



RICHARD N. GOTTFRIED
75TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

822 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ALBANY, NY 12248
TEL: 518-455-4941 FAX: 518-455-5939

214 WEST 29TH STREET, #1002, NEW YORK, NY 10001
TEL: 212-807-7900; FAX: 212-243-2035

E-MAIL: GottfriedR@nyassembly.gov

COMMITTEES:
RULES
HEALTH
HIGHER EDUCATION
MAJORITY STEERING

CHAIR
MANHATTAN DELEGATION

Community Update

Help for Haiti

The death toll is over 2000 people in Haiti, with almost 10,000 people injured. The country is in dire need.

All NYPD precincts are collecting medical supplies, personal hygiene products (toiletries like toothpaste and toothbrushes, diapers), bottled water, clothing and non-perishable food, baby food and flashlights (and extra batteries) to help in relief efforts. Find the nearest precinct [here](#).

If you want to donate money, see this [article](#) which lists many places you can donate.

Resignation of Andrew Cuomo

I applaud the women who bravely told their difficult stories and thank Attorney General Letitia James for her comprehensive and impartial report. Andrew Cuomo has done the right thing for the people of New York by resigning. I have confidence in Kathy Hochul's ability as Governor to confront the challenges and opportunities that face our state and look forward to working with her.

I believed the many women, whose complaints described a clear, consistent pattern of abhorrent, illegal and likely criminal conduct. Coupled with the Cuomo administration's shocking attempts to mislead and stonewall the public and the Legislature on the true toll of COVID deaths among nursing home patients, I had lost confidence in Governor Cuomo, and in March I called for him to resign or be impeached.

After State Attorney General James conducted the investigation that produced a very detailed and devastating [report](#) and the State Assembly Judiciary Committee launched an impeachment investigation, Governor Cuomo did the right thing for the people of New York by announcing his resignation on August 10, effective August 24.

Under the state constitution, impeachment only applies to someone who is in office, so the Governor's resignation takes that specific action off the table. That doesn't mean the Governor won't be held accountable. He faces criminal investigations by the U.S. Attorney, the State Attorney General, and five county district attorneys, plus civil lawsuits by some of his victims. The Assembly Judiciary Committee will release a report on its investigation of

the sexual harassment, nursing home issues, and whether the Governor used state employees to work on his book.

Community Engages on "Empire Station" Proposal

In January, Governor Cuomo proposed a \$51 billion redevelopment plan for Manhattan's West Side around Penn Station, labeled the "Empire Station Complex." Many elements in the plan have aroused opposition from New Yorkers living in the affected neighborhoods, Community Boards 4 and 5, and elected officials representing the area, including me. I and others have concerns about the plan, including the excessive height and density of some of the proposed buildings.

Much of the funding would be provided by making eight building sites available for 20 million square feet of retail, commercial and residential development, including "supertall" buildings up to 1,300 feet in height that would overshadow much of the area and "up to 1,400 units" of affordable housing. The proposal would authorize Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC, formerly called the Urban Development Corporation) to use its power to grant additional development rights to building owners to replace buildings around Penn Station with much higher buildings, in exchange for the owners making payments to help fund the Penn Station changes. The block immediately south of Penn Station (31st St.) would be torn down to enable construction of another train terminal and eight additional underground tracks as part of the Gateway project. New towers would then be built above ground. I am advocating that these new buildings include the small businesses and residential space for people displaced from 31st St.

In March, elected officials representing the area, including U.S. Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Jerry Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, State Senators Brad Hoylman and Robert Jackson, and I sent a joint letter to the State criticizing the proposal as more of a real estate development plan than a transportation project.

Following that, we successfully expanded the Empire Station Community Advisory Committee Working Group (CAC WG) to include residents, transportation and planning experts and other important stakeholders. We met over the course of 14 weeks, to go deeply into the project with ten issue-focused meetings including transportation, financing, and public space, with significant engagement and support from ESDC, the MTA, and Amtrak on technical details of the proposal.

The CAC WG will be releasing its [initial response](#) to ESDC's proposal. Key highlights include:

- The need to create a governance structure to oversee the creation and implementation of the overlapping major projects, including the General Project Plan, the Pennsylvania Station Reconstruction, and Pennsylvania Station Expansion to accommodate the Gateway rail expansion.
- The inclusion of an above-grade, highly visible train hall, assurance that the future ability of through-running (<http://www.rethinknyc.org/through-running/>) trains will not be impeded, and a call for an exhaustive study of non-demolition alternatives.

- Significant increase in transit connections, including improved subway access and expansion of space for other mobility modes including walking, bus, bike, and bike parking.
- The importance of a cohesive and unified public space - including above and below grade, inside and outside.
- Enhanced building controls to ensure a lively, livable, and inviting district.
- Financial structure changes to ensure that we are not granting developers more development rights than we have to in order to get enough revenue to support the project, as well as requiring early payments from developers to improve the public space.



BETH ISRAEL STAYS PUT: *In June I joined a press conference outside Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital to celebrate the news that it will be staying in its current location on E. 16th Street, where it will get an update to improve its facilities and boost its surge capacity.*

Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital Staying Put

It's great news that Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital has said it will be staying in its current location at East 16th Street and First Avenue. It had planned to move to a much smaller new building. Instead, it will update its facilities, and increase its 'surge' capacity for any future crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. There will also be a new Comprehensive Behavioral Health Clinic at 45 Rivington Street on the Lower East Side.

I introduced a bill ([A191/S1451](#)) that passed both the Assembly and Senate this year that will require a hospital to assess the impact of any major project, like the now-cancelled move of MSBI, on medically underserved New Yorkers in that hospital's service area. This would be considered by the Health Dept. before approving the plan. The bill is strongly supported by the NAACP, the Community Service Society, the Commission on the Public's Health System, Community Catalyst, and Planned Parenthood.

Include ABC Studios Site in Lincoln Square Special District

The Lincoln Square Special District (LSSD) was established in 1969 to protect and enhance the Lincoln Center area's "preeminent status as a center for the performing arts... an office headquarters, and a cosmopolitan residential community" (to quote its Zoning Text Amendment). The LSSD regulates the types of street level uses, and places certain limits on development.

When the LSSD was designated, however, the 2.6-acre site of the ABC television studios – which includes most of the block between Columbus Ave., Central Park West, and West 66th and 67th Sts. – was excluded to give ABC flexibility to continue operating TV filming and production, as they had since 1948. In 2018, ABC sold the site to a developer and will be vacating it in the next few years.

After ABC leaves, the developer would be free to build out-of-context, supertall skyscrapers on the site that would violate the spirit and intent of the LSSD, and block afternoon sunlight in Central Park. If the ABC site were to be included in the LSSD, contextual and height limitations would apply, making any new buildings more contextual with the area, while not diminishing the total square footage (volume) or "floor area ratio."

Upper West Siders and concerned New Yorkers, including Community Board 7 and Landmark West!, have joined to submit a Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) application to the Dept. of City Planning to include the ABC site in the LSSD. I advocated for the creation of the LSSD years ago and am now strongly supporting the effort to include this important site in the LSSD to help preserve Lincoln Square's character and quality of life.

The Fight for Drinking Water Quality

For the first time in five years, protecting Americans' access to clean drinking water is at the top of the presidential agenda. When President Biden promoted a bipartisan infrastructure agreement, he said that "every single American deserves clean drinking water, but that's not the reality for millions of people around the country."

We've long known about the danger of kids getting exposed to lead, which New York government public health agencies first began monitoring in the 1950's whether through dust and old paint in housing, or in drinking water.

More recently, we were shocked by what happened in upstate Hoosick Falls, where corporate giants like Saint-Gobain, Honeywell, 3M, and DuPont were found to have been contaminating the local water supply for years with the harmful chemical PFOA. Just last month, a \$65 million settlement agreement was struck between the polluters and the people of Hoosick Falls. It includes cash payments and long-term medical monitoring for thousands of residents.

We need to work to protect our water resources. Soon-to-be Gov. Kathy Hochul should sign into law two bills of mine passed by both houses of the Legislature this year.

The first bill, the Emerging Contaminant bill, which Senator James Skoufis carried in the Senate, will expand testing for dangerous chemicals in New Yorkers' drinking water ([A.126/S.1759](#)). It establishes a list of three dozen dangerous contaminants for which

testing should occur in NY's drinking water systems, to be followed up with public notification, and remediation when necessary. This legislation shouldn't be necessary: in 2017, following legislative hearings on water quality (including Hoosick Falls), the Emerging Contaminant Monitoring Act made historic investments in water infrastructure and directed the NYS Health Dept. (DOH) to establish a list of dangerous chemicals for which New Yorkers' drinking water should be tested. But four years later, we still don't have one. This critical legislation will enact an initial list and force DOH to act.

Another important clean water bill of mine awaiting the Governor's signature will toughen school drinking water standards against lead contamination. Sponsored in the Senate by Senator Gustavo Rivera ([A.160/S.2122](#)), it would set tighter standards for school districts to remove lead from drinking water, lowering the trigger from 15 parts per billion to 5 ppb and require testing every three years. The NY American Academy of Pediatrics supports the bill as a major step towards the 1 ppb level it recommends.

Another important issue for New York's clean water supply will be decided by voters in November, when a \$3 billion 'Restore Mother Nature' bond issue will be on the statewide ballot. It would raise funding for a variety of environmental projects, including a clean, renewable energy grid; preserving more open space; restoration of critical habitats for fish and wildlife and reduction of flood risk.

Pandemic Recovery Aid

Speed Up Emergency Rental Assistance Program Funds

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) was created by the Legislature to get desperately needed relief to New Yorkers and avert an eviction crisis.

Households earning at or below 80% of area median income can receive up to 12 months of past due rent accrued on or after March 13, 2020; up to 3 months of additional rental assistance for households spending more than 30% of their income on rent; and up to 12 months of electric or gas utility payments for arrears accrued on or after March 13, 2020. Payments are made directly to the landlord or utility. The problem is that months after the NYS budget was passed, very little of the ERAP funds have been distributed yet.

On July 25, I joined US Senator Chuck Schumer, NYS Senator Brian Kavanagh, and other New Yorkers to urge NY State to speed up the rollout of these critical funds. The next day, Gov. Cuomo announced that ERAP funds would be disbursed by August 31. On August 10, the Assembly held a hearing chaired by Social Services Committee Chair Linda Rosenthal about getting ERAP funds out to New Yorkers who need it.

For help, or more information, go to Emergency Rental Assistance Program <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/Emergency-Rental-Assistance/> or call my office at 212-807-7900.



SPEEDING UP PANDEMIC RENTAL ASSISTANCE: Tenant advocates, U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer, NYS Sen. Brian Kavanagh, and I spoke out in Hell's Kitchen about the State's inexcusable delay in rolling out ERAP funds. The next day, Governor Cuomo announced that they would be disbursed by Aug. 31.

Relief for Small Businesses, Restaurants, Arts & Cultural Organizations

The 2021 state budget provides millions of dollars in new funding for non-profit arts institutions, new capital grants to help arts/cultural organizations comply with COVID-19 health regulations, and the NYS Council on the Arts; provides a 4-year extension of the New York City Musical & Theatrical Production Tax Credit; and \$2 million in COBRA health insurance subsidies, a measure sought by workers on Broadway, Actors' Equity, and the Coalition of Broadway Unions and Guilds.

Small Business Recovery Grant Program grants can be used by small businesses and for-profit independent arts and cultural organizations to cover various business costs incurred between March 1, 2020 and April 1, 2021, including payroll, rent, mortgage, property and school taxes, insurance, utilities and pandemic-related expenditures needed to protect the health and safety of workers and consumers.

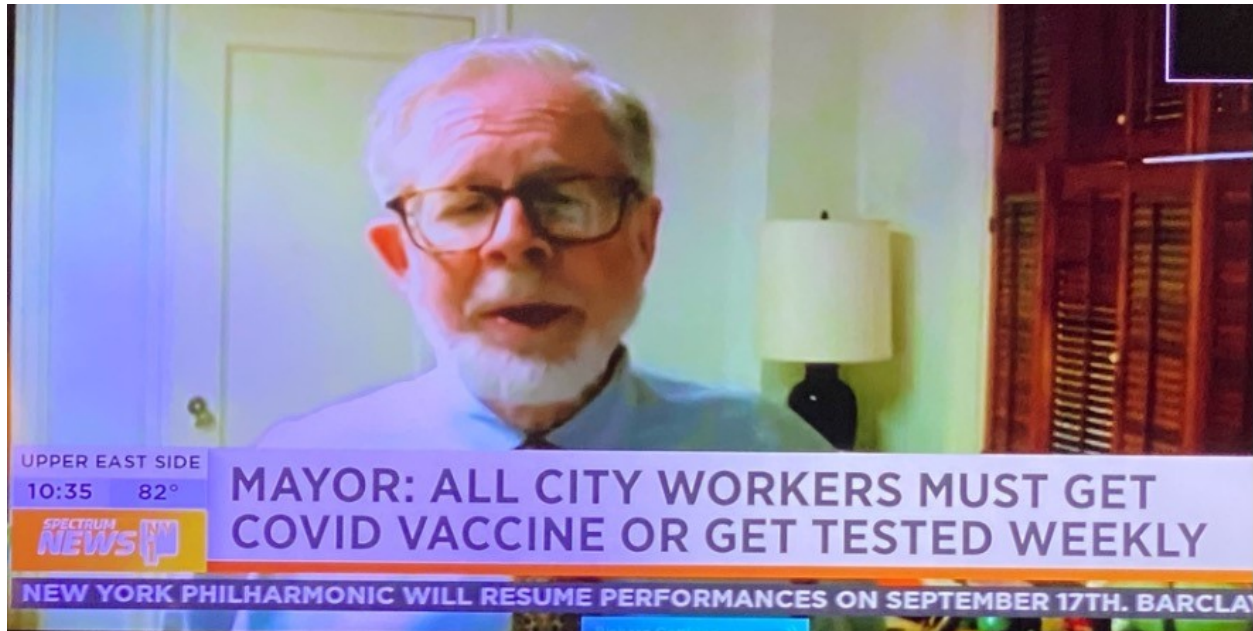
To learn more about the Small Business Recovery Grant Program and how to apply, see <https://nysmallbusinessrecovery.com>.

Restaurant Resiliency Program & Return-to-Work Tax Credit

The budget created a Restaurant Resiliency Program to provide \$25 million in grants to restaurants that provide meals and food to people in distressed or under-represented communities and a Restaurant Return-to-Work Tax Credit to give qualifying businesses affected by COVID with a tax credit of \$5,000 per new worker hired, up to \$50,000 per

business. Program details are being finalized for both initiatives, which will start accepting applications soon. To learn more about the Restaurant Resiliency Program, see <https://esd.ny.gov/restaurant-resiliency-program>.

To learn more about the Restaurant Return-to-Work Tax Credit, see <https://esd.ny.gov/restaurant-return-work-tax-credit>.



VACCINES PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH: *Speaking out for requiring public employees to get COVID-19 vaccines or be tested at least weekly.*

Requiring City Workers to Get COVID Vaccinations or Weekly Tests

Last month, I joined Mayor Bill de Blasio on New York 1 for his announcement that all City government employees would be required to get COVID-19 vaccinations or be tested weekly. Two days later, Governor Cuomo announced similar mandates for State government employees.

The City mandate, which is already being applied to NYC Health + Hospitals workers, will take effect for most City employees by September 13. (About 45,000 City workers in congregate and residential settings had to be vaccinated or begin weekly testing by August 16.) Unvaccinated City government employees were required to wear masks beginning August 2.

I said, "Public employees should not be coming to work if there's a danger that they will spread a deadly disease to the worker at the next desk or the public." As Chair of the Assembly Health Committee, I believe strongly that it's an important move to protect public health!

Gottfried Bill to Enhance End-of-Life Care for Hospice Patients Signed into Law

In On July 1, the Governor signed into law the [bill](#) I introduced with Senator Michelle Hinchey to allow hospice beds to also be used as in-patient beds so that a person in hospice can be treated there, instead of having to be transferred to a hospital.

While hospice care is often provided in the patient's home, it may also be provided in a hospice residence. When hospice residence patients need a higher level of clinical service, they are then referred to as an 'inpatient' in the residence. Before this bill became law, there was a limit on how many hospice residence patients could be inpatients at one time. But transfers from hospice residences to hospitals are disruptive for patients and their families. Removing the legal limit on hospice residences' ability to treat more patients on-site, as has been allowed during the COVID-19 pandemic, is a humane and medically appropriate solution.

Free Summer Meals

Free "grab & go" meals are available in NYC, Monday through Friday, 9 am - 1 pm. No registration, documentation or ID is needed to get a free breakfast or lunch.

Sites providing meals through Sept. 3 in or near the 75th Assembly District include the NYC Lab Middle School (333 W. 17th St.), and Beacon H.S. (521 W. 43rd St.).

To learn more, including to find a site near you, see <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food/summer-meals>.