



BROOKLYN'S IN THE HOUSE

NEWS FROM CONGRESSWOMAN YVETTE D. CLARKE

11th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Representing: Brownsville, Ocean Hill, Crown Heights, Greater Flatbush, East Flatbush, Kensington, Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Gowanus, Prospect Heights, Prospect Gardens, Grand Army Plaza, Windsor Terrace, Flatbush and Midwood

September 04, 2009

Rep. Clarke Hosts Two Successful Health Care Town Hall Meetings



August 31, 2009 Rep. Clarke Hosts Health Care Town Hall

On Monday, August 31, 2009, and Tuesday, September 1, 2009, I hosted two health care town hall meetings where the overwhelming majority of Brooklyn residents expressed their strong support for Congress to move forward with health care reform with a public option.

After listening to my constituent's stories, it is obvious that our nation can no longer accept the status quo. Health care reform must happen this year. During the town hall meetings, I was able to address many of the misconceptions about H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act. Understand that I will be advocating for health care reform legislation that will cover the 47 million people that are uninsured or underinsured.

"Three years ago, I lost both of my knees due to a bacterial blood infection I caught from the hospital. Now I need customized knees and they cost \$25,000.

My surgery has been postponed 3 times, due to the cost. Insurance will only pay for the hospital stay, surgery and therapy. That leaves me to get the money for my knees," stated Marisa Hunter.

"Everyone needs access to healthcare on all socioeconomic levels. I have recently been denied health care ... because I receive "too much" income from unemployment. I was recently laid off from a full time position where I received great health care insurance and now,

I have nothing, and I need healthcare insurance," stated Mary Lafayette.

These testimonies are the reason why I am such a staunch supporter of a health care reform plan that includes a robust public option. I believe that health care is not a privilege, but a right. That is why I cannot support legislation that does not include a public option. As a Member of the House Education and Labor Committee, I will be working to ensure that we pass legislation that helps to cover all Americans.



Rep. Clarke Listens to Marisa Hunter Who Asks Her Written Question and Shares Her Health Care Testimony.



Dear Neighbor:

This 9/11, our nation pauses to reflect on the life and legacy of those lives that were tragically altered or cut short as a result of the violent attacks on September 11th 2001.

In honor of those who lost their lives I will be hosting the "Green the Block" Event for National Service Day the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens on September 11th 3pm to 6pm.

The Source Magazine and the Hip Hop Caucus will join me in inviting high school students to actively participate by gathering at the 9/11 Memorial at the Botanic Gardens and assist in the mulching of trees, as well as the cleaning of tree beds along Washington Avenue in Brooklyn.

The purpose of this event is to encourage local high school students to volunteer in their community.

In order to participate, students must RSVP with Deanna Bitetti in my office at (718) 287-1142. Due to space only the first 100 students will be selected to participate.

Sincerely,
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Recognizing National Preparedness Month

It is important that we as a nation recognize and highlight that September is National Preparedness Month. I must commend the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for launching a new series of *Ready Campaign* public service advertisements (PSAs) designed to encourage all Americans to take steps to prepare for emergencies.

As the only New York City Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, I am working on legislative initiatives to help protect the nation and my constituents. I am also acutely aware of how critical it is that every individual and family takes personal responsibility for preparing themselves during an emergency situation. I am glad that the Department is utilizing new technologies to expand its reach and educate the American public on this issue.

The *Ready Campaign* encourages Americans to take three simple steps to prepare for emergencies:

- (1) Put together an emergency supply kit;
- (2) Make a family emergency plan; and
- (3) Get informed about the types of emergencies that could take place in their communities and appropriate responses.

In addition to the national *Ready* PSAs launched this week, New York City's new public service campaign—*Ready New York*—was also announced to encourage all New Yorkers to prepare for emergencies.

Last year, the House passed my resolution honoring America's emergency preparedness personnel and recognizing the significance National Preparedness Month. I plan to reintroduce this legislation again on September 11th, because emergency preparedness is a team effort that involves law enforcement, emergency response providers, as well as individuals and families.

Visit www.ready.gov or follow "ReadydotGov" on Twitter to find national and local preparedness information and resources.

Strengthening Minority and Women Owned Business

On Wednesday, September 3, 2009, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) launched a new online training course to help strengthen access to contracting opportunities for small businesses. This initiative is intended to benefit businesses owned by women, minorities, disadvantaged individuals and veterans.

The training course is called, "Recovery Act Opportunities: How to Win Federal Contracts." It is part of a federal government-wide initiative being run by the SBA and the Department of Commerce.

I encourage small business owners and future entrepreneurs in my district to participate. The comprehensive online course uses both audio and text to provide information about the federal marketplace and contract rules. Most importantly, it provides instructions on how to sell to the government, where to find contracts and Recovery Act opportunities. As a Member of the House Small Businesses Committee, I will be working closely with Congress to ensure that entrepreneurs are aware of the opportunities that exist to help grow their businesses.

The Recovery Act Opportunities course is available on SBA's Web site at www.sba.gov or directly at www.sba.gov/fedcontractingtraining.

Legislative Spotlight

Every year thousands of people will be sentenced to federal prison for possession of cocaine. Combined, they will cost American taxpayers over \$300 million per year.

While I believe that everyone should be held accountable for federal violations, I also believe that sentencing should be fair and just.

Many times, we find that those convicted of powder cocaine offenses had 100 times more drugs than those convicted of crack cocaine offenses, but still got the same sentence as those whose drugs involved crack.

This 100:1 ratio can result in sentences for low-level crack offenders that exceed sentences for higher-level powder cocaine offenders. This disparity has been in place for 23 years, and its effects are appalling.

That is why I am a proud co-sponsor of H.R. 265, the Drug Sentencing Reform and Cocaine Kingpin Trafficking Act of 2009.

This bill would eliminate the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine by:

- 1) increasing the amount of crack cocaine needed to trigger the 5 and 10-year mandatory minimums to equal the amount needed to trigger the same mandatory minimums at the current powder cocaine levels;
- 2) eliminating the mandatory minimum for simple possession of crack cocaine; and
- 3) authorizing drug treatment and enforcement funds while increasing fines for kingpins.

This legislation would save almost half a billion dollars over the next fifteen years in prison savings alone.

H.R. 265 ensures that we are fairly and justly sentencing these individuals. As a result it will save our taxpayers precious dollars from being wasted and redirect funds to effectively targeting large-scale drug traffickers.