

## On the brief side...

### Con Ed Blackout Finale Panned By Gianaris, Gioia

The Public Service Commission's confirmation of Con Edison's \$100-per-customer settlement of the 2006 Queens blackout was just another instance of the PSC coddling the giant utility, according to Assemblymember Michael Gianaris.

City Councilmember Eric Gioia also criticized the settlement, saying it was hard to believe Con Ed couldn't do better since they gave their CEO a raise amounting to almost a million-dollars a short while ago.

Gianaris (D-Astoria) said that by its approval of the settlement, the PSC demonstrated that, "It is a part of the problem instead of the solution."

"For too many years, the PSC has coddled Con Edison to the point that this unaccountable monopoly faces virtually no consequences for its failures," the lawmaker noted.

"Whether it is blackouts, steampipe explosions, stray voltage electrocutions or record rate hikes in the face of multi-million-dollar executive salaries, the PSC looks the other way while Con Ed continues to plague this city."

Gioia (D-Long Island City) said the settlement was "a little bit better than nothing, but not much". He added: "How can you tell a small business owner who lost everything that this is the best Con Edison can do when they just gave their CEO an \$800,000 raise?"

### Maloney, Bernanke Agree

Following Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's recent testimony before the House Financial Services Committee "highlighted the need to reform unfair and deceptive credit card industry practices", Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney said, noting that Bernanke's position was in line with the provision in her pending legislation.

Maloney (D-Queens/Manhattan) said, "The reforms in my bill would create a more transparent and fair system that would benefit both consumers and lenders." Bernanke agreed, she said. They also agreed that improving disclosure is not enough, and that solid industry-wide reform is overdue.

Maloney, a senior member of the committee, said her Credit Cardholder's Bill of Rights legislation has strong and broad support and she's hopeful of moving the bill forward this year.

### Seeks Gov's Help With HEAP Program

Citing a "severe home heating crisis" in New York state this coming winter, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver called on Governor David Paterson to support a bill passed by the Assembly to expand the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

The bill expands the income eligibility level under the program to make more low-income families eligible for coverage, Silver explained in a letter to the governor. "Under our proposal, a family of four would be eligible for HEAP assistance up to \$55,500, instead of the current \$41,600," Silver stated. Applications for the program have more than doubled as the price of home heating fuel has increased, Silver said.

The bill passed by the Assembly Democratic majority provides an additional \$550 million to cover the program expansion and \$250 million more for energy conservation measures.

### Queens Funding Passes 1st Hurdle

Funding for two community programs in Queens proposed by Congresswoman Gary Ackerman was approved for inclusion in the 2009 budget by the House Appropriations Committee.

Ackerman (D-Bayside) said \$100,000 would go to the Dominico American Society of Queens, 40-27 97th St., Corona, and \$30,000 to the Flushing-Bayside YMCA, 138-46 Northern Blvd., Flushing.

The Dominico American Society funds would be used for a program which includes English as a Second Language classes, computer training, tutoring and afterschool instruction, citizenship classes, immigration assistance and general civics information.

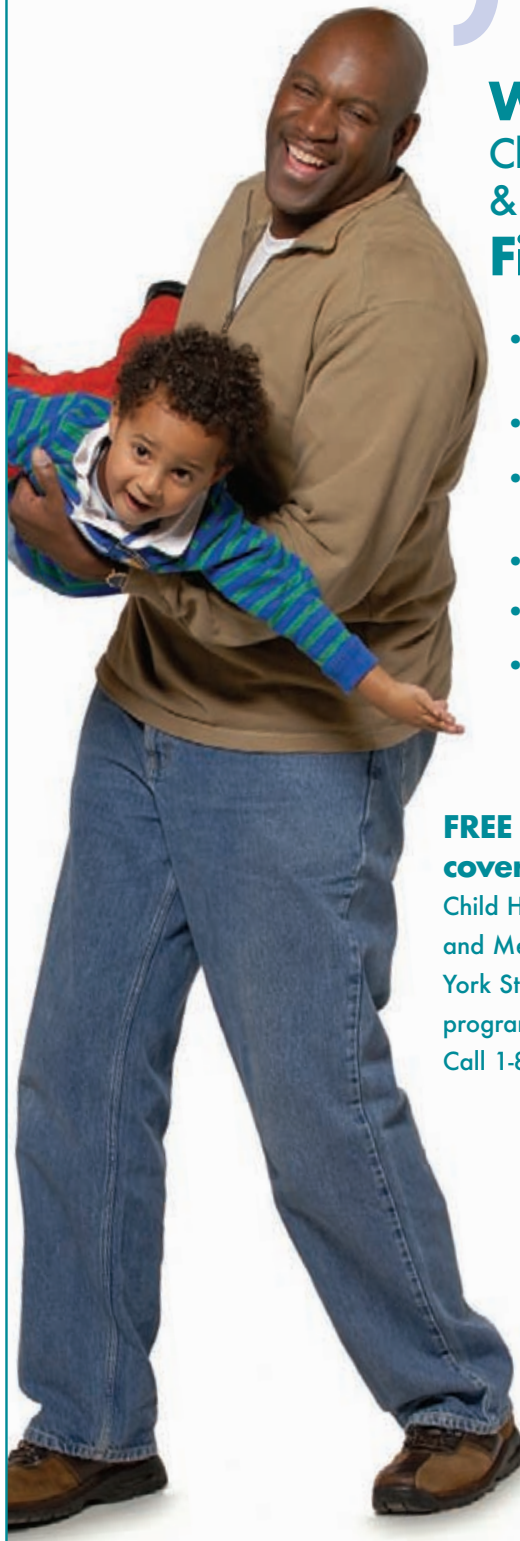
The YMCA funds would be used for an entrepreneur program that will allow at-risk youth to learn the fundamentals of starting, operating and managing a business, Ackerman said. Unemployed and out-of-school 17-24-year-olds would be eligible.

—Compiled by John Toscano

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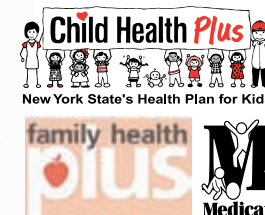
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