

# Rush Of Calamities Has Lawmakers Seeking Solutions

While Mayor Michael Bloomberg has been woefully short on solutions to the recent calamities that have struck New York City, several public officials from Queens have come forward with proposals to study the causes of these municipal infrastructure breakdowns to try to find ways to prevent them in the future.

Admittedly, the mayor has had his plate full and brimming over in the past few weeks as bridge safety issues have been raised, Midtown Manhattan was rocked by a steam pipe geyser and the subways were flooded again.

On top of this, Bloomberg has been occupied with an assortment of other problems such as the reported deaths of 11 children supposedly supervised by the city Administration for Children's Services, the hassle with 9/11 family survivors and the City Council's attempt to return cellphones to city schools.

As the pressure from this assortment of problems was building, the last thing the mayor needed was for the public to be reminded again of his possible presidential ambitions. Sure enough, the *Daily News* carried a detailed report of this fall's national World Trade Center Memorial fundraising tour which will include visits by the mayor to several states where early primaries are held.

Meanwhile, several Queens lawmakers and other public officials were issuing frantic calls to address the various problems. The most comprehensive of these was a proposal by Councilmember David Weprin (D-Hollis) and Comptroller William Thompson Jr. for City Hall to take immediate steps to address New York City's mounting infrastructure problems.

Weprin listed among these last year's power blackout in Western Queens, the ruptured steam pipe in Manhattan on July 18, and the massive flooding which shut down the subway system last week.

The torrential rains which brought the subways to a halt also led three other Queens lawmakers—Congressmember Joseph Crowley, Assemblymember Margaret Markey and Councilmember Eric Gioia to demand an investi-

gation of the severe flooding in Woodside, Elmhurst, Maspeth and other sections in Queens.

Another subway flood-related complaint came from Congressman Anthony Weiner (D-Queens/Brooklyn) and Councilmember John Liu (D-Flushing). However, their brickbats were aimed at subway and MTA officials.

Weiner pointed out that these officials should have created a cellphone system in the subways, something he's been demanding for the past four years. Hordes of inconvenienced transit riders should have had cellphone transmission capabilities available to help them through their harrowing ordeal, he maintained.

Liu, chairman of the council Transportation Committee and a frequent critic of MTA operations, also cited the lack of cellphones to make his point that transit officials have a responsibility to keep commuters informed about disruption and emergencies.

Many of the lawmakers issuing these proposals are gearing up to run for various citywide public offices in 2009 when term limits will end their service in their present jobs. Thompson and

Weiner are expected to be among the aspirants contending to succeed Bloomberg. Weprin is eyeing the city comptroller's job, while Gioia and Liu may be seeking the Public Advocate position.

**MAYOR, VALLONE TO CLASH ON CELLPHONES:** As expected, the mayor vetoed a City Council bill to allow school students to carry cellphones to and from school. Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. (D-Astoria) a sponsor and a most vocal supporter of the bill, will be in the front line when the council meets to override the mayor's veto.

Vallone and the mayor have had an ongoing quarrel on this subject, the lawmaker arguing that for safety reasons students should have access to their cellphones at all times. The mayor's position is that cellphones would be a distraction for the students.

**SCHUMER CHANGES TUNE:** After opposing a bill to close a controversial tax loophole that benefitted millionaire hedge fund managers—and being roundly criticized for it—United States Senator Charles Schumer (D-New York) has seen the light (or heard the critics) and is preparing his own bill to close the loophole.

Schumer was attacked for his original posi-

tion favoring the hedge fund managers because the managers had made large contributions to the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, which Schumer headed.

**BRIDGE SAFETY:** Assemblymember Ivan Lafayette (D-Jackson Heights) has reintroduced a bill to create an automatic warning system for motorists if a bridge is in danger of collapse. The bill calls on the state Department of Transportation to develop or design a device that provides an immediate warning if a bridge is in danger of collapsing.

Lafayette first introduced the bill in 1991 after a New York Thruway bridge upstate collapsed, killing 10 people. Lafayette introduced it again after the recent bridge collapse in Minneapolis.

**BRIDGE SAFETY HEARING:** The City Council Transportation Committee will hold a hearing at City Hall on September 6 to assess the state of the city's bridges.

Committee Chairman John Liu stated, "While bridge safety overall appears to be improving, there are still troubling inconsistencies in the way government monitors our bridge infrastructure and prioritizes repair work."



## DEADLY FIRES SPARK SAFETY AWARENESS

With deadly fires a constant reminder, state Senator Serphin Maltese (R-C, Middle Village) continued his Fire Safety Awareness Day campaign in Ozone Park last week. Members of the Catholic War Veterans' Louis De Monfort Post 1721 assisted Maltese in distributing information to more than 200 Ozone Park area residents on common fire hazards, proper use of a fire extinguisher, installation and maintenance of smoke detectors and critical evaluation skills. All in attendance received free First Alert Smoke Detectors and Carbon Monoxide Alarms.

**Pictured (l-r) are Vincent Dorio, Gabriel Grande, John Orlando, Senator Maltese, Anthony Corrente, Senator Maltese's Veterans Liaison Gene Burch, Michael Sorvillo, Post Commander John Byrne and Fire Safety Education Unit Instructor George Tabeek.**



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