



Dear neighbor,

Since mid-March our lives have changed dramatically. We have lost loved ones. We have seen our favorite local restaurants and cafés shuttered. Schools have closed and many of us have witnessed our living rooms transform into our offices.

First and foremost, I hope that you, your family, and your friends have remained safe and healthy. I know that may not be the case for everyone and to those who have lost loved ones, I offer my deepest condolences. My wife Miriam lost her father to COVID-19 earlier this month, leaving our family shattered.

In the time of pandemic and social distancing, goodbyes are premature and not how we imagined. Together, we mourn the health care workers, the grocery store employees, the teachers, the MTA workers, and the thousands of fellow New Yorkers we lost to this virus.

While our office did close in the wake of COVID-19, we are very much at work, fielding scores of calls and emails about issues facing constituents. We have connected constituents to food delivery services, advocated for better working conditions for nurses, worked to secure free rides for seniors in need, and helped many with their unemployment claims.

With aggressive social distancing measures in place, it appears as though the virus is slowly abating. That being said, we cannot grow complacent because we know this crisis is far from over.

Come what may, my office will continue to work on behalf of our community. If you are in need, know that we are just a phone call or an email away.

Stay safe,

Dan Quart



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Important
COVID-19
Information
from

Assemblymember
Dan Quart



Celebrating
Passover,
with my
daughter
Gabby.



My son, Sam,
and I cheering
on health care
workers from
our window.

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Re-opening the State

Planning has begun for re-opening New York State. We must get this right. If we don't, we stand to further overwhelm our already strained hospital system and lose even more lives.

There is a glimmer of hope, as the rate of transmission, hospitalizations, and the number of deaths are falling, however, we are not out of the woods yet.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that reopening happens in phases, starting with low risk businesses and in coordination with neighboring states. Once a region experiences a 14-day decline in hospitalization, they may begin a phased reopening. The Governor has outlined a plan to slowly reset, starting with construction and manufacturing.

Phase 2 will see the opening of industries and businesses based on priority and risk level. Businesses that are considered more essential and carry a low risk of transmission will reopen, followed by businesses that are considered less essential or are high risk. Two weeks will be allowed in between each phase to monitor hospitalization and infection rates for spikes.

Unfortunately, the truth is, we are going to live with this virus for a long time. Though restrictions will be eased, this does not mean that life will go on as before. I'd like to be proven wrong but in all likelihood, attractions that bring in large groups of visitors or tourists, such as concerts, sporting events, and the State Fair – among other things – will likely be canceled.

For now, this is our new normal.

Absentee Voting

All eligible New York voters will be mailed an absentee ballot application for the June primary, giving voters who don't feel comfortable going to the polls and casting their ballot in person, the ability to vote by mail.

Further, all New York City voters can request an absentee ballot application online at <https://nycabsentee.com/>. This change will give all voters the ability to exercise their most important right without having to risk potential exposure to COVID-19 to vote.

Unemployment Insurance

The coronavirus outbreak has created an unemployment crisis unlike anything we've ever experienced before. Over the last several weeks, millions of Americans across the country have lost their livelihoods. According to recent reports, as many as 26.5 million people have filed for unemployment insurance nationwide.

The crisis unfolding in our state mirrors the one occurring at the national level. Since the beginning of the pandemic, New York alone has paid out approximately \$2.2 billion in unemployment insurance to 1.1 million people.

We respond to many inquiries everyday but no single issue has been as troublesome for constituents as filing for unemployment. While most of our constituents have successfully filed their applications, they've gone weeks without receiving a call to confirm their claim. Following our intervention, most of our constituents have received a call back. While we are happy to help, filing for unemployment shouldn't be so difficult.

It's true that the DOL has struggled to absorb the substantial increase in traffic. They have, however, hired additional staff and partnered with Google to revamp the website and expand server capacity.

Under the new system launched on April 20, if you complete your claim online, you're all set and should receive payment in 2 – 3 weeks. If there are any issues with your application, you'll receive a robocall informing you that a representative from the DOL will reach out within 72 hours to confirm your claim. If you filed under the old system and have yet to receive a call to confirm your claim, please reach out to my office.

Over the last several weeks, the DOL has successfully decreased its backlog but if you continue to experience any issues filing for unemployment insurance, know that we are here to help.

Face Masks

On April 17, the Governor ordered all New Yorkers to wear a mask or face covering in public when social distancing is not possible. While professionally made face masks may be difficult to come by or too expensive to consider, making a homemade mask is a relatively simple process.

Though not flawless, according to the Center for Disease Control, wearing even a simple cloth face covering can slow the transmission of the virus and prevent its spread from an unknowing person to the next.

You can read more about the CDC's guidance on face masks and learn how to make your own here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Food Banks

Across the country, the number of Americans relying on food banks for their next meal has skyrocketed. Sadly, New York is no different. In New York City alone, demand has gone up by 100%. This is devastating. With an increased number of New Yorkers facing food insecurity, local food banks are relying on volunteers to meet increasing demands.

To learn more about current volunteer opportunities, please visit: <https://www.foodbanknyc.org/volunteer/>

The Met opera

Although the Met Opera had to shutter its doors due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, they are providing a myriad of online cultural resources and outlets for the community. Since it went live on March 16th, The Met Opera has streamed a free opera from its vast digital library via its website.

Over 3 million people have already taken advantage of this great opportunity. Visit here to tune in: <https://www.metopera.org/user-information/nightly-met-opera-streams/>