

# Sears Assails Senate Inaction On Pay Equity Bill



City Councilmember Helen Sears spoke about pay equity for women in a morning press conference in front of City Hall last week, in company with several women's groups, including the New York Women's Agenda, A Better Balance, the New York Coalition of 100 Black Women and the National Organization of Women (NOW). Sears, head of the council Committee on Women's Issues, afterward held a hearing in council chambers. She and the women's groups protested the state senate's unwillingness to deal with the equal pay bill passed by the state Assembly.

BY THOMAS COGAN

Saying that women are 46.3 percent of the workforce, yet on average are paid only 77 percent of what men are paid, City Councilmember Helen Sears told those attending a press conference in front of City Hall in mid-April that she and several women's groups gathered around her were demanding that the state senate in Albany assume some responsibility and pass a pay equity bill that has already been passed by the state Assembly. She was particularly concerned with what she called the plight of women who are head of households, who therefore have no one else to turn to when trying to meet expenses. She was joined not only by the women's groups but also by four male city council representatives, one of whom said it was outrageous that such a gathering was even necessary in 2008, when the justice of the women's cause has long since been obvious.

Women as heads of households, Sears said, would include widows, divorcees and those who

have been deserted. All these women must support themselves and any children they have, entirely on their own. She speaks from experience, having been widowed when she had a young daughter. She said she got a job and worked hard until she discovered that men of similar status at her place of work were being paid considerably more than she was. They had company cars, too, while she had to travel in her job without one. Confident she was a valuable employee, she told her boss she would resign if she were not given pay equity. She succeeded, and got a company car, too. Having experience like that, Sears could declare, "Women are honorable, have to raise their families and deserve equality." Matters are even more stressful for black and Latino women, she said, because where white women's comparative pay level is 77 cents to a dollar for men, black women's pay level is 66 cents and Latino women's 60 cents.

Joining Sears after a few minutes was

Councilmember Simcha Felder of the 44th district in Brooklyn's Midwood and Borough Park. He was the one who called it outrageous that such a protest had to be staged after what many thought were years of progress. But, another rally speaker asserted, what is called the Fair Pay Act has been stalled in the labor committee of the state senate since 2002, though the Assembly has passed it. When the committee recently got a new chairman, Joseph E. Robach, of the 56th district in Rochester, activists tried to persuade him to hold hearings on the FPA, but now they charge that he has only prolonged inactivity. Felder, who further described pay inequity as "ugly in every way", was joined by Councilmembers David Weprin of the 23rd district (Hollis/Jamaica), who said it "should be a non-issue"; John Liu of the 20th district (Flushing), and Tony Avella of the 19th district (Bayside), who declared: "Equal pay—we don't settle for anything less."

## Bd 7 Hails Congestion Pricing Defeat

BY RICHARD GENTILVISO

Although Councilmember John Liu voted in favor of congestion pricing, no one at the April meeting of Community Board 7 seemed to mind.

"As this board has wished, the whole congestion pricing thing is out of the water," Liu said at the meeting in Flushing.

The reaction was spontaneous and in the affirmative. "Yes!"

Liu, chairperson of the council Committee on Transportation, said, "I think we still have to come up with ways to reduce traffic congestion. We have to think outside the box now."

Along with encouraging more car pooling to increase occupancy in vehicles, Liu said, "We will continue to push for greater frequency of express buses on existing lines."

Liu also said Mayor Michael Bloomberg will continue to crack down on abuse of city-issued parking placards. "It's not acceptable to use placards to park the entire day," he said.

With the upcoming city budget due by July 1, Liu said, "We're getting close." Regarding the state budget, passed on April 9, he said, "[It] could have been a lot worse."

The \$122 billion state budget increased spending by 4.9 percent.

But with warnings from Governor David Paterson that as much as \$12 billion may have to be cut from next year's budget, Liu acknowledged the 2009 state budget will be different. "Next year, I think it's going to be really tough," he said.

Albany will be sending \$643 million more to the city for education this year, but Liu said the city is looking to significantly cut spending for education in its budget. "There is going to be a huge crisis in school funding," said Liu. "[This] will hurt many schools in our area. [We're] starting to get into the whole [budget] fray. We'll have a busy next couple of months."

In other business, the Metropolitan Transit Authority - Bridges and Tunnels, announced work on the Throgs Neck Bridge will begin by this summer. "We're doing a roadway deck replacement that includes painting," said Frank Pasquale, MTA - Bridges and Tunnels Director of Public Relations. "This is a brand new steel reinforced deck, a much better riding surface."

The main span of the bridge, up to the merge between the Clearview Expressway and the Cross Island Parkway, will be replaced. In addition, in the repainting, all old lead paint will be removed.

The Cross Island Parkway access ramp will be shut down and some diversions to the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge are expected. During work, the center median will be removed and replaced with movable barriers. In the morning there will be two lanes to The Bronx that will reverse to two lanes to Queens in the afternoon, maintaining three lanes in each direction during the work.

The contract will be awarded in June and the roadway work will be conducted in 2009 during two separate five-week periods. There will be no winter work and the entire length of the project is expected to be two years and nine months from the date of the award in June.

"We will be working double shifts and stay within New York City noise codes," said Pasquale. "We will also be careful about construction lighting." Access to Little Neck Parkway will be unaffected.

## Mortgage Veteran Saitta Joins Ridgewood Savings Bank

Ridgewood Savings Bank has announced the appointment of Arthur P. Saitta as assistant vice president and residential business development officer. Saitta comes to Ridgewood with more than 20 years of experience in residential mortgage lending, where he has worked on both the retail and wholesale sides of the business. Previously, Saitta was the director of sales and operations for Trump Mortgage, LLC. He has also worked for Astoria Federal Savings Bank as an officer and manager of mortgage originations; European American Bank (EAB) as vice president; and Great Western Mortgage Bank as regional manager and bank officer.

Saitta will be responsible for new product development and implementation. He will also oversee Ridgewood's residential mortgage account team and the operations of the bank's mortgage centers in Hicksville, Garden City Park, and Glendale.

"We are pleased to welcome Arthur Saitta to

the Ridgewood Savings Bank family," Ridgewood Savings Bank Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer William C. McGarry said, "Art brings a proven expertise in real estate financing that will certainly assist prospective and current homeowners in realizing their dreams. Investing and reinvesting in the neighborhoods we serve is one of the core missions of our community-focused bank."

"I am truly excited to have joined Ridgewood Savings Bank and am looking forward to continuing its history of providing customers with personalized mortgage services tailored precisely to meet their needs. I am proud to be a part of that tradition," Saitta responded.

Ridgewood Savings Bank also announced that Vice President Stephen Matvya has retired after 14 years of distinguished service to the bank. His retirement capped a 45-year career in the mortgage industry. "We would like to extend our best wishes to Stephen Matvya in his retirement,"

McGarry said. "Steve held a number of key roles in our lending division, most notably playing an integral role in the expansion of the Bank's residential loan portfolio. He certainly will be missed."

Ridgewood offers a wide variety of products and services for home mortgages and home equity as well as consumer and commercial loans, all with flexible terms and affordable rates. The bank's lending territories include Manhattan, Queens and The Bronx in New York City; Westchester, Nassau, Suffolk, Orange, Dutchess, and Rockland Counties in New York State; Bergen County in New Jersey, and Fairfield and Litchfield Counties in Connecticut.

Chartered in 1921, Ridgewood Savings Bank ([www.ridgewoodbank.com](http://www.ridgewoodbank.com)) is the largest mutual savings bank in New York state with \$4.1 billion dollars in assets, serving customers throughout the New York metropolitan area.