



Dear Neighbor,

Happy Holidays! I hope everyone who celebrates has a Happy Hannukah, Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa, and a Happy New Year!

My office will be closed for the holidays until January 2nd. If you urgently need assistance that would normally be provided by my office, please call 311 or go to the [311 website](#), or visit my website, krueger.nysenate.gov, for resources such as my [Older Adult Resource Guide](#).

If you would like to view any of the many virtual events we hosted over the last month, you can find them on my website or my [YouTube channel](#), including my recent [Housing Lunch Hour Series](#), and this year's [Virtual Older Adult Resource Fair](#).

Below you will find information on recent legislative developments, as well as other useful info.

Best wishes for the New Year,

Liz Krueger
State Senator

Governor Hochul Signs, And Vetoes, Critical Legislation



As this year comes to a close, the governor has finally taken action on all of the bills that passed during the legislative session that ended in June. Here's what happened recently with the bills that I carried:

The Governor Signed:

S.2192, the Climate Change Superfund Act: Nation-leading legislation that will use the polluter-pays model exemplified by existing federal and state superfund laws to collect \$75 billion over twenty-five years for climate change adaptation from the parties most responsible for causing the climate crisis - big oil and gas companies. Repairing from and preparing for extreme weather caused by climate change will cost more than half a trillion dollars statewide by 2050. That's over \$65,000 per household, and that's on top of the disruption, injury, and death that the climate crisis is causing in every corner of our state. The Climate Change Superfund Act is a critical piece of affordability legislation that will deliver billions of dollars every year to ease the burden on regular New Yorkers.

S.154: Requires that lithium-ion batteries used in micromobility devices, e-bikes, and electric mopeds are manufactured in accordance with certain standards and specifications. Unsafe batteries are contributing to a serious threat to the health and safety of New Yorkers in their homes and in their jobs, whether it's delivery workers trying to make a living, or residential tenants living next to a fly-by-night charging business. When a piece of equipment has the potential to cause so much damage, we simply cannot have a wild west approach without any oversight.

S.7212: Requires the Park Avenue Armory to continue to provide space to the Knickerbocker Greys, a beloved after-school program that has been on the Upper East Side for more than a century, and has been housed in the Armory for all that time. Unfortunately, the Park Avenue Armory Conservancy, which leases the

building from the state, decided not to allow the Greys to continue to use the space. Now, because of this bill, which passed both houses of the Legislature with just a single "no" vote, the Greys will be able to return to their home.

S.1736: Direct that the next state Energy Conservation Code require newly constructed buildings with associated off-street parking to include a certain number of EV-ready parking spaces and installed EV chargers. The presence of EV charging stations and parking spaces in a community is associated with greater use of EVs. However, the rate of adoption of EV parking spaces has been slow. In 2021, the state took steps to address to slow adoption of EVs by mandating that by 2035, all new vehicles sold in the state will be EVs. For the adoption of this policy to be successful, the installation of the hardware needed to support a large number of EVs on the road must be a priority.

S.4414: Starting in 2026, prohibits the sale of single-use Styrofoam beach coolers. Polystyrene foam presents risks to public health, including from microplastics that leach toxic chemicals that can accumulate in the body and pose serious risks. The National Institute of Health, for example, recently added styrene - a major component of polystyrene foam - to their list of anticipated human carcinogens. These coolers are a particular environmental threat. Many people bring foam coolers with them to beaches or lakes where they are left behind as litter or placed in open waste receptacles and ultimately wash into the water. Every year, as many as seven million foam cooler boxes are sold across the nation. Too many of these will end up in our lakes, rivers, and oceans.

S.8744: Repeals the law that made it a crime to commit adultery. This outdated statute criminalized sexual behavior between consenting adults as a Class B Misdemeanor, punishable by up to three months in prison and a fine of up to \$500. The state has no business regulating consensual sexual behavior between adults. It's simply bad policy to have a law like this - one that would never get passed today - sitting on our books. The fact that it was there, outlawing something that people may think is not good but certainly shouldn't result in a criminal record, even if it is very rarely used, creates the risk of unintended consequences. It was long-past time for us to remove this statute from the penal law.

The Governor Vetoed:

S.8898, the Tropical Rainforest Economic & Environmental Sustainability (TREES) Act: Would have helped to ensure that New York State government procurement does not drive tropical deforestation or degradation by tightening an existing state ban on the use of tropical hardwoods for government projects, and creating a new statute requiring state contractors who deal in forest-risk commodities to certify that their products don't drive deforestation. The bill, a previous version of which also passed both houses last year but was also vetoed, made several changes to address concerns raised by the governor, while retaining the nation-leading impact of the original bill. Unfortunately, the governor once again chose to veto an achievable, affordable, and necessary piece of critical climate legislation. I will be reintroducing this bill next year and working to ensure it makes it across the finish line.

S.9067: Would have required the development and implementation of pressure ulcer prevention programs at every general hospital and residential health care facility. Pressure ulcers, also referred to as bed sores, are injuries that occur when prolonged pressure is applied to one spot on the skin harming the underlying tissue. They are most common in those who are immobile or have limited mobility due to medical conditions, age, or injury. I am very disappointed that Governor Hochul chose to veto this legislation that would lower healthcare costs and reduce patient suffering. In spite of the governor's claim that current measures are "robust," those measures clearly aren't working given the exceptionally high rate of unnecessary pressure sores in nursing homes and hospitals. Any new costs to administer a pressure ulcer program would be outweighed by the savings from decreased infection rates across New York's healthcare institutions, not to mention alleviating the suffering of New Yorkers dealing with a painful but easily preventable problem.

Oversight Of State Mental Health Spending

The number of homeless New Yorkers who are visibly suffering from serious mental illness is an ongoing concern for many of us. This situation requires many policy interventions, one of which is increasing access to inpatient psychiatric treatment at hospitals. Yet while the mental health needs of New Yorkers have increased over the last decade, statewide inpatient psychiatric capacity decreased by 10.5%, or 990 beds, over the same period.

Over the previous two state budgets, the Legislature has allocated more than \$1 billion to various programs to support New Yorkers with mental illness, including increasing inpatient psychiatric beds, as well as creating new transitional and supportive housing.

Recently I joined Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal in writing to the state Office of Mental Health (OMH) requesting information on the impact that these investments are having on the ground. This information will help to inform the upcoming state budget process, which begins in January with the release of the governor's Executive

Click Here To Read The Letter to
OMH

Congestion Pricing Starts January 5th



Starting January 5, 2025, vehicles entering the Congestion Relief Zone in Manhattan —local streets and avenues at or below 60 St—will be charged a toll. The program will reduce traffic, improve air quality, and fund better public transit.

The toll amount will depend on the type of vehicle, time of day, whether any crossing credits apply, and the method of payment. For example, passenger vehicles with E-ZPass will be charged \$9 in the peak period or \$2.25 overnight, once daily. Discounts or exemptions may apply to your trip – visit [mta.info/discounts](https://www.mta.info/discounts) for more details.

E-ZPass is the best way to pay the toll. Drivers will be able to pay with their existing E-ZPass transponder and account. If you already have an E-ZPass account, make sure it is up to date with your current license plate number, to ensure you are charged the E-ZPass toll rate and receive any peak period crossing credits. If you don't use E-ZPass, the [toll will be higher](#). Here's the [full toll schedule](#).

For more information, visit [congestionreliefzone.mta.info](https://www.congestionreliefzone.mta.info).

Manhattan Individual Disability Exemption Program Assessment Center

The MTA has announced that the Manhattan Individual Disability Exemption Program (IDEP) Assessment Center is accepting appointments for people who are applying for the Individual Disability Exemption Plan. Applicants can now schedule an appointment at the Center to determine if they are eligible for the exemption.

To schedule an IDEP assessment, applicants can call the appropriate number for the preferred location:

- Manhattan: 888-811-1050
- Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx: 844-233-3377

As a reminder, enrolling into IDEP is a two-step process. Applicants first need to establish eligibility, and then use that eligibility to enroll in IDEP. To apply and learn more, applicants can visit [mta.info/idep](https://www.mta.info/idep).

Additionally, the MTA is offering a new public webinar with a focus on how to apply for IDEP. The webinar will take place on Monday, December 23rd from 6 PM to 7 PM. Members of the public are encouraged to visit [mta.info/crzwebinars](https://www.mta.info/crzwebinars) to learn more and register.

Frequently asked questions

How do crossing credits work?

You will get a crossing credit if you enter the Congestion Relief Zone via the Lincoln, Holland, Queens-Midtown, or Hugh L. Carey tunnels with an E-ZPass during the peak period (5 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays, and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends). No crossing credits are available overnight, when the toll is discounted 75% from the peak toll.

The crossing credit is up to \$3 for passenger vehicles, \$7.20 for small trucks and buses, \$12 for large trucks and licensed sightseeing buses, and \$1.50 for motorcycles. For example, if you drive a passenger vehicle and enter the zone from the Lincoln Tunnel, your Congestion Relief Zone toll will be \$6 instead of \$9. Check the “Tunnel Crossing Credit” column under Phase 1 of [the final toll schedule](#) to see the exact crossing credit amount.

I applied for a discount or exemption plan in the spring. Do I need to re-apply? How do I know if my discount or exemption was granted?

If you applied for a discount or exemption plan in the spring and were approved, you

do not need to re-apply as the plan is already on your [E-ZPass NY](#) account.

To check if the discount or exemption plan was added to your account, log into your E-ZPass account or call E-ZPass customer service at 800-333-8655. [Learn more about Congestion Relief Zone toll discounts or exemptions.](#)

If I'm driving a rental car, how do I pay the Congestion Relief Zone toll?

If you're driving a rental car and enter the Congestion Relief Zone, you'll pay via Tolls by Mail. Visit the [Tolls by Mail NY](#) website and click "Rental/Loaner Vehicle." Make sure to mark the transaction as a "rental vehicle."

I live in the Congestion Relief Zone. Am I exempt from the toll?

No, you are not exempt from the toll because you are a resident. However, if you live in the zone and your New York adjusted household gross income is less than \$60,000 annually, you may be eligible for a tax credit in the amount of tolls paid. Visit the [New York State Department of Taxation and Finance](#)'s website for more information.

You may also qualify for a discount or exemption plan. Check the [MTA website](#) for more details.

Utility Affordability Programs

The financial hardships that have been felt for many years since the pandemic, along with skyrocketing costs of gas and electricity, have led to an unprecedented amount of utility arrears owed by millions of New York customers. If you have fallen behind on your utility bills, you are not alone and may be eligible for financial assistance.

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

HEAP is a federally funded program that provides annual grants to help income-eligible homeowners and renters pay for their energy costs. Monthly income limits vary by household size (the maximum monthly income for a one-person household is \$3,322, \$4,345 for a two-person household, and \$6,390 for a four-person household) and there are no asset limits. HEAP is available to households that pay directly for heat and to those where heat is included in rent. Additional details about HEAP eligibility are available at <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/>.

HEAP includes the following benefits:

- **Regular Benefit** – assists households that pay a high proportion of household income for heat or heat-related energy. Annual grants generally range between \$21 and \$900 based on whether a household pays directly for heating costs, type of housing, source of heat, and if the household contains a vulnerable individual (household member who is age 60 or older, under age 6 or permanently disabled). The 2024-25 Regular Benefit opened on November 1, 2024.
- **Emergency Benefit** – assists households already receiving Regular HEAP benefits who are facing a heat or heat-related energy emergency. Households may be eligible if their heat has been turned off or is in danger of being shut off, if they are out of fuel or have less than a quarter of a tank and do not have the funds to purchase more, or if the electricity that runs their heating system or thermostat has been shut off or a shut off is pending. Income limits are lower than those for the Regular HEAP Benefit and asset limits apply. The emergency benefit grant ranges between \$185 - \$635 depending on the source of heat. The yearly application period will start on January 2, 2025.
- **Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement** - helps income-eligible homeowners repair or replace furnaces, boilers, and other direct heating equipment necessary to keep their primary heating source functional. Benefit amounts are based on the actual cost to repair or replace your furnace, boiler, and/or other essential heating equipment (capped at \$4,000 for a repair and \$8,000 for a replacement). The application period opened on October 1, 2024.
- **Cooling Assistance Benefit** - provides cooling assistance services to households that include an individual with a documented medical condition that is exacerbated by extreme heat, or your household contains a vulnerable member based on their age (elderly age 60 years or older, or young children under age 6). Applications are expected to be accepted starting on April 15, 2025. Funds often run out early so residents who think they are eligible are strongly encouraged to apply as early as possible.

New York City residents can apply for all HEAP benefits through the NYC Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration (DSS/HRA). NYC residents who receive SNAP benefits and/or Cash Assistance should be automatically enrolled in the Regular HEAP Benefit. Applications can be submitted online via AccessHRA, by mail or fax, or in person at HRA HEAP offices. Eligibility details for each HEAP program, information about how to apply, and applications are available online at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/energy-assistance.page>. Applications can be submitted online via HRA at <https://a069-access.nyc.gov/accesshra/>.

You can also call the NYC DSS/HRA Infoline unit at 718-557-1399 with any questions about eligibility and benefits, to have an application mailed to you, or to inquire

about the status of your application.

Energy Affordability Program

Through the Energy Affordability Program (EAP), Con Edison customers who receive certain types of government assistance are eligible for discounts on their monthly energy bills. The EAP program reduces bills up to \$173 a month for low-income customers in New York State.

Con Edison customers should be enrolled automatically if the utility is notified by a government agency that a customer is receiving HEAP, SNAP, SSI, or public assistance but this does not always happen. Customers who are automatically enrolled will receive a letter from Con Edison providing details about the discount. Check your online account or bill if you aren't certain whether you've been automatically enrolled.

Customers will not be automatically enrolled if they receive Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, the Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit, or Lifeline, and must submit an application to Con Edison.

Applications can be submitted online, via email, by mail, by fax, or in person. Con Edison customers should visit <https://www.coned.com/en/accounts-billing/payment-plans-assistance/help-paying-your-bill> for more details and applications.

Bill Payment Options for Con Ed Customers

Con Ed offers special protections and payment programs for [seniors, people with disabilities](#), customers experiencing [medical emergencies](#), and [domestic violence](#). Con Edison offers a wide array of flexible [Payment Plans](#). Con Ed offers the following payment plans for customers struggling to pay their monthly bill:

- **Budget Billing:** Helps customers avoid seasonal price spikes by spreading energy payments out evenly across the year.
- **Payment Extensions:** Gives customers up to 10 days of extra time to pay their bill.
- **Payment Plans:** Allows customers who have fallen behind on their bills to pay down the outstanding balance in manageable, monthly installments.

NYSERDA's EmPower+ program

This program provides no-cost energy efficiency services up to \$10,000 for home energy upgrades for low-income customers. It also provides incentives of up to \$5,000 with a 50 percent customer match required for moderate-income customers. [See eligibility guidelines for the program here.](#)

Mapping NYC's Lead Water Pipes



The New York League of Conservation Voters, using data from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, has created an [interactive map](#) showing which buildings in NYC have lead water service lines. According to a recent [article in Gothamist](#), the map shows that there are 124,197 lines in the city that are lead and 571,351 lines that do not contain lead. There are also 124,917 pipes that could contain lead.

The EPA estimates that up to 9 million homes nationwide are served by lead pipes. There is no level of lead that is deemed safe to human health. When lead enters the body, it can make its way to every organ, resulting in impaired brain function and decreased fertility. However, the presence of lead service lines does not necessarily mean lead is leaching into the water supply. Proper maintenance and water treatment can mitigate any risk.

New Yorkers can order a [free testing kit](#) from the city's Department of Environmental Protection to check lead levels in the water. The agency also has information on [what to do](#) if lead is detected in your water. Qualifying low-income New York City residents can apply for grants to cover the cost of work to replace lead

pipes. The most accurate way to assess lead exposure is through blood tests. Infants fed with powder formula are at the highest risk.

If your home is served by a lead water pipe, the DEP recommends the following mitigation measures:

- Flush your tap water in the morning until you notice a colder water temperature. This usually takes about 1 to 2 minutes. The colder water is an indication that the water sitting in your home piping overnight has been flushed and you are pulling fresh water from the City's water mains.
- Clean the faucet's screen (also known as an aerator) periodically. In some homes, small particles containing lead can get trapped in these devices.
- Use a water filter certified by the NSF or UL for lead removal. These can either be installed under a sink or used as a pitcher.
- The surest way to remove lead from your drinking water is to replace your lead water service line and/or lead plumbing fixtures in your home. You can do that by hiring a licensed master plumber.

[Click Here to View the Lead Service Line Map](#)

NAMI Free Mental Health Support



The graphic features a dark blue background with the text 'FREE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT' in large white letters. To the right of the text is a yellow icon of two figures, one standing and one sitting, with a heart between them. Below the text are two green buttons: 'Helpline: 212-684-3264' and 'helpline@naminyc.org'. To the right of the buttons is the NAMI logo, which includes a circular icon with a flame-like shape, the text 'nami', and 'National Alliance on Mental Illness' and 'New York City Metro naminyc.org' below it.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City helps families and individuals affected by mental illness build better lives through education, support, and advocacy. They have a free mental health helpline that you can call, email, or web chat with if you need to talk with someone, or are interested in getting information about resources for yourself, a friend, a patient, etc.

The helpline is free and easy to access via calling in, emailing, or using the online web chat feature. NAMI-NYC's helpline is run by peers, meaning they have experience with mental illness and can relate to callers' experiences. The Helpline is also a great resource for families, friends, and clinicians to learn about different resources available for constituents, such as supportive housing or support groups.

NYC Parks Greenways and Drives Input Tool

NYC Parks has announced their NYC Parks E-Pilot Map Input Tool. They are asking for park users to share thoughts on their experiences on NYC Parks' greenways and drives, especially related to the flow of bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters, pedestrians, or other park users, to improve conditions on these shared facilities.

Share your thoughts on the conditions of greenways and drives in parks! Use the [input tool](#) (available in various languages through the translate feature).

In the second year of the NYC Parks Electric Micromobility Pilot, they are looking to gain additional insights, test new methods for e-micromobility management, and expand efforts to prevent heavier vehicles like mopeds from entering parks. The feedback from the input tool will help them create better experiences and manage the flow of traffic on greenways and park drives.

As parks are shared spaces, Parks expects all park users to be considerate of others, and operate their bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters, roller skates, or any other legal devices in a safe manner – especially on drives and greenways, which see a variety of uses and speeds. The pilot allows the same bicycles, e-bikes, and e-scooters that are legal to operate in NYC streets to also operate on park drives, such as the Central Park and Prospect Park loops, and greenways, such as the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway. These are spaces where bicycles are already permitted in parks. Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes, as well as lighter-weight e-scooters, are already allowed to operate on NYC streets and in bike lanes, and are allowed in parks as part of the pilot. The pilot does not allow any electric micromobility devices to be ridden on pedestrian paths, and

does not include faster, heavier mopeds or motorcycles anywhere in parks or on greenways. You can learn more about the program at nyc.gov/parks/ebikes.

Weill Cornell Do More Feel Better Program



Do More, *Feel Better*


**Are you feeling lonely?
Not doing as much as you used to do?
Not enjoying as many things?**

**Weill Cornell Medicine
is offering a free therapy program to help you
refocus on your values and build routines to
lift your mood.**

In this program you will meet individually via phone or video with a member of the team for 9 weekly sessions.

Eligible participants are also paid for research interviews during the program.

To learn more about the program,
Call Rebecca or Talya at the toll free number.

 **844-999-8746 ext 714 / ext 720**



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<https://sireylab.weill.cornell.edu>



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