

Legislation

Betsy Gotbaum has introduced and co-sponsored 346 bills.

Bills introduced offer solutions to important, yet unaddressed problems that affect New Yorkers, including the need to allow advocates to help New Yorkers cut through red tape by setting up help desks in public benefit offices, reduce hazardous mold and pest infestations in apartments, require pharmacies to translate prescription information into other languages, protect caregivers from workplace discrimination, and more.

New York City Employee Retirement System Trustee

The Public Advocate is a Trustee on New York City's largest retirement system, with over \$40 billion in assets. She holds one of six full votes, which she used to increase the representation of smaller fund managers, target programs that invest pension dollars in rehabilitation of affordable housing, force companies to adopt fair labor practices related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and more.

Fund for Public Advocacy

Betsy Gotbaum's not-for-profit fund is an incubator for innovative government programs, including a program to equip paramedics with motorcycles to increase emergency response times. The fund also supports programs to provide tens-of-thousands of New Yorkers with important information on public housing, senior services, education and more. Since its inception, the fund has raised over \$2,500,000.

Looking Ahead

With about a year left in office, Betsy Gotbaum has an ambitious agenda.

She will continue her successful fight to improve education, child welfare and women's health services. Additionally, she will:

- Propose the city expand children's access to primary care, dental care, and wellness programs, including nutrition and exercise
- Increase access to public benefits by enabling advocates to set up help desks in public benefit offices
- Make available the city's first-ever public benefits resource for 600,000 immigrants
- Guarantee workplace protections for caregivers.

Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum

IMPROVING CITY SERVICES



Betsy Gotbaum was first elected to serve as Public Advocate in November 2001 and re-elected in 2005. She is only the third woman elected to a city-wide post in NYC history.

As Public Advocate, Betsy Gotbaum improves the lives of the City's most vulnerable residents by championing reforms that lead to improved city services. The following is a snapshot of some of Betsy Gotbaum's successes as Public Advocate to date.

“Ms. Gotbaum has chosen to... advocate for the city's most vulnerable, underserved and invisible residents: poor families, battered women and schoolchildren.”

New York Times, September 7, 2005

Education

- **Commission on School Governance:** Betsy Gotbaum's strong advocacy on behalf of school children led the State Assembly to ask her to convene a commission on school governance to make recommendations on the reauthorization of mayoral control before it expires in June 2009. The commission, whose members include experts in education, policy and government, met with over 60 stakeholders and acquired a series of original papers from nationally recognized experts; these will be published by the Brookings Press. The commission's report serves as a blueprint for a discussion on the future of mayoral control.
- **Fought Forced Drop Outs:** Betsy Gotbaum and Advocates for Children showed that, over 3 years, the Department of Education (DOE) forced 160,000 students to drop out of high schools, triggering new procedures to prevent this illegal practice.
- **Secured Special Education Services:** Betsy Gotbaum revealed that the DOE was withholding special education services for up to 20,000 students, prompting the DOE to improve the special education evaluation system and offer make-up sessions to students denied services.
- **Improved Career and Technical Education:** Betsy Gotbaum found that the DOE missed opportunities to provide students with career and technical education (CTE) programs that lead to living-wage, career-track jobs. Her recommendations for improving the CTE program were incorporated into the final report of the city's CTE Task Force. A pilot program will launch in 2009.

Betsy Gotbaum is an outspoken critic of the DOE's lack of transparency and accountability, its cell phone ban, its practice of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on no-bid contracts, and its failed safety and suspension policy.

Women's Issues

- **Increased a Woman's Access to Reproductive Health:** Betsy Gotbaum and NARAL Pro Choice NY successfully lobbied the city to institute an abortion training program for its medical staff, create separate facilities for women undergoing this procedure, and make available the medical abortion pill.
- **Ensured Availability of Vital Maternity Information:** Betsy Gotbaum forced the 44 city hospitals that offer labor and delivery services to provide legally-mandated maternity information and convinced the City's Department of Health to make this important information available online.
- **Improved Access to the HPV Vaccine:** Betsy Gotbaum revealed few city clinics offered the HPV vaccine. Shortly thereafter, the city announced all immunization clinics would make this vaccine available.

Child Welfare

- **Helped More At-Risk Families:** Betsy Gotbaum advocated against the mayor's shortsighted cuts to preventive services, getting an additional \$22 million to help more than 1,000 families stay together.
- **Improved Child Safety at City Shelters:** Betsy Gotbaum identified that, over a 3 year period, 20 children died of abuse or neglect in city shelters. The City Council passed legislation she introduced mandating the distribution of information on reporting of child abuse, providing materials on protecting children, and creating a training program for shelter staff.
- **Increased Public Awareness of Sleeping Safety:** Betsy Gotbaum found that the most common cause of fatalities of children known to the child welfare system was improper sleeping position, prompting the city to launch a \$1.5 million "Take Good Care of Your Baby" public education campaign.
- **Prompted Expansion of Legal Services to Better Protect Children:** Betsy Gotbaum identified a 23% annual child welfare attorney turnover rate due to high caseloads, leading the city to hire 25 more attorneys and increase the legal budget by \$3.4 million.

Fighting Hunger

- **Improved Access to Food Stamps:** Betsy Gotbaum's investigations and advocacy resulted in the food stamp application being reduced from 16 pages to 4, evening and weekend food stamp office hours for working New Yorkers, and a community-based outreach program that enrolled 77,000 New Yorkers in the food stamp program.

Improving Government

- **City Services Satisfaction Project:** Betsy Gotbaum initiated a program to assess New Yorkers' opinions of city services in order to provide city agencies with information they need to make improvements. In partnership with the Mayor and the Fund for the City of New York, 100,000 New Yorkers were surveyed. This is the largest municipal services survey ever conducted.
- **Constituent Services:** The Office of the Public Advocate runs a municipal helpline that helps about 12,000 New Yorkers a year get the public benefits and services that are rightfully theirs. Constituent calls for help with public benefits and services including public housing, housing, income support and food stamps, have more than doubled during Gotbaum's tenure, as have calls related to the schools.