

# BROOKLYN NEWS

## EDITORIAL

### Raccoons hazard to city

There was some hope last week when an errant raccoon took up residence on the roof of City Hall that there might be a change in official policy toward the masked critters.

They are a long-established nuisance to householders in Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights and some other neighborhoods, while making occasional unwelcome appearances elsewhere in the borough.

Raids on the trash are usually the first sign of the new neighbors, but making a mess is the least of their unsuitability for urban living.

They carry diseases — such as raccoon roundworm, leptospirosis and rabies — that can be transmitted to pets and even humans. Six rabid raccoons have been found in the city this year.

They look cute, but they are wild animals and fierce enough to kill a cat or small dog if they feel threatened. The city mostly takes a live-and-let-live approach: If they aren't sick or injured, you are on your own as far as dealing with them is concerned.

Recently they have even invaded the concrete canyons of lower Manhattan. One stumbled into a SoHo boutique last month. Then there was the one on the roof of City Hall.

Those who thought the raccoon on City Hall's roof would spark a change or even discussion of municipal policy toward raccoons were disappointed. When the beast turned out to be healthy, animal control officials just let it go. In a Manhattan park.

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BE OUR GUEST: ANDREW FRIEDMAN, lawyer

## We can't afford NOT to give employees some sick time

**W**hile working as a building handyman, Guillermo Serna was told to demolish a fourth-floor bathroom and carry the heavy construction debris down the stairs.

Lugging heavy sinks and toilets down the stairs, he developed a hernia. Serna's employer did not provide paid sick leave and he could not afford to take time off to deal with his health problem. His condition grew more serious.

Eventually, Serna was forced to have an operation. Even though his doctor told him to stay home for a month to recuperate, Serna returned to work after 15 days to avoid lost wages and losing his job.

Serna, like hundreds of thousands of workers in New York City, had to choose between his health and his job.

Throughout the city, only 5% of restaurant workers have paid sick days. As a result, they routinely report to work, and handle our food, while sick because they cannot afford to lose pay or even lose their jobs.

Similarly, thousands of parents each week are forced to send their children to school, even when they are sick, and contagious, because the parents do not have

even a single day of paid sick leave. The status quo is a public health disaster.

This spring, during the swine flu outbreak, public health officials counseled New Yorkers to stay home from work if they had any symptoms of the H1N1 virus. Unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers simply could not stay home without risking losing their jobs, or taking a tough financial hit.

**'The status quo is a public health disaster.'**

There is expected to be a resurgence of swine flu in the fall, just as most children return to school. Eventually, the pandemic will pass. But the essential public safety issue remains: People who are sick or hurt, and who cannot afford or are not allowed to take unpaid leave, will continue to go to work sick and hurt.

Sick workers are less productive, more likely to have accidents on the job, and spread disease. Injuries and illnesses that could be taken care of early, at a lower medical cost, grow into major health crises.

Last week City Councilwoman Gail Brewer (D-Manhattan) introduced paid sick leave legislation that would address these basic issues of public safety and fairness to working New Yorkers.

The bill would guarantee all workers a minimum number of paid sick days to care

for themselves or an immediate family member — nine days for workers at large and medium businesses and five days for workers at small businesses.

The legislation also makes sense for business. Workers with the security of paid sick leave are happier in their jobs; in turn, this reduces turnover and recruitment and training costs.

**S**an Francisco and Washington have successfully implemented paid sick leave laws. According to a 2009 study by the Urban Institute, many employers in San Francisco reported minimal business impacts of the paid sick leave law. Several small business owners here in New York City, such as Freddy Castiblanco of Terrazza Café in Jackson Heights, Queens, are leading the charge for an earned paid sick leave law in New York City.

The time has come for the city to pass an earned paid sick leave law. Workers and children should stay home when they are sick. Public policy should help them do so and protect the public health and well-being.

*Andrew Friedman is a lawyer and the founding co-director of Make the Road by Walking, a nonprofit immigrant rights advocacy group.*

## VOICE of the PEOPLE

### Not E-Z for idiots

Here's a way to improve gas mileage, cut pollution, even get a discount, and we won't even get the government involved. It's called E-ZPass. You see it every day at toll booths when the morons without them back up traffic, clog the middle lanes and then cut off others who wait in the cash lanes. Get one, and give the rest of us a break.

*Richard Ferro*

### Fruits of our labor

The way to end welfare is for social workers to go to all fruit stands and supermarkets and tell the owners to hire welfare recipients rather than illegals. Problem solved. Pass a law to get rid of illegals and hire needy Americans and save our city.

*Mike Viehl*

### Spray it ain't so

Why do I see water fountains in kids' playgrounds still spraying out fresh water at 4 a.m. in locked parks? Let me guess, the "recession" made it impossible for the mayor to put timers or "OFF" knobs on them for eight years? Is this part of the "greening" trend our dishonest politicians keep telling us about?

*Sean Sabelli*

### Guard your child

If I see another parent walking far ahead of their child I'm going to scream. Parents, please hold your precious gift near to you at all times. It only takes a second for a child to be snatched up and taken from you. The other day a little boy was walking halfway up a block alone while his mother was at the corner already yelling for the boy to "come on." Our children are our gifts from God, please treat them that way.

*Lenore McKinney*

### Election by checkbook

I would like to propose a campaign finance law that says those seeking office must use only public campaign funds so that millionaires and billionaires would not be able to buy themselves positions in government.

All candidates would be on equal footing and would be forced to offer cogent arguments to convince voters they deserved the job.

*John Richman*



## College dean is honored by City Council

As part of City Council's annual Jamaican Independence Day celebration, Council presents proclamation to Michele Rodney (3rd from l.), dean of the School of Criminal Justice at Monroe College, last Wednesday. Joining in presentation are (from l.) Council member Mathieu Eugene, Jamaican Consul General Geneive Brown-Metzger, Rodney, Council members Leroy Comrie and Kendall Stewart, and Assemblyman Nick Perry.

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