



# BROOKLYN'S IN THE HOUSE

## NEWS FROM CONGRESSWOMAN YVETTE D. CLARKE

### 11<sup>th</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

*Representing: Brownsville, Ocean Hill, Crown Heights, Greater Flatbush, East Flatbush, Kensington, Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Gowanus, Prospect Heights, Prospect Gardens, Grand Army Plaza, Windsor Terrace, Flatbush and Midwood*

# August 14, 2009

## Rep. Clarke Celebrates AmeriCorps Graduation

On Friday August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, I was honored to attend the Community Counseling and Mediation Center Annual AmeriCorps Graduation Ceremony.

Approximately 15 students graduated for Community Counseling and Mediation Center Annual (CMM) AmeriCorps Leadership & Educational Attainment Project (LEAP). This program is designed to provide young people with the resources they need to address their community's concerns. The Corps helps to address a wide range of issues across Brooklyn ranging from access to education, community awareness of public safety, the environment and much more.



Rep. Clarke Attends (CMM) AmeriCorps LEAP Program Graduation

It was an honor to stand before these graduates and see their commitment and determination to giving back to the Brooklyn community. I was able to share with them my personal journey in public service and encouraged them to continue addressing concerns in their community as a regular part of their lives. I commend the AmeriCorps's LEAP program for making its mission to empower disadvantaged youth and adults by getting them involved through community building efforts and leadership development. I am confident that these young leaders have a bright future ahead of them and will no doubt make a positive lasting impression on the Brooklyn community.

## Back- To-School Federal Grants

***Open Society Institute and State and Federal Governments Provide \$175 Million to Low-Income Families for the School Year***

As a Member of the House Education and Labor Committee, I believe that education is the gateway out of poverty. On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 I applauded Governor Patterson's announcement regarding the partnership between philanthropist George Soros and the Open Society Institute (OSI) offering grants of \$200 to more than 800,000 children returning to school this September across New York State in order to purchase school supplies. The collaboration between the federal government stimulus funds, George Soros and OSI is a tremendous step to ensuring that our children have access to the educational tools that they need. Families receiving public assistance or food stamps can qualify for the grant of \$200 per school-aged child (ages 3 through 17). I am hopeful that through these grants, the children of Brooklyn, New York will have the opportunity to start off their school year with the confidence they need to excel.



Dear Neighbor:

I want to invite you to the "Forum for Seniors and Persons with Disability" that I am hosting on Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup> from 2:00pm to 4:00pm.

Do you have questions about your Medicare benefits? Do you have questions about filing for SSI benefits due to a disability? Are you confused about which agency to go to for help?

The purpose of this forum is to education our senior citizens and person of disabilities about the benefits that they may be qualified for.

There will be a panel of New York City's top government agencies answering questions about access to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and much more.

The event will take place at the Community Room, 123 Linden Blvd., on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor (Between Bedford and Rogers Avenues).

It is important that you have access to the facts you need to understand the benefits that you may be qualified for.

Sincerely,  
*Yvette D. Clarke*  
Member of Congress

# Celebrating the 47th Anniversary of Jamaican Independence

August 6, 2009 was the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence for Jamaica. It was with deep humility that I address the Jamaica Independence Celebration Foundation, Inc and the Consulate General of Jamaica as their keynote speaker.



Rep. Clarke Address the Jamaica Independence Celebration Foundation, Inc

As many of you may know, my mother and father emigrated from the great island-nation of Jamaica, West Indies to the United States in the 1950's. It is through the foundation of my culture roots that I am able to adequately serve the 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of New York, containing one of the most diverse Caribbean constituencies in the U.S. I spoke to the Foundation about some of the very important issues I've been working on during the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress which will ultimately have a major impact on our families, friends and communities.

One of my very first legislative initiatives in my first term in Congress was a bill recognizing the crime and security issues as major concerns for the Caribbean Basin and calling for a Caribbean Merida Initiative. This June, the House authorized the President to incorporate CARICOM into the Merida Initiative.

While celebrating Jamaican Independence Day and remembering the great contributions and achievements that Jamaicans have made in the US is important, let us not forget that we still have much work to do in addressing our concerns on a federal level. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the house and senate to ensure that these needs are met.

## USCIS INTRODUCES CASE STATUS UPDATES FROM

The U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has made a customer service number and e-mail address available to individuals inquiring about the status of a case. Callers will be given a 'complaint number' and advised to wait 30 days for the situation to be resolved. Constituents can now email the Service Center, which has jurisdiction over their case. The USCIS encourages you to email these centers after 30 days from the initial phone call, if there has been no resolution.

Customers are encouraged to check the USCIS Web site at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) frequently for updates or call the USCIS National Customer Service Center toll free at (800) 375-5283.

Childhood nutrition remains one of the issues I am most committed to addressing during my tenure in Congress.

Earlier this year, I cosponsored H.R. 1869, the White House Conference on Food and Nutrition Act. This bill directs the President of the United States to call the White House Conference on Food and Nutrition to be convened in order to make fundamental policy recommendations on ways to end hunger and to improve nutrition in this country. It is unconscionable that, in the wealthiest nation on Earth, more than 35 million Americans live in households that face a constant struggle against hunger. Over 12 million of these people are children and approximately 5 million include seniors, the disabled, and the critically ill.

The highest levels of this nation's leadership must begin a discussion on the primary causes of hunger, food insecurity, and under-nutrition. I have joined 80 of my congressional colleagues in this effort to focus on assisting the most vulnerable in our society. This legislation still remains in the House Committee on Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry. I will continue pressing for action from the White House on this nation's hunger challenge.

Even those that technically have access to food still need greater access to healthy meals. H.R. 1324 was introduced on March 5, 2009 by Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) and was referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. I am a member of the Education and Labor Committee and am also a proud co sponsor of this bill. Establishing healthy eating and nutrition habits early on are an important part of any child's life. This bill would apply Food and Drug Administration nutrition standards for foods sold out of vending machines, in cafeterias, and a la carte items in schools. Healthy food is essential to the learning process. Students who are provided healthy meal choices reap not only the nutritional benefits but also are better prepared to face the school day. Studies show that students who receive a well balanced meal focus better and are therefore better able to learn.

Currently in our country one third of children, approximately 25 million, are overweight or in danger of becoming overweight. In the last two decades, rates of childhood obesity have doubled for children ages 6 to 11 and tripled for adolescents. It is no coincidence that these childhood obesity rates increased during the same time that fast food and high sugar foods became more prevalent. The health of our children is crucially important and we have a responsibility to provide them with healthy food and proper nutrition.

In addition to fully supporting H.R. 1324, I am also encouraging Congress to reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act, which is scheduled for reauthorization in September of this year.