

Summer 2016 Newsletter Introduction



Senator Perkins proudly hosts Senator Bernie Sanders during a Town Hall meeting in Harlem.

Over 239 years ago the New York State Legislature met for the very first time during the midst of the Revolutionary War. From the first session's maiden voyage into the realm of creating legislation that governs our State—to our recently concluded 2016 Regular Legislative Session—we now have to ask ourselves how far we have come and if, in fact, we are still in revolutionary times.

The beginning of the 2016 Session was overshadowed by two dark clouds represented in the criminal convictions of the two most recent leaders of the Senate and Assembly, respectively. You may have seen these narratives on the front pages of your daily newspapers and read of the exploits of U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara who has worked tirelessly to clean up Albany. I believe that we are finally on the right path and I ask you to keep the faith and know that I am fighting on a daily basis for your interests and the collective good of those in Senate District 30.

We passed a budget that will spend an amazing \$154.6 billion dollars, with the bulk of that expenditure going towards education and healthcare. In the context of the budget we passed two critical pieces of legislation for working families: A \$15 dollar an hour Minimum Wage and Paid Family Leave. These two important programs will ensure that every hardworking person will have a path to progress and prosperity as well as the means to spend time with their loved ones in the moments that matter most. I urge you to read the section of this newsletter entitled, "End Of Session Report" for more details.

We continue to work with a great deal of effort on numerous pieces of legislation such as New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Reform, which passed the Senate for the third year in a row, as well as numerous Criminal Justice Reform initiatives, such as HALT-ing Solitary Confinement and our essential bill to revolutionize our healthcare system: New York Health. I was particularly proud of the amount of organizing undertaken and numerous events we held in Albany this year which continue to build momentum to establish health care as a fundamental human right and forever put "patients before profits." The work, the struggle and the movement continues!

As always, it continues to be my honor to represent you in the State Senate and to listen, advocate and make the stands necessary to bring about justice, fairness and humanity in this world.

End Of Session Report

The recently concluded 2016 Legislative Session saw progress on a number of important items that will positively affect the lives of all those in the 30th Senatorial District. Highlights include:

The Fight For \$15: We are finally going to provide a Living Wage for all New Yorkers, including residents of New York City, who will see the minimum wage rise over the next three years until it reaches \$15 at the end of 2018.

Paid Family Leave: New York State will now have the strongest Paid Family Leave program in the nation: with 12 weeks of paid leave at 2/3 of an individual's regular pay.

Housing | Homelessness Prevention: We reached a consensus on a \$20 billion Housing and Homelessness plan that will commence right away and have the following timelines: Initial funding will ensure timely completion of the first 1,200 units of the state plan to create 6,000 units of supportive housing over the next five years; 20,000 units of supportive housing over the next fifteen years; and the creation or preservation of 100,000 units of affordable housing over the next twenty years.

Expanded Coverage For Breast Cancer Screenings: We passed forward-thinking legislation to extend the screening hours at 210 hospital-based mammography facilities statewide and to remove financial barriers, such as deductibles, co-pays and other needless hurdles that can compromise access to screening and care.

Eradicating Lead From Our Schools: New York is now the first state in the nation to mandate regular testing of drinking water in schools for the presence of lead. This legislation further requires reporting to parents and local and state entities, and provides guidance for remediation to ensure availability of clean and safe drinking water in every school.

Support For The MTA And Public Transportation: We provided for a nearly \$28 billion Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Capital Program. This exceptionally important funding will ensure that New York's transit projects are moving forward in New York City, including \$1.5 billion for Phase II of the Second Avenue Subway—upwards to 125th Street.

Join Senator Perkins At The Annual Veterans Resource Fair In Harlem On August 10th



Congressman Charles B. Rangel will be honored during the 3rd Annual Veterans Resource Fair in Harlem for his lifetime of incredible, heroic and tireless public service.

Event: 3rd Annual Veterans Resource Fair in Harlem
Date: August 10th, 2016
Time: 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM
Where: Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building; 163 West 125th Street | Public Plaza

This August—in collaboration with Harlem Vet Center, Samaritan Village, Manhattan Legal Services and NY Metro Vets—our office is proudly hosting the 3rd Annual Veterans Resource Fair in Harlem, which is structured to provide the opportunity for veterans to connect with a large number of service provider organizations and governmental agencies in one place. In addition to this year's theme being "Homelessness Prevention in the Veteran Population," the event will also serve to pay tribute to Congressman Charles B. Rangel for his heroic actions as a member of the U.S. Army during the Korean War as well as his distinguished service as a member of the U.S. Congress since 1971.

Healthcare As A Human Right



Senator Perkins is joined by Assembly Member Dick Gottfried and doctors, nurses and other medical professionals at Harlem Hospital who steadfastly support health care as a human right.

We held two very important events in the first half of this year to build momentum around New York Health (Senate Bill 3525-A)—which would enact a Universal Single Payer Healthcare System for New York State. This proposal will ensure that patients are always placed before profits and each person can live by the maxim, “your health is your wealth.” It will enact universal health coverage for all, universal benefits for all, and move away from fees and private greed towards a non-profit public model of care.

In February, we had our annual Caucus Weekend Workshop where we focused on the issue of healthcare disparities, specifically in Black and Latino communities. The design of our overall healthcare system is a chief contributor to health disparities among Blacks and Latinos who suffer higher rates of negative health outcomes, such as: infant mortality, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, cancer and sickle cell anemia. Inconceivably, our system is profit-based and, as such, works hard to deny people care. Insurance companies work hard to sell people plans that offer minimal coverage—**minimal coverage equals maximum profit**. As a capstone to our event, Senator Bernie Sanders gave taped remarks that underscored the need for a revolution in the way we approach healthcare, ensuring that it is a fundamental human right.

We held a Harlem Town Hall Meeting on April 14th where we were able to hear from a number of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals who have spent their lives **putting patients before profits**. During this community meeting, these experts further explained how passing the New York Health Act would help each and every family in Harlem and all across our State save money, open the door of access and improve outcomes.

In June, New York Health passed the Assembly for the second year in a row. Senator Perkins said the following on this momentous occasion: “I commend our exceptional legislative marathoner Dick Gottfried for once again leading the Assembly in fundamentally addressing one of the great human rights issues of our time: health care. The New York Health Act is a universal preventative solution for all New Yorkers. It will finally recognize the fundamental human rights principle that our collective health is our greatest source of collective wealth. Moreover, by putting patients before profits, New York Health will revolutionize our healthcare system, address persistent disparities and ensure that care is truly patient-centered, once and for all. On to the Senate!”

To learn how New York Health can benefit you, your family, and your neighbors, please visit: <http://www.nyhcampaign.org/>

Veterans’ Hall Of Fame Honoree | Walter E. Bridgers



This year, Walter E. Bridgers of Harlem was proudly named to the New York State Veterans’ Hall of Fame by Senator Bill Perkins. Walter E. Bridgers had a truly heroic and distinguished record of service on behalf of our Country including a decade long stint in the United States Army as a Combat Medic and a Logistic NCOIC. He received a

legion of awards, medals and commendations for his excellence, proficiency and devotion to his fellow soldiers.

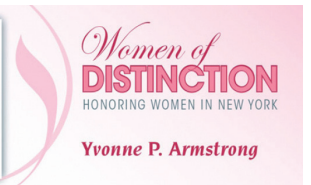
After a life-altering physical injury, in the form of a broken back—Sgt. Bridgers was medically retired and honorably discharged from the Army. Shortly thereafter, he applied to college under the Veterans Administration GI Bill. He decided to pursue a career in psychology so that he could better understand his physical trauma and transition to civilian life; now he shares his deep insights and mindfulness with others.

Today, Sgt. Bridgers is a dynamic professional with a Baccalaureate in Psychology and a Masters in Social Work Administration from Hunter College School of Social Work with in-depth clinical and administrative social work experience in overseeing a government facility for Veterans and their families. He is particularly adept in empowering interventions for post-traumatic stress disorder, war trauma, male involvement in family planning, youth development and in a spectrum of executive-level responsibilities.

Senator Perkins was honored to host him in Albany and herald his impressive accomplishments for all to appreciate.

Woman Of Distinction Honoree | Yvonne P. Armstrong

Senator Perkins had the great privilege of honoring Yvonne P. Armstrong—lifelong community activist, dedicated professional and longtime leader of the New York Branch of the NAACP—as his 2016 Woman Of Distinction.



Yvonne P. Armstrong is presently the Secretary for the New York Branch of the NAACP, where she has served on the Executive Committee since 1987. For nearly thirty years, she has been indispensable to the organization, constantly giving of her time and talents. Additionally, she has worked at Consolidated Edison Company Inc. of New York for over forty years and during this purposeful tenure, she was elected as the first black woman to hold a full time Officers Position within the Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA) as a Business Agent representing over 2,500 members. Yvonne also served with great purpose in the National UWUA Union for 4 years as their EEOC Officer and Women’s Committee Chair.

Her service and love for the community are legendary—from mentoring and literacy initiatives, to leadership positions in her Church—consequently, she has revived numerous community and civic awards. Senator Perkins was proud to express the collective thanks and gratefulness of the whole State for her lifetime of service.

Senator Perkins Proudly Welcomes Constituents To Albany



Senator Perkins welcomes advocates from the William F. Ryan Community Health Network to Albany.



Harlem United brings the best of Harlem to Albany on their lobby day.

Solitary Confinement Reform



Senator Perkins stirs up support for our HALT Solitary Confinement Bill at a rally in Albany.

We continue to make steady and encouraging progress in the fight to end state-sanctioned torture, in the form of solitary confinement. The purpose of our correctional facilities are to aid individuals in the rehabilitation process; however, these facilities are steering away from their initial purpose towards a control and punish model and instead are leading individuals to recidivate. The state's prison system puts roughly 4,500 inmates into solitary confinement each year, around 2,000 of which are released directly back into society every year without receiving meaningful educational, vocational, rehabilitative or transitional programming. Incarcerated individuals are entitled to human rights and their incarceration status in no way makes them less human or less deserving.

Although some correctional facilities believe that solitary confinement is the best way to rehabilitate inmates, evidence to the contrary has quickly become apparent to those familiar with the practice. There is a generalized misperception that a person's rights while imprisoned are fewer than those of free citizens. Therefore, many people do not consider solitary confinement as a form of torture but rather as a form of punishment for incarcerated individuals. Evidence of the harmful effects from solitary confinement have been well documented over the years and it has long been identified as cruel and inhumane treatment, including by the United Nations. Specifically, because the deprivation of human contact and outside stimulation is commonly used as a torture tactic throughout other parts of the world—and incredibly in our own backyard of New York State.

Solitary confinement has fostered the calamitous result of inmates going insane, committing suicide or not being able to effectively function in society at the time of their eventual release—leading to recidivism. Many individuals are released directly to the streets after spending years in isolation. Because of this, long-term solitary confinement goes



Senator Perkins and Assemblyman Jeff Aubry stand in front of a replica of a solitary confinement cell to underscore the grave inhumanity of isolating human beings for 23 hours a day.

beyond a problem of prison conditions, to pose an alarming public safety and community health problem. The time for change is now.

We held multiple events in Albany this Spring to harvest further support for the HALT Solitary Confinement Act (Senate Bill 2659 | Assembly Bill 4401) that I proudly carry with Assemblyman Jeff Aubry. HALT will substitute a rehabilitative and therapeutic model in place of isolation so that individuals can receive the programming, support and interventions needed to help them rehabilitate and grow.

In addition, on the 17th of May, I proudly supported a play that took place in Albany—Mariposa and the Saint—which is a dramatic production that was written through letters between Julia Steele Allen and Sara (Mariposa) Fonseca—who was placed in solitary confinement for fifteen months due to a minor infraction. This play shines a light on the human rights issue of solitary confinement and allows the viewer to have direct insight into the conditions individuals undergo through subjection to this torture. Mariposa's performance is a direct revelation of the issues that manifest inside prisons, including abuse, isolation and suicides that frequently occur and have now become the norm for prison officials. During the play, Mariposa takes a moment to ask the audience what they would miss if they were to be placed in solitary confinement, and then proceeds to state how much she missed her children when she was first placed in solitary confinement but after months of isolation she began to miss the little things such as the feeling of wet grass in between her toes. As months passed in solitary confinement, we began to witness Mariposa having hallucinations

as well as paranoia. Mariposa also mentioned how all of the women who are locked up with her are all her sisters, despite their different backgrounds, who are each trying to hang onto their sanity and humanity. Overall, solitary confinement is not a place for anyone. It leads to the violations of an individual's fundamental human rights and constitutes cruel and inhumane treatment, as well as torture. It is time to HALT the practice, forever!

For more information on these events visit our website or that of the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC)—<http://nycaic.org>.

Standing With Orlando | Ending Gun Violence

On June 12th, 2016, we collectively witnessed the deadliest mass shooting in our nation's history that took place in a nightclub in Orlando, Florida. This event was clearly an offensive act of unmitigated hatred towards the LGBTQ community. It throws into a stark light certain facts which we must confront head on: In our country, assault weapons that have been designed by and for military use have been repeatedly used by our fellow citizens to slaughter loved ones in our schools, houses of worship, movie theaters, malls, nightclubs and other public and private spaces.

At a vigil on 125th Street held by Integrity Harlem, I offered a statement that read: *"My doleful heart is squarely with the individuals, families, friends and loved ones whose lives have been inescapably impacted by the unconscionable act of hate and terror perpetrated in Orlando. The fact that the terrorist was able to obtain such offensive weapons of war legally in our Country is an affirmative indictment of the highest order. At this stage—in our collective lives together here on earth—we have to seriously ask ourselves what useful role, if any, is there for guns in any society of human beings."*

As a Senator, I have been a longstanding supporter of legislation related to Gun Safety in New York including:

Child Access Prevention—Legislation that would require the safe storage of guns in order to prevent improper access and unintentional incidents, particularly by children.

Micro-Stamping—Legislation that would mandate that all semiautomatic handguns sold or delivered in New York be equipped with a feature that imprints a unique code onto the shell casing every time a gun is fired, to deter criminal use and assist in solving crimes that do occur.

Gun Purchase Limits And Waiting Periods—This legislative proposal would limit buyers to the acquisition of one handgun a month coupled with a 10-day waiting period before a buyer takes possession of a firearm in order to give law enforcement adequate time to perform a background check and deter acts of violence.

Protection For Domestic Violence Victims—This legislation will empower law enforcement officers to remove firearms from the scene of a domestic violence incident, to decrease the likelihood of violence.

Ban 50-Caliber Military-Style Sniper Rifles—This legislation will ban the sale of certain .50 caliber rifles with very high power and long range, in the same manner the SAFE Act banned sales of assault weapons with similar features.

Improved Background Checks—This legislative initiative will require dealers to report to law enforcement when failed background checks reveal that people have attempted to buy guns they are otherwise prohibited from owning.

Close The "Terror Gap"—This legislation will prohibit the issuance or renewal of New York State firearm licenses to individuals who appear on the FBI's No Fly List due to their status as suspected or known terrorists.

Giving Back To Our Beloved Seniors

Each year, my office endeavors to find new ways to show our appreciation for our beloved senior citizens who are the heart and soul of our community. This year, on May 27th, we proudly presented our 4th Annual Aging Healthy In Harlem Day. The purposeful festivities included helpful workshops by the NYC District Attorney's Office and the NYS National Guard. Over 130 persons attended the two workshops in the conference rooms of the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building. Afterward, everyone ventured outdoors to the State Office Building Plaza where 18 community and governmental groups provided important information to the workshop attendees. Health screenings, massages and other wellness activities were offered. Over 200 lunches were provided by the Whalburg Center/Meals On Wheels program and served with enthusiasm by members of AARP and student volunteers.

Senator Perkins Summer Internship 2016 Report

Senator Perkins was honored to recently host a dynamic group of young High School Interns from across the World—Jaime Harn (Florida); Joshua Gourgue (New York); Anna Holemans (New Jersey); Tatiana Curiati (Brazil); Darnell Ward (New York); Tania Dixon (Virginia); Jamieer Vaughn (New York); Anna McLeod (United Kingdom); La-Quan Keitt (New York); and Yelim Lee (Hong Kong).

On week one, the Summer Interns were immersed into the public service world of Senator Perkins. They quickly became active in the community, canvassing the neighborhood asking people to complete a short survey concerning rats in the transit system. The data collected was turned into a report, which followed-up on the original Rat Attack publication from 2010. Additionally, they attended a City Hall briefing by Mayor Bill de Blasio on the City's preparedness with respect to the Zika Virus; this was an exceptional learning experience for all.

Highlights of week two included a visit from Corey Wise—one of the Central Park Five—who spoke to the interns about his tireless quest to clear his name and prove the innocence of himself and his fellow brothers. A forum was held on the issue of solitary confinement, complete with the creation of a mock cell; the conclusion reached was that as currently practiced, solitary confinement equates to torture and must be stopped. The capstone of the week was the 9th Annual Eid Celebration commemorating the climax of Ramadan.



The Summer Interns learned about human rights and social justice from Victor Pate, a solitary confinement survivor.



The Summer Interns learned the tragic and redemptive story of the Central Park Five from Corey Wise.

Week three included a field trip to El Museo del Barrio to witness the “Future Funk Fashion” exhibit of the legendary artist Antonio Lopez and his collaborator Juan Eugene Ramos. The bulk of the week was concentrated upon preparing and executing a television show on Manhattan News Network (MNN) where all of the interns participated in a wide-ranging debate and discussion concerning the HALT Solitary Confinement Bill and the role of Charter Schools in New York City.

Conclusively, all of the interns thoroughly enjoyed their experience, and the knowledge and perspective gained on public policy and what it means to serve the people.

For a full copy of the 2016 Summer Intern Newsletter, please visit our website at: perkins.nysenate.gov.



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Senator Perkins speaks at a climate change rally, imploring all of our friends and neighbors to advocate for sound, sustainable and progressive environmental policies.