

## Push For More Anti-Terror Funds

BY JOHN TOSCANO

Continuing the fight for more dollars for New York City and state to build an effective anti-terror defense and to assure a fairer distribution of funds for these purposes, local lawmakers have introduced bipartisan legislation to establish that the city receive sufficient funding.

Both bills are aimed at reforming the Urban Areas Security Initiatives (UASI) grants program to avoid future reductions in anti-terror funding to high-threat cities such as New York.

The bipartisan bill filed by Congressman Joseph Crowley (D) and Vito Fossella (R-C) would require the UASI grants to be distributed based only on risk, defined as threat, vulnerability and consequences, and eliminate all needs-based variables.

The legislation introduced by Congressman Anthony Weiner (D) would limit eligibility for high-threat grants to the 15 cities most at risk of a terror attack, Weiner said.

"While UASI grants are supposed to be reserved for the highest-threat cities (such as New York City), they have become pork barrel funds doled out to 'urban areas' covering 54 percent of the country, including 14 areas with populations smaller than Staten Island," Weiner (Queens/Brooklyn) pointed out.

His bill would reduce from 46 to 15 the number of cities eligible for anti-terror funds under the UASI program, he said. By doing this, Weiner added, "The funding mix will free up more funds for large, high-risk cities, reducing the possibility of drastic cuts such as the \$83 million or 40 percent cut in New York City's funding last year."

Weiner said his office estimated that if the standard he proposes was in place last year, New York City would have received at least \$49 million more in 2006.

Crowley (Queens/The Bronx) noted that the UASI initiative was created to ensure American cities with the greatest risk of deadly threat would not be denied resources to protect themselves and for their first responders to have the training and equipment to save more lives.

"Still, last year," he continued, "President [George W.] Bush was prepared to let New York City lose \$83 million to secure itself against threats that are all too real."

Fossella (Staten Island) said, "Pork barrel politics has now infected the one and only threat-based anti-terror funding program.

He pointed out that the Crowley-Fossella bill would end leaking of anti-terror dollars to a small city to purchase a hazmat truck even though it does not face the threat of chemical, biological or radiological attack.

The Crowley-Fossella bill would also:

- Expand the use of funding to include construction costs to enhance security at communications facilities, command centers and medical response facilities.
- Expand the use of funding for overtime costs for localities with 100 or more personnel dedicated exclusively to counter-terrorism and intelligence activities.
- Establish a legal basis for UASI programs to set clear guidelines for this administration, which it presently does not have.
- Prevent a repeat of last year's anti-terror reductions to high-threat cities such as New York City, which received a total of \$124 million in homeland security grants, a 40 percent cut from levels of the previous year under the UASI grants program.

## Relief For Small Businesses From Washington, Albany

Small business tax breaks to encourage development of new jobs are addressed in separate legislative packages proposed by Congressman Joseph Crowley and state Senator Frank Padavan. Crowley said in a release that legislation giving small businesses a tax cut to encourage creation of jobs had been passed by the Ways and Means Committee, of which Crowley is a member.

The bill, if approved, would also facilitate passage of a minimum wage increase, Crowley said.

Meanwhile, Padavan (R-C, Bellerose) and the Republican senate majority has passed legislation which would provide almost \$500 million in new assistance to small businesses in the first year and almost \$1.3 billion after fully implemented.

Padavan said that since the



small business aid legislation was announced a month ago, "countless small businesses from all over New York have congratulated us for an incentive package that would bolster New York's economy and provide much-needed relief to its small businesses".

## On the brief side...

### Gianaris: Notify Parents Of School Bedbug Problems

Assemblymember Michael Gianaris (D-Astoria) has filed a bill mandating that all parents with children attending bedbug infested public schools must be notified of that fact and must be provided with prevention information.

Gianaris acted after the Department of Education refused his request to adopt a notification policy.

The lawmaker stated, "Bedbug infestations are spreading throughout New York City and have hit the schools of Western Queens [in his district] particularly hard. One way to fight back is to educate parents about preventing the spread of this quality-of-life problem."

### Pheffer Offers Advice On Tax Filing

Parents of school-aged children are reminded by Assemblymember Audrey Pheffer (D-Rockaway) that when they file their income tax statements they must be sure to apply for the Empire State Child Tax Credit.

Pheffer says that the credit is available to all-year-round New York state residents who are eligible to claim a federal child tax credit or who meet certain income thresholds; and have a child who was at least 4 years old but less than 17 years old on Dec. 31, 2006.

To apply, says Pheffer, fill out form IT-213 and submit it with your New York State income tax return. If you've already filed your state return, you can still file the IT-213 form separately by mailing it to the State Processing Center at PO Box 61000, Albany, N.Y. 12261-0001.

### Maloney Wants Greece In Visa Waiver Program

Joined by 20 of her House colleagues, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-Queens/Manhattan) has appealed to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Homeland Security Service Commissioner Michael Chertoff to add Greece to the list of nations which are included in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP).

In a letter to the two officials, the lawmakers said, "Greece has met the criteria for the VWP, including a less than 3 percent refusal rate of U.S. non-immigrant visa applications and biometric passports. The delay needs to end."

Maloney said Greece is the only member of the original 15 European nations not to belong to VWP.

### Weprin Hosts Healthcare Workshop

Working in conjunction with the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), City Councilmember David Weprin (D-Hollis) will hold a workshop on healthcare proxies and living wills at his district office, 205-07 Hillside Ave., this Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

At the free session, constituents will have access to healthcare proxy and living will forms and NYLAG will provide assistance to whomever requests it.

The meeting is part of NYLAG's new project called Total Life Choices (TLC), a free legal services project offering assistance in preparing advance directives (living wills and healthcare proxies) and free electronic registration of these documents on a secure database.

### Gallagher Seeks Applicants For CBs

Seeking to make appointments to community boards more open, City Councilmember Dennis Gallagher (R-C, Middle Village) has announced he will take applications from anyone desiring to serve and will then meet with Borough President Helen Marshall to make final choices for Boards 5 and 9.

Applications are being accepted at Gallagher's office at 78-25 Metropolitan Ave., Middle Village. Once filed, Gallagher said he will meet personally with each applicant.

The lawmaker said he had been flooded with phone calls from people interested in volunteering to serve.

Usually councilmembers, who can recommend people to serve on the boards to the borough president, do not take applications for the voluntary positions.—Compiled by John Toscano

Small business tax breaks to encourage development of new jobs are addressed in separate legislative packages proposed by Congressman Joseph Crowley and state Senator Frank Padavan.

In Washington, Crowley reported that last month the House passed legislation raising the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour. But the bill stalled in the Senate, reflecting concern from business groups that the minimum wage hike would hurt small businesses.

Following negotiations between the two houses, an agreement was reached on a new bill that would enable small businesses to create and keep jobs and will provide the framework for Congress to act soon and raise the minimum wage.

Summing up, Crowley stated,



"This bill is responsible legislation that will help ensure our lowest-paid workers get a pay raise, while giving a boost to the smaller businesses that provide important job opportunities for millions of Americans."

The proposed tax bill will provide \$2 billion in tax cuts for

small businesses, Crowley said.

In Albany, Padavan reported that the state senate Small Business Assistance Plan would:

- Eliminate the income tax and corporate franchise tax on manufacturers, providing \$550 million in tax relief.
- Provide a \$350 million refundable tax credit to help 386,000 small businesses that employ 20 people or less.
- Reduce the corporate Franchise Tax from 7.5 percent to 6.85 percent to save businesses \$150 million.
- Create an average \$700 tax rebate for small businesses that pay school taxes and employ fewer than 20 people.

"This is a good plan that would provide some much-needed relief to some of the hardest-working New Yorkers—the small business owners," said Padavan.

—John Toscano