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FROM COUNCIL MEMBER

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JULY COMMUNITY BULLETIN

City Council Passes Fair, Balanced, and On-Time Budget

I'm proud to share that the City Council has once again passed a balanced and on-time budget that acknowledges our city's fiscal challenges while also recognizing our obligations to fund core services.

The \$66 billion plan does not layoff any teachers, keeps our fire companies open, and restores critical funds to senior centers, child care, cultural institutions and libraries. We managed to do that without raising taxes or dipping any further into the rainy day funds that we'll need to close the deficits that are projected in the coming years.

As a member of the Council's Budget Negotiating Committee, I am acutely aware that these are difficult times. While we did avoid the Mayor's proposal to lay off 4,100 teachers, the budget does include layoffs for approximately 1,000 other city workers and the reduction or elimination of a variety of programs. That is painful.

But, as Chair of the Aging Committee, I am particularly proud that we were able to restore funds for senior centers, Meals on Wheels, and Elder Abuse. And, in a huge victory for older New Yorkers, we got the Administration to agree to "baseline" \$14 million for senior centers moving forward. That simply means that senior services should fare better in future budget years.

If you're interested in learning more about where you tax dollars are going next year, you can view the Adopted Expense Budget, which includes Council Members' discretionary allocations, online at: <http://council.nyc.gov/html/budget/PDFs/2012/FY2012ScheduleC.pdf>. You can also call my office if you have questions about specific line items.

Important News for Renters

The last few weeks have held some very important developments for New York City renters, some good and some bad.

First, the state legislature passed a bill to extend and strengthen rent regulations for New York City tenants. This is a huge win for the millions of New Yorkers living in rent stabilized and rent controlled apartments. Here are some of the highlights of the new legislation:

- **Vacancy decontrol limit raised from \$2,000 to \$2,500.** Under the previous law, landlords could remove an apartment from regulation if it was unoccupied and the rent reached \$2,000. That threshold has been raised by \$500, keeping many apartments under rent protections for longer.
- **High income decontrol limited raised from \$175,000 to \$200,000.** Previously, landlords could destabilize apartments if a household's combined income reached \$175,000 for two consecutive years and the apartment had reached \$2,000. Now, apartments are protected up to an income of \$200,000 for two consecutive years and the rent is at \$2,500.
- **New York State Homes and Community Renewal (NYSHCR) is empowered to enforce rent regulations.** For years, NYSHCR has overseen rent regulations without any real authority to enforce the law and ensure that landlords are meeting their obligations. With this new law, NYSHCR will have the ability to enforce the law and take action to ensure that tenants' rights are protected.
- **Reducing the burden of Major Capital Improvements (MCIs).** A tenant's responsibility for an individual apartment's MCI has been reduced from 1/40th of the cost of the improvement to 1/60th of the cost for larger buildings.

These increased protections will aid middle class New Yorkers who rely on rent stabilization and controls to stay in their homes.

However, the news for renters is not all positive. On June 27, the Rent Guidelines Board voted to allow landlords to increase the rents in stabilized apartments by 3.75% for one-year leases and 7.25% for two-year leases. These increases mark the sharpest hikes since 2008 when our current fiscal slowdown began. I testified against these increases. It's outrageous that the Board did not acknowledge the fiscal realities that city tenants face.

Marriage Equality Comes to New York

By now, you've undoubtedly heard the very exciting news that the New York State Legislature passed the marriage equality law, allowing same sex couples to marry in New York. I happened to be standing next to Christine Quinn – the openly gay Speaker of the New York City Council – when the marriage equality bill passed in the State Senate. Speaking with passion and emotion, the Speaker said she couldn't describe how it felt to finally have her family recognized by this state as equal to everyone else's. She said it was one of the happiest moments of her life.

It was incredibly moving. I am proud of New York for being on the right side of history and for my colleagues in the state government for all of their hard work to turn this bill into law. This law moves us one step closer to equal rights for all New Yorkers.

MTS: The Fight Continues

Thanks to everyone in the community for coming out and attending the recent rallies against the 91st Street garbage dump and for continuing to sign petitions and make phone calls to press our case. We've had some good press and more people than ever are engaged and actively involved in our campaign.

If you are new to this issue and would like to learn more, or if you would like to join our MTS email list, please contact us at: lappin@council.nyc.gov.

Great Ways to Get Involved

Every year, thousands of children living in New York City's homeless shelters enter school without the supplies they need to succeed in class. But you can help them. Operation Backpack is hosting a drive to collect backpacks filled with age-appropriate school supplies to be donated to the children in New York's homeless shelters. Backpacks are being collected at Duane Reade locations and other drop locations around the city from now until July 24. To learn more, please visit OperationBackpackNYC.org.

Another great way to get involved and make a difference in the life of a child is to participate in the Everybody Wins Power Lunch program at the Ella Baker School on the Upper East Side or at one of Everybody Wins' 24 other sites. Everybody Wins is a literacy and mentoring program dedicated to increasing children's prospects for success by sharing one-on-one read aloud experiences. Volunteers visit the school to spend lunch sharing a sandwich and a good book with one of the students there. To learn more about how you can get involved, please contact Program Director Terri Canady at tcanady@everybodywinsny.org or visit www.EverybodyWinsNY.org.