



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Letitia James

April 2014



Our First 100 Days

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Public Advocate James rallies with advocates for ending the influence of big money in elections, following another Supreme Court ruling (McCutcheon v FEC) that erodes limits to political donations.

“A CITY THAT WORKS FOR ALL”

Dear friend,

Since taking office as the New York City Public Advocate, I have worked to advance a progressive agenda that aims to build a city that works for all. At a time marked by historic levels of economic inequality, I have sought to implement key policy initiatives that uplift working families and protect the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Additionally, my office has overseen a robust constituent services program that has directly helped thousands of New Yorkers.

I look forward to working with you to make sure every New Yorker has a chance to succeed in our city, regardless of which community they come from. Our neighbors deserve no less.

Sincerely,

Letitia “Tish” James
Public Advocate of the City of New York

GOOD WORK, FAIR PAY

Public Advocate James has made the struggles of the working poor and other marginalized workers a top priority and used the first 100 days of her administration to address such issues.

A strong supporter of low wage workers, Public Advocate James has stood with fast food workers throughout the City to rally in support of fair and equitable wages. She is a strong believer that no New Yorker working full-time should ever live in poverty and that wages must keep up with the rising cost of living in our city.

When reports surfaced about **wage theft at McDonalds** and other fast food franchises, PA James began a push for legislation to assist impacted workers. This includes the ability to anonymously report wage theft to appropriate authorities with guidance from the Office of the Public Advocate as part of a Wage Theft Hotline included in the PA James' proposed legislation.

When UPS unjustly fired 250 local workers as a retaliation for staging a brief protest, Public Advocate James stood up to the company and, using the leverage of the City's financial incentives to UPS, **successfully pressured UPS to re-hire all 250 employees.**

The Public Advocate has also called attention to the immediate need for a minimum wage increase. PA James has pressed to **allow New York City to control its own minimum wage**, independent of Albany legislators.

*"Public Advocate Letitia James demonstrated tremendous leadership from the start, demanding fairness and offering to mediate a dispute that was harming working families and UPS alike. **Tish's leadership helped save 250 drivers and their families and win respect and dignity for hard-working New Yorkers.**"*

– Tim Sylvester
President of Teamsters, Local 804
(UPS employees)

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Public Advocate James is on the front lines of preserving and expanding healthcare access for all New Yorkers. From Long Island College Hospital (LICH) and Interfaith in Brooklyn, to St. John's Hospital in Queens, and North Central Bronx Hospital, PA James recognizes the healthcare access challenges confronting our city.

That is why Public Advocate James **battled tirelessly to prevent LICH from being shuttered.**

When SUNY, the hospital's operator, tried to walk away from LICH – claiming it wasn't worth losing money over – Public Advocate James fought to put patients over profits. The Public Advocate litigated in court to force the state to keep LICH open and keep comprehensive medical services in the community. Through her efforts and the hard work of community members, workers, and other leaders, LICH is on its way to continuing as a full-service hospital that will offer continued care to patients.

Additionally, Public Advocate James successfully pushed the mayoral administration to **freeze plans for privatizing dialysis services** with a contractor more concerned with the bottom line than with patient safety.

“Public Advocate Letitia James’ leadership has been key to preserving healthcare access in New York City. When our communities were on the verge of losing medical services at LICH, Interfaith, and North-Central Bronx Hospital, Tish stood up; and when public dialysis services at four HHC hospitals were being pushed toward privatization, Tish stepped in and advocated for putting the healthcare needs of the community first.”

– Jill Furillo

Executive Director, NY State Nurses Association

COMMON SENSE PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICY

With so much controversy surrounding education policy, Public Advocate Letitia James is focused on common sense solutions to the challenges of public education. Public Advocate James has approached education based on simple and fair principles:

- ✓ every child must have access to a high quality education, regardless of which neighborhood she or he lives in;
- ✓ every school must be safe;
- ✓ class size matters and overcrowding must not be acceptable in our schools;
- ✓ special needs students have the right to receive proper services;
- ✓ all students must receive physical education and a comprehensive curriculum that includes arts and music.



Public Advocate James greets Queens students during a community event with Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer and Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan.

GOING TO COURT TO PRESERVE PUBLIC EDUCATION

When the administration sought to continue a practice of forced co-locations, Public Advocate James went to court.

Public Advocate James, along with more than 70 other petitioners, is seeking to block these forced co-locations that:

- result in elementary aged students being co-located with high school students;
- cause special needs students to lose space for therapy and all other students to lose space for physical education, art, and music;
- were approved without parents' input or without a review of available space within each school; and
- will result in further overcrowding without addressing the overwhelming number of children forced to learn in dilapidated trailers.

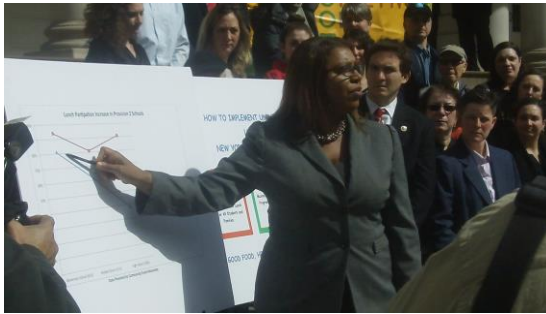


Public Advocate James has used her position to be an outspoken advocate for women's empowerment. PA James attended a community event rallying against street harassment with non-profit "Girl Be Heard" and Council Member Helen Rosenthal.

UNIVERSAL SCHOOL LUNCH

Study after study demonstrates that children who are properly nourished perform better in school. Unfortunately, because of the way the free lunch program is carried out in our schools, there is a poverty stigma that results in a quarter million students missing out on lunch.

That's 250,000 students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch but don't eat!



Public Advocate James Announces Plan for Universal Free Lunch with Lunch 4 Learning Campaign.

Public Advocate James has partnered with the "Lunch 4 Learning Campaign," a group of more than 150 community organizations, advocates, parents, students and elected officials who are working to make universal school lunch a reality. Under the plan, schools will eliminate onerous paperwork and practices that foster the poverty stigma associated with free or reduced price lunch and often stand in the way of hungry children being fed.

Because the federal government is responsible for paying the majority of school lunch costs, the impact of universal school lunch on the Department of Education budget would be minor, costing the City only \$20 more per student for the entire school year.

Public Advocate James has enlisted the support of a wide array of backers for universal school lunch. 46 City Council members have signed on to a letter supporting the initiative, which calls on the Mayor to immediately take steps to provide universal free lunch in the city.

"The city's public advocate, Letitia James, has gotten behind this worthwhile campaign for universal free lunch Mayor Bill de Blasio and the schools chancellor, Carmen Fariña, should embrace these ideas because a school population that's better nourished is more ready to learn."

– New York Times Editorial
April 10, 2014.

KEEPING NEW YORKERS IN NEW YORK

Rising rents continue to displace low-income and middle class New Yorkers from our neighborhoods. It's why Public Advocate has championed affordable housing and fought to protect tenants.

PA James has worked with tenant advocates to **take on a notorious Bushwick slumlord who purposely destroyed apartment units** in order to evict tenants and raise rents. She is working with the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development to ensure that these tenants are protected and the landlord is held accountable for the abuse.

Additionally, PA James has worked to **protect rent regulated tenants from being denied services** and all tenants from being neglected by their landlords, particularly when it comes to tenant safety.

When rent-stabilized tenants were told they were not permitted to use amenities in their buildings that were reserved for market-rate tenants, Public Advocate James took action. She immediately **filed a complaint with the New York City Commission on Human Rights to end the practice**. Furthermore, PA James is working on **legislation to protect tenants** by ensuring that landlords cannot deny the same amenities to low-income and middle-class tenants that they provide to market/luxury rate tenants in the same building, particularly when these landlords are receiving City-sponsored tax breaks.

In response to the growing cost of housing in our city, Public Advocate James is collaborating with Mayor de Blasio in **support of his initiative to create 200,000 units of affordable housing**. Specifically, PA James wants to ensure that tax breaks afforded to developers encourage construction and maintenance of additional affordable housing and that new housing is built by workers receiving fair wages and benefits.

Public Advocate James is also working to **improve the treatment of homeless individuals** in the City. PA James has been successful in getting DHS to reform procedures by extending the period many homeless families have to remain in emergency shelters, establishing a support services helpline at DHS, and offer emergency shelter applicants a checklist to ensure they received fair treatment and due consideration.



Public Advocate James presides over the City Council as Speaker Pro Tem. PA James has expanded the legislative role of the Public Advocate's office. (photo by William Alatraste).

LEGISLATIVE ACTION FOR WORKING PEOPLE

PA James has dramatically transformed the legislative component of the Public Advocate's office.

During her first 100 days, the Public Advocate has taken up an active role as the presiding officer of the New York City Council.

PA James has participated in dozens of legislative hearings, holding city officials accountable and making sure our government works for working people again. Moreover, Public Advocate James has sponsored legislation ranging from child protection, public safety, wage protection for low-income workers, breaks for Sandy-affected small businesses, and environmental preservation.

"Public Advocate Tish James remains one of the body's most active members. In her less than three months on the job, PA James has put her mark on more than a dozen pieces of legislation."

– New York Observer
March 28, 2014



Public Advocate James stands with rent-stabilized tenants of Stonehenge Village who were denied building amenities that were reserved for market-rate tenants. Joining PA James is Council Member Mark Levine.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

Helping the most vulnerable individuals and families in need is the bedrock of Public Advocate James' constituent services plan. **Each month, thousands of New Yorkers call or visit the Public Advocate's office where they receive help getting through red tape, identifying resources, getting questions answered, and obtain general support.** The office's constituent services team has helped families with heat and hot water complaints, stopped countless evictions and investigated and reported wrong-doing that results in sub-par public services.

The office opens an average of 400 constituent cases each month. Along the way, there are many success stories.

“As a low-income mother of a newborn, I thought I had nowhere to turn when my landlord failed to pay the electric bill as she was supposed to and Con-Ed turned off the power in my apartment. I was most worried about my child who requires an electric nebulizer for chronic asthma. But Public Advocate Letitia James was there. Her office helped us get the power back on and worked with the landlord to make sure it stayed on.”

– Patricia Duncan
Staten Island, NY

“My NYCHA apartment had a terrible gas leak that caused my son to be taken to the hospital with high levels of carbon monoxide. I didn’t just lose my health, I almost lost my son to Children’s Services! Public Advocate Letitia James’ office made NYCHA fix the gas leak and remove mold. Tish protected our family at our toughest hour.”

– Jennifer Ellis
Brooklyn, NY

“When the City’s Housing and Preservation Dept. tried to force me to move out (into a smaller apartment), I was devastated. As a quadriplegic individual who needs 24-hour care by a trained nurse, I simply couldn’t move into a studio like HPD wanted me to. Public Advocate Letitia James cut through the red tape for me and got HPD to make the necessary accommodations.”

– Sue Strong
New York, NY

ABOUT PUBLIC ADVOCATE LETITIA JAMES

Public Advocate Letitia "Tish" James was born and raised in Brooklyn and continues to call the borough home. After graduating from Howard University School of Law, Ms. James began her career in public service, starting as a public defender in the Legal Aid Society. She later served as a top-level aide in the State Assembly and as an Assistant Attorney General for New York State (Brooklyn Region).

Ms. James was elected to the City Council in 2003 where she distinguished herself as a fearless and effective advocate for social and economic justice.

As a public defender in the Legal Aid Society, Ms. James represented low-income children and families in the criminal justice system.

As an Assistant Attorney General, Ms. James resolved hundreds of consumer complaints and investigated predatory lenders who prey on first-time homebuyers. She assisted the Civil Rights Bureau in its investigation of the NYPD's stop-and-frisk policy and cracked down on firms engaged in deceptive business practices including violations of human rights, environmental laws, and scams targeting immigrants.

As a member of the New York City Council, Ms. James introduced and helped pass the Safe Housing Act, which became City law in 2007. This ground-breaking bill ensured that thousands of families in rental buildings receive prompt and full repairs to their apartments. Ms. James also helped preserve afterschool programs and childcare slots. As chair of the City Council's Contracts Committee, Ms. James helped uncover the CityTime scandal, which cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions.

In the Public Advocate's Office, Ms. James has successfully fought for protecting jobs, helping put 250 UPS employees back on the job after the company fired them as part of a union dispute; helped prevent LICH's closure and moved it toward a full-service hospital; and reformed Department of Homeless Services practices to ensure fair and compassionate treatment of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Public Advocate James is the first woman of color to hold city-wide office in New York City.