



STATE OF THE DISTRICT

ASSEMBLY MEMBER

DANIEL O'DONNELL

Upper West Side ■ Morningside Heights ■ Manhattan Valley

Winter 2021



Dear Neighbor,

I hope this newsletter finds you well. As we collectively recover from the pandemic and figure out what the new normal looks like, my office is here to help.

We're open from Monday through Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For those with specific housing problems, I have a dedicated specialist on staff. I also have a constituent liaison with experience navigating unemployment and other community-wide concerns.

Interested in learning about the work I'm doing in my district, as well new events and opportunities? Follow my official Facebook account. You can also join my e-list by emailing "subscribe" to odonnelld@nyassembly.gov.

Very truly yours,

Danny

How to Get Things Done in Albany

I pride myself in holding community-wide events — like our popular paper shredding day and flu vaccine drive — that provide needed services while also giving people an opportunity to ask me about my work for the district. One of the most common questions I receive is: how do bills get passed in the legislature, and what progress can we expect to see in the year ahead?

This is what I share: during my nearly twenty years in the State Legislature, I've learned how to rack up small policy victories and achieve meaningful systemic reform. As we enter a new era with a new Executive, I am excited to put my experience to good use by pushing for the transformation change we deserve.

This reset in Albany couldn't have come at a better time. As other states turn the clock back on issues from reproductive health to voting rights, New York has led by example. In the last six months, legislators approved nearly 900 bills, including long-standing priorities like fully funding public schools; legalizing marijuana; ending solitary confinement; and establishing gender-neutral markers on state-issued IDs. These ground-breaking laws reflect years of building partnerships to imagine a better future. While I once endured ignorant and painful comments every time I debated legislation to help the LGBTQ community, I can now proudly share that bills to help transgender New Yorkers have passed unanimously in the Assembly for the past two years.

In the following pages, I'll share some of the lessons I've learned from my years in the Assembly and where we're going next. As we move into a new year, I also want to wish you all a happy, healthy start to 2022.



Walking in Riverside Park during my second year as a legislator.

Where We've Been, Where We're Going

LGBTQ Rights

2011: Marriage Equality: Before the Marriage Equality Act became law, same-sex couples lacked the nearly 1,300 state rights and responsibilities conferred to married couples. To communicate these facts to my colleagues and build support for my bill, I kept a color-coded spreadsheet of secured votes and how to convince “no” votes — be it through policy memos or dinners with me and my then-boyfriend, now husband, John. Nearly ten years and four governors later, New York State became the largest in the nation at the time to allow same-sex marriages.

2020: Gender-Neutral Single Stall Bathrooms: New York enacted my legislation requiring public, single-occupancy bathrooms to become available to all, regardless of gender. Building broad support on an issue in the national spotlight was important. When the bill finally passed, months went by without confirmation that the Governor would sign it. In response, we mounted a loud public campaign to voice support for the bill and ensure it became law.



I am committed to building off the success of these victories to pass legislation that protects the rights of some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers — kids. In 2010, the Governor signed the Dignity for All Students Act, which I introduced to protect kids from discrimination and harassment. Despite our progress, LGBTQ youth are almost four times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth. That's why I will fight for the passage of the Student Suicide Prevention Act, which requires local educational agencies to respond to students who have demonstrated suicidal thoughts or intentions.

Dancing at my wedding with my husband, John.

Criminal Justice Reform

2015: Expanded Mental Health Services: The Governor signed my bill mandating that inmates maintain access to medication and mental health treatment plans upon their release from prison or jail.

2018: Restricting Firearms from Domestic Abusers: After the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, my bill prohibiting people with misdemeanor domestic violence convictions from purchasing or possessing firearms became law.

2020: Repealing 50-A: New York responded to the killing of George Floyd by approving my bill to repeal Section 50-a of the state Civil Rights Law, which had kept the discipline records of police officers secret for decades.



Moving forward, we need to continue re-imagining how we hold bad actors accountable. To achieve this goal, I've introduced two transformative pieces of legislation: one to establish an office of the correctional ombudsman and another to restrict dangerous no-knock raids.

A correctional ombudsman will peel away the mystery that often surrounds incidents of violence and abuse in our prisons, while restricting no-knock warrants will make New York a national leader in ending dangerous raids like the one that killed Breonna Taylor in 2020.

Denouncing 50-a with my colleagues.

Strengthening Our Neighborhood

Lowering the Speed Limit

In 2014, the Legislature passed my bill to lower the speed limit to 25 miles per hour across the majority of the City. Evidence showed that lowering the speed limit by just 5 mph could mean the difference between life and death. The families of car crash victims capture this fact better than anyone, which is why I held press conferences with them and gave them final say over the language of the bill. We also allowed the Department of Transportation to designate 20 mph only streets with signage. But our work is not over. Increased biking and walking during the pandemic mean we must make public spaces more accessible. Next session, I will introduce legislation to remove trash from the sidewalk, which will give us all more walking space.

Preserving Local Businesses

This year, my bill to create a Historic Business Preservation Registry in New York State became law. This initiative will serve as an educational and promotional tool to recognize long standing community-serving businesses as valuable cultural assets. We know that store vacancies have sky-rocketed during the coronavirus pandemic, accelerating a ten-year trend fueled by rising rent and e-commerce. This registry is just one of several tools I'm using to combat this trend and save small businesses.



Holding a press conference to push for lower speed limits.



Joining community leaders for the 2017 unveiling of Phase I of the Morningside Heights Historic District.

Community Events



The Return of Composting!

As the City recovers from the pandemic, Curbside Composting is restarting in stages. Learn more information on the DSNY website, or sign up here: <https://dsny.force.com/curbsidecomposting/s/>

Paper Shredding!

My office hosted another Free Paper Shredding event — and it remains as popular as ever! I was also pleased to host a pop-up flu vaccine event and an e-waste event, where locals could drop off old electronics for recycling. If you would like to be added to our shred list and receive notifications about all upcoming events, please email odonnell@nyassembly.gov.

Have You Received Your Booster Shot?

Vaccine booster shots are now available to all New Yorkers ages 18 and older. *Your booster shot can be any of the three authorized or approved vaccines. If you are not sure whether to get a booster shot or which kind of vaccine you should get for your booster, please talk to your healthcare provider.*

In addition, per the CDC, children ages 5 to 11 are now eligible to receive a vaccine.

See the latest recommendations on who should get the booster: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page>
Check availability for your shot at your local pharmacy or find a location here: <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/>

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