



Assemblywoman
**Margaret
MARKEY**

Report to the People

SUMMER 2011

A message from
**Assemblywoman
Margaret Markey...**

Dear Neighbors:

The legislative session that has just concluded was one of the most productive since I've represented you in Albany.

Despite the difficulties faced by New York State as a result of difficult economic times, the Assembly, Senate, and the Governor worked together and compromised to make some tough choices about the state budget that made it possible to reach an agreement about a new budget that was on time, in balance, and required no new taxes. In doing that, we closed a \$10 billion budget gap in the current year.

That was the good news, but there is bad news that has me deeply troubled. For the second year in a row, there is no funding available for worthy local organizations here in Queens. Sadly, the "member item" (also known as "pork") has become a dirty word in political circles as a result of a few outrageous abuses by a small handful of people.

The result is that the important and effective work of dozens of service, civic, and non-profit organizations right here in our neighborhoods is badly harmed. Some of those hurt include a food pantry at Trinity Church, the Central Astoria Local Business Coalition, Woodside on the Move, Maspeth Town Hall, and many others whose work is particularly needed during these challenging times.

I am hopeful that as the economy improves, we will be able to restore this funding in future years to give urgently needed support to the outstanding work of our local non-profits.

Sincerely,

Margaret Markey

We Are Finally Getting Most of Those Big Trucks Out of the Heart of Maspeth

A decade-long fight to stop big trucks from traveling through the heart of Maspeth is finally showing results.

Enforcement action from the 104th Precinct of the new local route designation of Grand and Flushing Avenues has already reduced the number of big trucks on our principal shopping street since the new local truck route designation went into effect in March.

With approval of the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Maspeth Truck Bypass plan by Community Boards Two and Five, street work will begin this summer on installation of a permanent diversion of through trucks to and from the Long Island Expressway (LIE). The goal is to get big trucks headed for the Maspeth industrial zone off Grand and Flushing Avenues and send them directly to and from the LIE.

Under the plan, Maurice Avenue and 58th Street will become one-way, with southbound trucks routed on 58th Street and northbound ones sent up Maurice. These and other changes are expected to improve an increased truck traffic flow, particularly through a complicated intersection where Maspeth Avenue turns south.



DOT officials worked with many individual Maspeth businesses to ensure that street changes to implement the bypass plan will not adversely impact them. I joined them in May outside the Clinton Diner where DOT Borough Commissioner Maura McCarthy and agency experts reviewed alternatives with the restaurant owner.

Enforcement is already showing results with fewer big trucks on Grand Avenue; new truck bypass street plan soon to be in place to make shopping and residential streets safer and cleaner.

Other changes suggested by the community to keep trucks off residential streets between Grand and Maurice are expected to be implemented by the end of the year. DOT has pledged to carefully monitor the effect of the traffic flow changes and make adjustments as needed.

More than a decade ago, Community Board Five saw that truck traffic was bad for local businesses; that it was dangerous for residents and shoppers; and that it polluted the air. The late CB5 Chair Frank Principe and his members asked the city to implement a bypass plan to solve these problems.

After years of delay, the area's elected officials came together last year to press the city to finally act to get big trucks out of the heart of Maspeth, and the DOT responded by giving us some immediate relief, changing Grand and Flushing Avenues to local truck routes, while they worked on the plan now being implemented.

We are now on the eve of the permanent solution to our truck problems and I and your other elected officials will work with the community and DOT to ensure that we end up with the safer, cleaner and less congested streets that we've long hoped for.

We Had a Productive Session in Albany

Our On-time State Budget Closed a Massive \$10 Billion Gap and Resulted in No New Taxes

The budget process this year was remarkable for two reasons. First, we adopted the first on-time state budget in many years and second, we eliminated a \$10 billion budget gap the state faced this year and we did it with no new taxes.

At the same time, we moved the state toward better fiscal health in the future by eliminating a total of \$39 billion in deficits over the next four years.

The Assembly majority has been a strong champion for better education, for affordable health care, and for basic programs for children, seniors, and job growth. Some of us thought that there was too much pain in the proposed budget for people who could least afford it, since many of the cuts would have affected programs that are more important than ever during tough economic times like these.

I am proud that we were successful in restoring many items to the budget that would have impacted some of our most vulnerable citizens. These included: \$22.3 million to keep the EPIC prescription drug program affordable for seniors; \$15.2 million for summer jobs for kids; \$36 million to keep senior centers open around the state, including 105 in New York City; and \$230 million in general support for education, including \$53 million for NYC schools.

The new budget also includes economic development initiatives and restorations to boost state job creation efforts and additional funding to keep college education affordable by restoring funds for community colleges.



We Kept Senior Centers Open

We responded strongly to a budget crisis earlier this year that would have closed more than 100 senior centers in New York City, including many in Queens. Here I joined some of the happy members of Maspeth SelfHelp to celebrate the good news that the Legislature ensured that \$25 million would be in the current state budget to keep these centers open and operating.



Thanks to the Troop 45 Boy Scouts

I was grateful to Scoutmaster Fred Coltrinari and members of his Boy Scout Troop 45 for assisting at my inauguration for a new term at the beginning of the year. Here we are joined by some of the other program participants, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer and Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley.

Some of the Other Legislative Highlights:

Following are some of the notable bills adopted by the Assembly and Senate that have been sent to the Governor for his signature:

Strengthening NYC rent laws — Regulations that promote better access to affordable housing were enhanced by bipartisan legislation we adopted that closed loopholes and makes it more difficult for landlords to raise rents and remove apartments from rent controls.

Landmark ethics reform — Working with the Governor, we created independent oversight of the legislative and executive branches and we put tough new requirements into effect for disclosure of outside income and conflicts of interest by public officials. In the future, public officials who are convicted of a felony related to their work will face loss of their pension benefits.

Keeping college affordable — Guaranteeing quality education while keeping tuition affordable at State University of New York (SUNY) and City University (CUNY) campuses is the goal of legislation we adopted that will permit incremental tuition increases over the next five years while also establishing a new tuition credit system for students eligible for the Tuition Assistance Program.

Making auto traffic safer — We adopted legislation that beefs up existing laws that makes texting or using any electronic device while behind the wheel of a car a primary offense. We also passed a bill that requires drivers on highways and parkways to move over and slow down when approaching an emergency vehicle.

Extend unemployment benefits — The Governor has already signed an authorization we adopted to pay an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits to New Yorkers who are out of a job, a benefit affecting some 160,000 residents.

Incentives for new power sources — Encouraging new sources of clean, affordable and reliable electricity, particularly solar power, is the aim of legislation we adopted. It also makes it possible for homeowners to invest in “green” money-saving energy improvements and pay the cost through their monthly electric bill.

Better access to taxi service — People who seek taxi service in Queens and the other boroughs outside of Manhattan will soon have better access to taxicabs thanks to legislation we adopted that will permit licensed, for-hire car service drivers to pick up riders on the street.

Support for small businesses — We provided \$55.4 million to a program that gives small businesses greater access to capital in an effort to improve the business climate in the state. The NY State Capital Access Program, Innovate NY Fund and Bonding Guarantee Assistance Program will make it possible for small businesses to borrow money to expand and create new jobs.

A New Park is Created Where Ugly Gas Tanks Once Stood

It was a delight to stand with my local government colleagues and city officials to formally dedicate the new Elmhurst Park on Grand Avenue. This six-acre \$20 million open space replaces the unsightly Elmhurst Gas Tanks which were demolished more than a decade ago.

This wonderful park is a tribute to how great things can happen when government and the community work together to convince a private company to do a good thing.

At the dedication, I reminded Mayor Mike Bloomberg and the audience of the critical role of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver who brought Congressman Joseph Crowley and I and other area elected officials together, face-to-face, with the President of Keyspan so we could convince the company to make the site available for a park. It was the beginning of a process that led to the environmental cleanup of the site and its acquisition by the City of New York for \$1.

Where there were once ugly gas tanks, the city and the community have created a magnificent new public space that will be enjoyed by many future generations of Elmhurst and Maspeth residents.



We were all smiles as Mayor Bloomberg led in cutting the ribbon to officially open the new Elmhurst Park. In addition to Borough President Helen Marshall and Councilmember Elizabeth Crowley (far left and right) we were joined by Congressman Joseph Crowley (behind the Mayor), Community Board 4 District Manager Richard Italiano and Pat Toro of Chapter 32, Vietnam Veterans of America, which is working to place a memorial for veterans in the park.



Union Apprentices Visit Albany

Apprenticeship programs prepare young men and women for good-paying construction jobs. I was pleased to recently welcome this group of apprentices to Albany, led by George Reilly of Local 1 of the New York State Pipe Trades Association. They were visiting legislators to tell them about the importance of their training.

Child Sexual Abuse Costs New York State \$1 Billion Every Year in Economic Impact on Taxpayers, Victims and Society

Childhood sexual abuse costs New York State taxpayers more than \$1 billion a year, some \$230,000 for each new case. Those were the startling figures that emerged when I held a public hearing on my Child Victims Act of New York legislation in the spring with the Assembly Codes Committee.

Researchers tell us that one in five children in America is a victim of childhood sexual abuse—most of it at the hands of family members or acquaintances, or by other people they trust and respect. But since most victims are not able to report what has happened to them until they are well into adulthood, current law enables many predators to avoid the consequences of their immoral and illegal acts by “running out the clock” on their crime—taking advantage of our arbitrary and outdated statute of limitations.

My bill has already been adopted by the Assembly three times over the past seven years, but still has not yet come to the floor in the State Senate. It will extend the civil and criminal statute of limitations for these crimes. It will give victims a greater opportunity to have their day in court and will also protect future generations of New York children from abuse by exposing pedophiles that have previously been hidden.

More than a dozen criminal justice, academic and victim service experts presented testimony to the committee. They spoke about the severe impact of childhood sexual abuse on victims and the reasons why many victims don’t ever come forward about what happened to them until well into adulthood, if ever. They also spoke about the high economic cost of childhood sexual abuse to government and society.

A strong argument for a longer statute of limitations came from the office of Queens District Attorney Richard Brown, which reported that when that office reviewed backlogged DNA evidence that had been collected over 10 years beginning in the late 1980’s, it found 75 cases where a perpetrator was able to be identified, but who was not able to be prosecuted because the current statute of limitations had expired. Another 89 similar cases were identified in the Bronx and more than 600 similar cases were identified in Manhattan.

We have become all-too-familiar with the horrendous personal impact of child sexual abuse on individual children and their families. Now, we also know that New York taxpayers and all of society are affected by child rape and sexual abuse. I will continue to fight to make the Child Victims Act the law in New York State.



I reported on my public hearing at a press conference that kicked off a May Lobby Day in Albany for the Child Victims Act. Speakers included several victims who have recently come forward to tell about their ordeals, including one Albany area man who was able to bring his abuser to justice in Massachusetts which has a very different statute of limitations.

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Update on Community Issues

Cross Harbor Freight Study Looks at Environmental Impact of Increase of Trucks in W. Queens

Just as we are beginning to feel relief about getting big trucks off Grand and Flushing Avenues, Maspeth is facing an even bigger traffic and pollution challenge that could also impact much of western Queens. The Port Authority of NY and NJ (PA) is conducting an environmental impact study of alternatives for improving the shipment of freight into New York City.

Projecting an enormous increase in this traffic over the next few decades on the region's already clogged highways, bridges and tunnels; the agency is looking at truck, rail and water solutions for easing congestion. I hosted a public information meeting last fall where the PA reviewed its Cross Harbor Freight Movement Program and reported about the environmental study it now has underway. Since that meeting, there have been other presentations about the studies being conducted.

With poor air quality, bad traffic congestion, and problems with the current rail traffic through our neighborhoods, I and other elected officials are carefully monitoring the PA study. We expect some preliminary data from the agency over the next few months and I will keep you informed about what it says and its potential impact.

We Say No to New MTA Depot — I joined elected officials and civic groups earlier this year to strongly object to surprise plans by the MTA to locate a bus depot in Maspeth. It would be the third such MTA facility here and a real

setback to our recent progress in reducing unnecessary congestion in the community to improve safety and air quality. There has yet been no opportunity for a public review of the potential location at a site which is already owned by the city. We are already slated to see sharp increases in commercial traffic in this same area with the upcoming opening of a huge municipal waste transfer station and we will stand fast to oppose this additional MTA operation.

Shut Down Maurice Ave. Speedway — The long-standing headache of illegal nighttime drag racing on Maurice Avenue along the border of Woodside and Maspeth has been put to an end with the installation of speed bumps by the Department of Transportation. The bumps were installed in May after I and other public officials from the area called the attention of DOT to the problem after pleas from local residents and civic groups. The illegal activity reached intolerable heights, especially on weekends, after the street had been repaved in 2010. Everybody deserves a good night's sleep and this illegal and dangerous activity has been stopped.

Still Hope for a Park at St. Savior's Site — Negotiations are still underway to bring a new open green space to the site where St. Savior's Church once stood. Community groups and public officials continue to press the private owner and the City of New York to find a way to make at least a portion of this block at Rust and 58th Streets a public park. With the potential for capital funds from Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and City funding from Councilmember Crowley, the gap between what the owner is seeking and potentially-available public funds may have closed somewhat with the possibility of \$1.2 million allocation from the Newtown Creek Environmental Benefit Fund, administered by the City Parks Foundation. I will advocate for desperately-needed open green space at this location.

Memorial Day Parade Also Honors Purple Heart Heroes



I was proud to salute the Grand Marshals of the 2011 Maspeth Memorial Day Parade, a husband and wife team, World War Two veteran Andrew Frazier and community activist Virginia Frazier. Andrew served in the Pacific Theater and has been a member and leader of Maspeth American Legion Post #783 for 45 years. Virginia is a long-time member and past president of the Post #783 Auxiliary. The annual parade is sponsored by the United Veterans & Fraternal Organizations of Maspeth. The theme of this year's event was "The Purple Heart Medal" and two Maspeth men who earned the medal, Robert M. Reilly and Arigo Fruner, were recognized.

My State Funding Provides New Check-In Units for Libraries

I am pleased to announce that I have arranged for a state allocation of \$250,000 in state Community Capital Assistance funds to the Queens Public Library for major capital improvements at the Maspeth Branch Library and at the Woodside Branch Library.

The funding will pay for installation of an interior self-check-in unit at the Maspeth Library, making the process more user-friendly and freeing up the hard-pressed staff to have more time to deal with individual needs of library patrons. At the Woodside branch, a similar exterior unit will be installed. I have been a strong supporter of library service in Queens since my first days in the Legislature.

Not only have I provided state funding



Planning library improvements with Library Director Thomas Galante and Jennifer Manley of his staff.

for the borough-wide Queens Public Library system, but I have also previously funded major improvement work at the Maspeth, Woodside, and Astoria branches.



P.S. 58 Writers Share Creative Talent

Students at P.S. 58 proudly shared their creative writing with me when I visited the school recently. It was a delight to hear their imaginations at work as they read their work.

Assemblywoman Margaret Markey

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