

The Young Democrats of America (YDA) honored City Councilmember Eric Gioia as the John F. Kennedy Outstanding Young Democrat at their national convention in Dallas, Texas in July. The John F. Kennedy Award is bestowed annually on a male young Democrat under the age of 36 who demonstrates ongoing commitment and achievement in the Democratic Party.

Gioia, 34, is a native of Woodside, and a product of local public schools P.S. 11 and I.S. 125, as well as St. Francis Prep. He worked his way through NYU and Georgetown Law School working nights as a janitor, doorman, and elevator operator. He served in the Clinton White House and practiced law at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy.

Gioia was elected to the City Council in 2001 at age 28 to represent the neighborhoods of Woodside, Sunnyside, Long Island City, Astoria and Maspeth. Currently serving his third term in the council, he lives in Sunnyside with his wife, Lisa Hernandez Gioia, and daughter Amelia.

Gioia quickly became known as an effective advocate for change and as a rising political star. The award in particular highlighted his work on child hunger, an issue to which Gioia has devoted energy for several years by conducting multiple investigations into government bureaucracy that prevents families from accessing Food Stamps, writing legislation, and most recently raising awareness of the issue by participating in the Food Stamp Challenge.

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Gioia Named Outstanding Young Dem Of The Year

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Gioia was nominated for the award by his local chapter, the Queens County Young Democrats, and their president Matthew Silverstein. Silverstein has been instrumental in growing the Queens Young Dems organization, which Gioia has actively supported.

In nominating Gioia, Silverstein lauded him as "the best of the American Dream", saying, "[Gioia] represents and has demonstrated the difference a young person can make through hard work and a solid commitment to public service."

"I was proud to nominate Eric and couldn't be happier to see him recognized for his accomplishments on the national stage," Silverstein said. "Eric is a true inspiration to the members of my chapter and he will now be an example for young people across the country."

As chair of the city council Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Gioia has exposed inefficiency, waste and mismanagement, and worked to make government cost less and work better. He has uncovered deplorable living conditions for homeless New Yorkers with AIDS, excessive wait times for mammogram screenings and



the limited availability of emergency contraception for victims of sexual assault. His investigations have discovered defective bulletproof vests sold to the New York City Police Department and exposed the unlawful charging of sales tax on clothing. Gioia's hard-hitting hearings have shined light on egregious worker safety violations and have resulted in a massive whistleblower education program for city workers and more diverse hiring practices for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation.

Using the findings of his investigations, Gioia worked with his colleagues to pass laws ensuring the wide availability of emergency contraception to all women in New York. He wrote a bill to strengthen the Tax Payer Bill of Rights, which forces tax preparers to provide important information to their clients, and he has introduced legislation to make it easier to collect child support from deadbeat parents. He has authored clean beach legislation to give the public better information about sanitary and health conditions on the city's beaches.

Gioia has made education his top priority,

securing more than \$4 million for computers and technology in his district's schools to ensure that each school is wired for the Internet and prepared for the 21st century. Gioia has worked to increase access to higher education by supporting free college counseling and SAT preparation, and successfully expanded extracurricular opportunities by founding a youth basketball league and the first ever youth baseball league in Queensbridge, New York's largest public housing development.

Gioia has been among the leaders of the renaissance in Long Island City, where the waterfront is being opened up to the public after decades of neglect with new parks, schools and homes. He has funded a greenway that will run the length of the East River waterfront, and has fought to clean up Newtown Creek as part of a lawsuit to force Exxon Mobil to clean up their massive oil spill. Gioia has fought for more affordable housing for working families and the middle class. He passed the first-ever inclusionary zoning plan in Queens, which the Daily News called "the housing plan that could save Queens".

Gioia has long been leading the fight to end hunger in New York City, where more than 400,000 children go to bed without enough to eat every night. In addition to multiple investigations and numerous laws he has written to expand access to food stamps, in May 2007 Gioia took the Food Stamp Challenge. For one week he lived off the equivalent of what a person on Food Stamps is allocated—\$28 per week in New York City. His participation drew much needed attention to the hunger problem in New York City and raised awareness on the importance of improving benefits. He also traveled to Washington, D.C. to share his experiences and lobby members of Congress to increase Food Stamp allocations.

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