



STATE OF THE DISTRICT

ASSEMBLY MEMBER

DANIEL O'DONNELL

Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

WINTER 2019



DEAR NEIGHBOR,

I love this community. Our passion, compassion, and unity make us stronger, and our neighborhood the best place to be. As I work to improve life locally and globally, I am inspired by your stories - so please, keep saying hi when you see me, and keep sharing your stories.

If you'd like to receive my monthly e-mail updates, with events, news, and opportunities in our neighborhood, you can e-mail me at odonnell@nyassembly.gov with the subject line "Subscribe."

My staff and I are always available to assist you. Call, write, or visit us, Monday through Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Very truly yours,

GETTING EVER GREENER



At Assembly Member O'Donnell's Environmental Policy Forum, community residents heard from advocates and experts on new laws and local action ideas

Our planet is in crisis, and we need bold action to save it. Where the current administration in Washington has failed the world, New York is stepping up to show how state and local governments can take the lead in tackling climate change. I was thrilled by the enthusiasm when nearly 500 neighbors came to my Environmental Policy Forum, hosted with the League of Conservation Voters and Columbia's Earth Institute, where we discussed New York State's new Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). Most importantly, and excitingly, CLCPA commits New York to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It specifies reducing emissions by 85% (compared to 1990 levels), makes clear rules for offsets for the other 15%, and requires 70% of our electricity to be generated by renewable sources by 2040. Critically, it also directs 40% of the benefits to disadvantaged communities, ensuring that marginalized communities are not forgotten.

To achieve these goals, a robust shift away from fossil fuels is needed, so I am drafting legislation that will create infrastructure to support electric vehicles, reduce plastic and cardboard waste, and make public transit and biking easier and more reliable. Finally, there are steps each of us can take. I hosted an event this fall on Composting, to highlight the ways we can prevent organic waste from reaching landfills, where the methane it produces is over 26 times worse than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. I encourage all residents to help keep organic waste out of landfills by signing up for residential compost pickup at www.nyc.gov/organics.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

TENANT'S CORNER

REJOICE! VACANCY DECONTROL AND HIGH INCOME DECONTROL ARE GONE

This past June, I was proud to be a main sponsor on a housing package that reformed our rent laws. The package contained many provisions, including addressing two of the topics my office has received the highest number of concerns about over the years: Vacancy Decontrol and High Income Decontrol. These two provisions, both originally enacted in 1993, have resulted in the loss of over 155,000 rent regulated apartments. The elimination of these practices will help keep NYC's entire housing stock more affordable.

Vacancy Decontrol served as an incentive for harassment of Rent Stabilized tenants. When Rent Stabilized tenants left apartments where the rent was over \$2,774, landlords were allowed to raise the rent for the next tenant up to market rate. The landlord made more money, but the City became less affordable. The potential for this windfall resulted in horror stories from some of my constituents. In many cases, owners would get tenants to leave by refusing to repair leaks or remediate mold, or by bombarding residents with unfounded eviction cases. In the most severe cases, my office discovered illegal construction where exterior walls were demolished to make conditions unlivable for rent stabilized tenants. My office was able to intervene and protect tenants in many cases, but the new rent laws remove a major incentive for this misbehavior. If you're experiencing harassment, please reach out to my office for assistance.

Another method of deregulation was High-Income Decontrol, where tenants whose rent was over \$2,774 and household income over \$200,000 could have their apartment deregulated. While the income threshold was rare, there were many cases where tenants lost their rights because they filled out the form incorrectly. The elimination of both Vacancy Decontrol and High-Income Decontrol means that tenants no longer have to fear losing their apartments due to harassment or clerical errors.

These are just some of the issues last year's landmark rent law addressed. Stemming the loss of rent-regulated units gives us the opportunity to address our city's descent into unaffordability, with far reaching impacts on storefronts, retail, and neighborhood livability and diversity.

AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD



Hosting a talk show about criminal justice reform



Recognizing the work of local NYCHA leaders



Greeting seniors during Celebrate Our Elders Week



Shredding old documents at my Fall Shred event

UPCOMING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

SAVING SMALL BUSINESSES

PREVENTING VACANT STOREFRONTS

It's no secret that our small stores and businesses are hurting. Rising rents, competition with online retail, and the combination of retail space to create mega-spaces beyond the reach of small businesses are putting local brick and mortar stores in a vice, and costing our community dearly. According to a recent Comptroller report, the Upper West Side has an average storefront vacancy rate of over 10% on corridors like Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues. That's why I have introduced the Small Business Survival Act (SBSA), which would create a program for fair negotiations in the commercial lease renewal process, and ensure that long term leases become a standard.

Additionally, our vacant storefronts sometimes create quality of life issues for our community. Sidewalks in front of vacant storefronts become dirty, and during the winter they can become safety hazards. To ensure that we can count on commercial space owners to be good neighbors, I've introduced a bill requiring that vacant storefronts post the contact information of the property manager and leasing agent so that the community (and my office) have a contact if there is a problem. It also shows good faith that the owner is looking to fill the property, making it easier for prospective renters to inquire.

Lastly, I've introduced bills that eliminate sales taxes on books to protect our local book shops, and legislation to enact a Historic Business Registry to ensure that shops that have built our neighborhood receive the small business support they deserve.

SUPPORTING THE ARTS

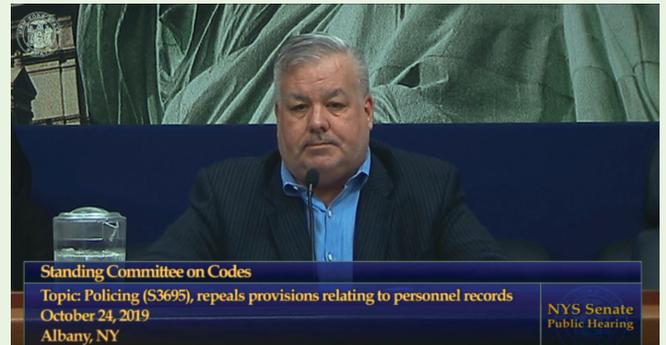
CELEBRATING OUR CULTURAL WEALTH

As Chair of the Committee on Tourism, Parks, Arts and Sports Development, I held hearings to listen to leaders in the Arts world about plans for the future, and how they provide access to school kids, disabled individuals, and low income community members, along with the tourists that flock to our city. Our arts should be accessible to all, and as Chair I'm proud to continue working with institutions throughout our state to achieve that goal.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

PRISON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

During my time as Corrections Chair it became apparent that the New York State correctional system lacks proper oversight. Currently, investigations of unusual incidents and concerns are handled by an internal unit within the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), creating a conflict of interest. At least ten other States, from Alabama to Hawaii, have created an independent oversight body, and it's time for New York to do the same. In light of this, I proposed the Office of the Correctional Ombudsman which would monitor the prisons, investigate complaints, and report to the Governor, the Legislature, DOCCS and the public. The goal of this legislation is to achieve transparency and accountability in our state correctional system, ultimately helping prevent dangerous incidents from occurring at all.

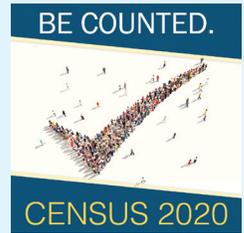


REPEALING "SECTION 50(A)"

After five years of red tape, in October the officer who used an illegal chokehold, killing Eric Garner, was finally fired by the NYPD. A key reason for delays like this, which are all too common, is a law passed in the 1960s to shield police officers from having their personnel records shared with attorneys looking to use unrelated past incidents to discredit testimony in court. Unfortunately, the courts ruled broadly that this law applied to releasing disciplinary records in all cases, preventing the public and those directly involved in police incidents to learn critical information, like if an officer had a history of abuse of force. To fix this, I introduced Assembly Bill A2513 to repeal Section 50(a) of the New York State Civil Rights Law, to ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness.

THE 2020 CENSUS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Once every ten years, the United States Census takes a count of every person in the United States. Census information is used to determine New York City's fair share of \$650 billion in federal funds for public education, public housing, infrastructure, and more — as well as the number of seats we have in Congress. Because so much is at stake, it's critical that New Yorkers stand up and be counted in the 2020 Census. In the 2010 Census, the city's self-response rate was less than 62%, compared to the national average of 76%.



We need your help to get the word out, so sign up for your Neighborhood Organizing Census Committee today by going to nyc.gov/census

245 West 104th Street, New York, NY 10025



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**DANIEL
O'DONNELL'S**
STATE OF THE
DISTRICT

Daniel O'Donnell, Assembly Member, 69th District
Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

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A background image of a city skyline at sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon. The New York State Assembly seal is centered in the upper part of the image. Below the seal, the text "Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell:" is written in large white font. Underneath that, contact information is listed in smaller white font: "245 W. 104th Street, New York, NY 10025 • 212-866-3970 • Fax: 212-864-1095", "712 Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12248 • 518-455-5603 • Fax: 518-455-3812", and "Email: odonnelld@nyassembly.gov". At the bottom, the text "Open Monday through Friday 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m." is written in white font.

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