New Anti-Tobacco Rules Taking Effect

U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-Manhattan, Queens) hailed strong new rules taking effect today that crack down on the marketing and sale of tobacco products. The new rules are the result of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which was passed by Congress and signed into law on June 22, 2009.

Among other provisions, the new rules require stores to place tobacco products behind the counter and out of the reach of children, prohibit tobacco companies from using deceptive terms like “light,” “mild,” and “low-tar” when advertising cigarettes, and require larger warning labels on smokeless tobacco products. More details on the new rules can be found below.

“The new rules make it clear that there are no ‘safe’ tobacco products, and make sure that stores keep tobacco out of kids’ reach,” said Rep. Maloney. “No longer will Big Tobacco be allowed to blow smoke at consumers by telling them that cigarettes are ‘light’ or ‘low-tar,’ when in fact they are as deadly as ever. These common-sense rules will save lives and are yet another example of this Congress’s dedication to public health.”

Facts on Use of the New Anti-tobacco Rules from Speaker Pelosi’s office:

- Tobacco is now responsible for about 1 in 5 deaths annually, or more than 400,000 deaths a year and tens of billions of dollars of extra health care costs.
- Tobacco companies continue to spend more than $12 billion a year to market their products, often in ways that are designed to appeal to children.
- Currently, every day, more than 3,500 young people try a cigarette for the first time, and another 1,000 will become new, regular smokers. One-third of these youth will eventually die prematurely as a result.
- Cracking Down on Tobacco Marketing and Sales to Kids
- The new rules on tobacco marketing and sales to kids will:
  - Ban all remaining tobacco-brand sponsorships of sports and entertainment events;
  - Ban virtually all free tobacco samples and giveaways of non-tobacco items, such as hats and t-shirts, with the purchase of tobacco;
  - Prohibit the sale of cigarettes in packs of less than 20 (eliminating so-called “kidde packs” that make cigarettes more affordable and appealing to kids);
  - Require stores to place cigarettes and other tobacco products behind the counter, out of the reach of children;
  - Restrict vending machines and self-service displays to adult-only facilities; and
  - Place a national ban on the sale of tobacco products to people under age 18 (rather than the current state-by-state bans).

Banning Use of Deceptive “Light,” “Mild,” and “Low-Tar” Labels

Another key provision that takes effect today is a ban on terms such as “light,” “mild,” or “low-tar,” when marketing and selling cigarettes. For decades, the tobacco industry has used these terms to deceive the public into believing that some brands of cigarettes are less harmful than others and to discourage smokers from quitting. Many smokers erroneously believe that using these products help reduce the risks from smoking. This is false, and the tobacco industry has long known it is false. The FDA should conduct a public education campaign to ensure that smokers understand that the only proven way to protect their health is to quit.

Requiring Larger Warning Labels for Smokeless Tobacco

Finally, another key provision that takes effect today is the requirement of larger, bolder health warnings on smokeless tobacco products and advertising. Specifically, these warnings must cover 30 percent of package display panels and 20 percent of advertising. (Large, graphic warnings on cigarette packs and advertising are being developed and will take effect by 2012 or sooner.) The new warnings on smokeless tobacco products are important because these products are very addictive and cause cancer and other serious diseases. As smoking rates have declined and restrictions are where you can smoke have multiplied, tobacco companies have introduced new smokeless tobacco products and significantly increased marketing for them. For the most recent government surveys have found that, while cigarette smoking has declined, smokeless tobacco has increased by more than 3 percent among 10th to 12th graders in recent years.

SENATE MAJORITY SECURES FUNDING FOR STUDENT METROCARDS

The Senate Democratic Majority has achieved a major victory for New York children and families by securing $25 million in state funding for a reduced fare student MetroCard program.

A budget agreement between the MTA, city and state will prevent cuts to the program and continue to provide students access to a reduced-fare MetroCards from the MTA.

A budget agreement between the MTA, city and state will prevent cuts to the program and continue to provide students access to a reduced-fare MetroCards from the MTA.

The $25 million in state funding will help ensure that, while cuts to the student MetroCard program have been proposed in the MTA’s budget bills, our message will have substantially reduced cost would be catastrophic for working families. With the passage of the upcoming budget bills, our message will have been heard loud and clear. It is expected that the legislation containing the agreement will be acted upon early next week.

“Smart Choices in Retirement”
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108 Pct Council Meeting
Tuesday, June 29th @ 7 pm
Sunnyside Community Center 43-31 39th Street
Please join us in saying good-bye to Deputy Inspector Thomas Kavanagh and wishing him much success in the future. Deputy Inspector Thomas Kavanagh has been with us for three and a half years. We will also be introducing and welcoming our new leader Captain Donald Powers to our community.

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The campaign to save the libraries is in full force and Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer has pledged his support and has continued to fight on their behalf in the City Council’s budget deliberations.

“Libraries are an essential part of our communities,” said Council Member Van Bramer, in addressing the crowd. “These educational havens provide vital resources during such pressing times—now more than ever New Yorkers need libraries.”

“Demand for library services here in Sunnyside and around the borough continues to grow and grow. Yesterday, we delivered over 100,000 signatures in support of keeping libraries open. I am pleased to stand here today with a real champion of our libraries every day,” said Queens Library CEO Thomas W. Galante.

For the past two years, the talented fifth-grade students at P.S. 152 in Woodside, Queens have participated in American Ballroom Theater’s Dancing Classrooms Program, learning and mastering the Merengue, Rumba, Fox Trot, Tango, and Swing. The Ballroom Dancers of P.S. 152 received a gold medal for their performances at the fall semester finals in Queens and on June 23rd, 2010, they will compete for the grand prize in the city-wide American Ballroom Theater Competition.

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NEWS FROM THE 7th DISTRICT

During these extremely tough economic times, we must keep our focus on putting people back to work and restoring the fiscal health of our country. We have brought the economy back from the brink, but too many Americans still feel the recession more than the recovery. No one can be satisfied when unemployment nationwide averages 10 percent.

That is why I was pleased that the U.S. House of Representatives passed two important bills to help put our small businesses back on their feet. Small businesses are the engine of our economy, creating two-thirds of the new jobs over the last 15 years. The best thing the federal government can do is lay a strong foundation that will allow entrepreneurs and small businesses to grow and expand. In doing so, we will help put our economy back on track. For this reason, I supported passage of:

1) The Small Business Jobs Tax Relief Act, which passed on June 15, 2010, will not add to the deficit and will:
   - Aid small business start-ups by creating a public/private partnership designed to channel investment capital to them.
   - Give $2 billion in funding for new or existing state lending programs, which already exist in thirty states, to use small amounts of public dollars to generate up to $30 billion in lending.
   - Increase to $20,000 – from $5,000 in current law – the deduction for start-up expenditures for investigating the creation of a business. This will allow entrepreneurs and small businesses to recover more start-up expenses, so small business owners can focus on hiring new workers and growing their businesses.
   - The Small Business Jobs and Credit Act, which will:
     - Provide loans to small businesses on Main Street to create jobs through a new $30 billion lending fund for small and medium sized community banks to leverage up to $300 billion in lending;
     - Give $2 billion in funding for new or existing state lending programs, which already exist in thirty states, to use small amounts of public dollars to generate substantial private bank financing; and
     - Aid small business start-ups by creating a public/private partnership designed to channel investment capital to them.

Rest assured, I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Congress to create American jobs by helping small businesses stay healthy and strong.

Sincerely,
Joe

DEBRA S. GUTHRIE
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“Celebrating 22 Years....”

JIMMY VAN BRAMER BRINGS
MOVEABLE MUSEUM TO
QUEENSBRIDGE FOR FAMILY DAY

On Saturday, June 19th Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer joined
Queensbridge Houses residents for their Annual Family Day. Friends and neigh-
bors gathered together in front of the Jacob Riis Settlement House to enjoy a fun filled
day of games and food.

The event which is hosted every year by the Queensbridge Tenant Association
was made even more meaningful by the presence of the Museum of Natural
History’s Moveable Museum. As a result of Council Member Van Bramer’s efforts
to bring the Museum to Queensbridge, children had the opportunity to enjoy the
museums mobile interactive exhibit focusing on dinosaurs at the Family Day Event.
The traveling museum travels to schools, libraries, and community organizations within New York City’s five boroughs.

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Kendra’s Law Passes Senate

Majority Extends Mental Health & Public Protection Program Through 2015

The Senate Democratic Majority announced the passage of legislation (S7254) to keep Kendra’s law, an important mental health and public protection program fully operational through 2015. The law had been set to expire at the end of this month.

Senator Majority Conference Leader John L. Sampson said, “Kendra’s Law honors the memory of a life lost too soon, as well as a mother who has fought tirelessly to ensure New Yorkers with mental illness have access to the treatment they need. This program is an effective, affordable, and humane form of treatment which keeps our communities safe.”

Kendra’s Law was named after Kendra Webdale, a young woman who was killed in January 1999 after being pushed in front of a New York City subway train by a person who was living in the city without being treated for his mental illness. That year, the Legislature enacted Kendra’s Law, which created a statutory framework for court-ordered Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), to ensure that individuals with mental illness and a history of hospitalizations or violence participate in community-based services appropriate to their needs.

The legislation establishes a procedure for obtaining court orders for certain individuals with mental illness to receive and accept outpatient treatment. A person cannot be placed under AOT unless:

• The person is suffering from a mental illness;
• The person is unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision, based on a clinical determination;
• The person has a history of lack of compliance with treatment for mental illness that revealed serious violent behavior or required hospitalization;
• The person is unlikely to voluntarily participate in the outpatient treatment;
• The person is, according to his or her treatment history and current behavior, in need of the treatment to prevent a relapse or deterioration that would likely result in serious harm to the person or others;
• The person is suffering from a mental illness;
• The person is suffering from a mental illness;
• The person is suffering from a mental illness;
• The person is suffering from a mental illness;
• The person is suffering from a mental illness;
• The person is suffering from a mental illness; and
• The person is suffering from a mental illness.

The program consisted of each grade portraying a different scene from the film, and singing the pertaining song of that particular scene. It was great to see the creativity and uniqueness that each student brought to the table while acting. There were even group performances where some of the students sang beautiful solos. The anticipation grew more and more as each scene progressed, and left the audience astounded at how excellent the event was.

Refreshments were sold and hot food was available in addition to fun raffles. In the finale, the 8th grade class ended the show on an extraordinary note dancing to Michael Jackson’s, “Thriller.” The execution of the choreography was great, and received in marvelous applause. Altogether, the show was a hit with a room crowded with relatives of the students in addition to several alumni.

To sum things up, the show was a blast and a beautiful spring evening was well spent with friends and family. This event is one of the many different events that St. Raphael School has hosted in the past and will probably be one of the many that it will host in the future!

Assembleem Gianaris’ Redistricting Bill Clears Committee

Assembleem Gianaris’ proposal would establish an independent commission to reapportion legislative districts every ten years, removing that function from the legislature itself and removing, along with it, the conflicting motivation for legislators to draw districts that primarily ensure their own reelection, rather than connect communities that share natural boundaries and local concerns.

Now that the bill has advanced out of the Governmental Operations Committee, it is a significant step closer to being brought to a vote, ideally before the end of legislative session.

More competitive elections lead to more accountable representatives, added Gianaris. I will continue to fight for reforms to end the gridlock and make our government more responsive.

ST. RAPHAEL SCHOOL’S MODERN TWIST OF “THE WIZARD OF OZ” PROVIDES GRAND ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE SUNNYSIDE COMMUNITY

On May 20, 2010, a current interpretation of the well-known Wizard of Oz was performed by students in all grades at St. Raphael School. It was a night of laughter and awe. The room was jam packed as people entered in for the great show. Beginning with the all famous band kicking things off to a great start, the evening kept growing in excitement.

The program consisted of each grade portraying a different scene from the film, and singing the pertaining song of that particular scene. It was great to see the creativity and uniqueness that each student brought to the table while acting. There were even group performances where some of the students sang beautiful solos. The anticipation grew more and more as each scene progressed, and left the audience astounded at how excellent the event was.

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Photos above by Joe Gurrado

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You’ve finished paying your children’s college bills. Maybe you’ve even paid off your mortgage. So now that you’re in your “empty nest” years, you don’t have to worry about where the money is going, right? In reality, you may be caring for aging parents and possibly even dealing with “boomerang” kids returning home. Nonetheless, at this stage of your life, you need to focus your efforts on saving and investing for the retirement lifestyle you’ve envisioned.

If you’re concerned about whether you’ll be able to afford retirement, you aren’t alone. Consider the following figures from the 2009 Retirement Confidence Survey, published by the Employee Benefit Research Institute:

- 59% of the workers surveyed said they are very confident about having enough money for a comfortable retirement. This represents the lowest level since the Retirement Confidence Survey began in 1993.
- Seventy-two percent of workers — up from 66% in 2007 — are planning to supplement their income in retirement by working for pay.
- These figures are probably not surprising to many workers who have just done the best they could for all three of these years. But if you’ve finished paying off your mortgage, paying for your kids’ college and educating the “empty nest” years, you don’t have to worry about where the money is going, right? In reality, you may be dealing with “boomerang” kids returning home.
- According to the recent recession, but they also reflect a general uneasiness among workers about saving and investing for the retirement you deserve.

Just 13% of the workers surveyed said they are very confident about having enough money for a comfortable retirement. This represents the lowest level since the Retirement Confidence Survey began in 1993. Seventy-two percent of workers — up from 66% in 2007 — are planning to supplement their income in retirement by working for pay.

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According to the recent recession, but they also reflect a general uneasiness among workers about saving and investing for the retirement you deserve.
The recent article in the New York Times by Jennifer Medina entitled “City Pushes Shift for Special Education” does not accurately reflect what is really happening. The statement that New York State has had difficulty figuring out how to provide appropriate services for children with disabilities without isolating them is ridiculous. There is a committee reviewing process and mandated State Education Department procedures that parents and educators follow in order to diagnose and place a child with a disability in special education. The issue is not whether children receive appropriate services but rather that the appropriate services are more expensive than regular education. The problem in special education is money. And this is the issue that is not adequately discussed by Ms. Medina.

Any time there is an economic and/or budgetary crisis, the number of newspaper articles about special education increases dramatically. Special education costs more than regular education because there are therapeutic services which are built into the child’s program. Typical children do not need occupational therapy, physical therapy, language therapy and/or a special education teacher. But it is not politically correct to “say” that disabled children should not receive the services because of money. So under the guise of “inclusion” there is now another push to remove students with disabilities from highly specialized schools to regular classrooms with typical children. If children with disabilities could be educated in regular classrooms, they would be there. The reason that they are not in regular classrooms is because they cannot function appropriately in a classroom with a regular teacher and 25 typical children. In a regular classroom, children with disabilities would not receive the individualized and intensive instruction that they would receive in a specialized program. They also would not receive the therapeutic services that they need.

Let’s stop sugar-coating this “sales pitch.” This is all about removing children with disabilities from programs which have been highly successful and beneficial; programs that parents believe are highly effective. Once special education children are in regular classrooms, who is going to monitor if they are getting what they need? The public schools have a checkered record educating typical students and children with limited English proficiency. Do you really think that they are going to do a better job with children who have disabilities?

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Student Essay Contest
Winners Awarded Cash Prizes

On Saturday June 5, eight LaGuardia Community College students were honored for their inspirational writing at the “LaGuardia Community College Changed My Life” essay contest awards ceremony, held at the College.

First prize winner Michael Hodgens, second prizewinner Andrew Greene and third prize winner Nainy Syla along with Honorable Mention awardees Ramona Herrera, Robert Hobson, Eileen Madiskey, Tony Pham and Crystal Voyelle were chosen out of almost 100 submitted essays. They were formally congratulated by Fern Luskin, Professor of Art History and creator of the contest, and were presented awards by The New York Times reporter Fernanda Santos.

After the prizewinners accepted their awards, Michael received $500, Andrew $300 and Naim $200, each read his essay to the crowd of students, family and friends. This contest was an idea that came to Professor Luskin after hearing LaGuardia’s President Gail O. Mellow lecture on the importance of a community college education. Many of the honored students thanked the school for the essay contest because it provided them with an outlet and gave them confidence in their abilities. “I didn’t expect that,” said Professor Luskin. “They had to climb mountains before they even got here, they practically moved the mountains, and once they got here their lives transformed.”

SUNNYSIDE GROUNDMARKET
On Skillman Ave between 42 & 43 Streets
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Your Eyes
by DR. IRVING ROVIN, OPTOMETRIST
CHECKING PERIPHERAL VISION

If you’re concerned about how good your side (peripheral) vision may be, try this simple experiment. Looking straight ahead, fix your line of sight on one particular object in the room. Still looking straight ahead, make a note of all the other surrounding objects in the room that are also visible. If your eyes give you a “full” picture, your side vision may be normal. However, this kind of test is not reliable and may give you a false sense of security. Only through tests made by your eye doctor can you be sure.

Any defective side vision can be hazardous and may also be a sign of advanced stages of glaucoma, an eye disease that can cause blindness if not treated in time. In glaucoma, fluid pressure builds up in the eye, causing serious damage to the delicate structures within the eye. You should have your eye pressure checked at least once a year, especially if you are over forty, are nearsighted, or if there is a history of glaucoma in your family.

EYES EXAMINED
PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED
DESIGNER FRAMES
MEDICAID - MEDICARE
INVISIBLE NO-LINE BIFOCALS

CLOSED WEDNESDAY
Dear Editor,

In a June 4th op-ed, Sunnyside Chamber of Commerce Presi- dent Ira Greenberg laid out the Chamber’s transportation agenda for making Queens Boule- vard better for business. One of his top recommendations was to allow for parking along the Boulevard at all times. This would not only be good for busi- ness from drivers, and less busi- ness from pedestrians. This parking restriction is a relic of the old Department of Transportation, where moving traffic was more important than business or safety. Over the past several years the DOT has made protecting lives a higher prior- ity. We have already seen this change on Skillman, 43rd and Barnett Avenues, where speeds have gone down and injuries are less common.

Removing the rush hour park- ing restriction is the next step in the direction of safety. It would not have protected Gonpo Dorjee, because he was hit on the corner, but it will protect thousands more. It will also bring more customers to Sunnyside businesses, in cars and on foot. Good for business, good for safety, good for Sunnyside.

Response to June 18th “Rezoning and Affordable Housing in NW Queens”

Dear Editor

Affordable housing is de- signed for people who work. It seems to me that the ques- tion is not whether there should be more affordable housing, but rather why there is still such great need. If a person in the United States works at a legitimate job for 40 hours per week, makes $20,000 annually, ($2.00 above federal minimum wage), why should there not be decent, affordable housing which produced use- less paper – for which they were handily paid. Banks’ greed. They took no responsibility, they bundled mortgages which they could ill afford (once their interest payments increased); it was caused by Wall Street and the thermodynamics of pedes- trians like Dorjee from Lowery Liquors get tick- ets. Drivers who don’t want tickets shop elsewhere, and that means that Sunnyside gets the pollution, noise and danger from the cars passing through, but receives no economic benefit to offset any safety.

The rush hour parking re- striction is not just an economic hard- ware, but rather why there is still such great need. If a person in the United States works at a legitimate job for 40 hours per week, makes $20,000 annually, ($2.00 above federal minimum wage), why should there not be decent, affordable housing for their family?

The financial crisis was not caused by the thousands of people who were given mortgages which they could ill afford (once their interest payments increased); it was caused by Wall Street and the Banks’ greed. They took no responsibility, they bundled these mortgages and sold them to other financial insti- tutions which produced use- less paper – for which they were handily paid.

Unions on the other hand, brought workers a living wage and therefore millions of fami- lies moved into the middle class; which is the backbone of America’s democracy.

Let’s not blame the vic- tims; let’s put it where it belongs, on institutionalized greed.

Linda Stein, Woodside