

# BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW NEWS



SPRING 2009  
Volume 39  
No.2



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## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

“Happenings” really describes our past few and next few months. We’ve launched a Facebook page (thanks to our more tech-savvy leadership), welcomed our new intern, Iris Houston, held a wonderfully informative and entertaining International Women’s Day event, begun review of candidate PAC questionnaires, and are in the midst of planning the first annual NOW-ie Awards! Please note that our chapter phone number has changed. Many thanks to Judith Ebert for so conscientiously receiving and responding to chapter phone calls for so many years. Our new number is: 718 769-0101. Please make note of it. To go forward in these fast-paced times, we’re reaching out to our membership for contributions over and above your membership dues. See our enclosed Fundraising appeal and please be generous.

You’re invited to a House Party! Our June chapter meeting will be multi-purpose: Election of officers, dinner with your BQNOW sisters (and brothers), and a house party!

While there’s been a recent repro-rights VICTORY - Emergency Contraception is now available over the counter to all who request it regardless of age in NY State - we lack legislation that safe-guards our basic reproductive rights ! Yes! Thanks to the Roberts-led Supreme Court, New York, the first state to legalize abortion in the nation, can no longer afford to rely on federal constitutional law to protect the fundamental right to make private reproductive healthcare decisions. Come to the June meeting to find out what we can do about this.

June also brings us the National NOW convention in Indianapolis from the 19th to the 21st. We have several delegate slots still open, so if you’re planning to go to the convention, contact President Julie Kirshner ([julierachel19@webtv.net](mailto:julierachel19@webtv.net)) first and get registered as a chapter delegate.

We’re on Facebook! Check out our new page. To get there, go to [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com) and in the “Search” box, type in “Brooklyn Queens NOW” and there we are! Our intern, Iris, will be monitoring the site and posting our upcoming actions on it.

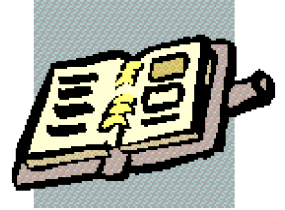
BQNOW is beginning to gear up for the citywide elections this fall. Positions from the Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, to the Borough Presidents and the City Council races are all up for grabs. Candidates have started contacting our PAC for our endorsement. Primary races are in September and in general, the winner of Democratic Primary is the winner in November’s General Election.

Our March 8th International Women’s Day event was a success despite a last minute change in speakers: Velmanette Montgomery and Diane J. Savino were called to Albany for late into the night budget negotiations. Graciously, Congressional Representative Yvette Clarke spoke of women who influenced her career and Senator Savino’s Communications Assistant, Anne Tinsley, discussed pending legislation. Dr. Nancy Goldner, scheduled to speak on women’s health issues, ironically cancelled due to illness. We hope to hear from her at another time. Shirley Ranz spoke about Ernestine Rose, a lesser-known suffragist who inspired Susan B. Anthony to take to the roads across the nation to campaign for women’s suffrage. To begin and end the event, well-known feminist folk musician Marie Mularczyk-O’Connell wowed us with her beautiful voice and feminist oriented selections.

The “NOWies” are coming! The “NOWies” are coming! We’re considering our own recognition awards and may even hold a “red carpet” event this fall. Come to the May and June meetings and let’s  
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## BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW CHAPTER CALENDAR-2009

Chapter meetings take place the first Monday of the month at 7pm, unless otherwise noted. Inclement weather may force the rescheduling of a chapter meeting, so be sure to RSVP the number provided or call 718 769-0101. Call the numbers below for exact location and directions.



- May 4 **Chapter Meeting** in Midwood. Call 718-951-7441.  
Jun 1, **6:30pm Chapter Meeting & House Party** in Sheepshead Bay. Election of Officers. 718-769-8901.  
Jun 19-21 National NOW Conference in Indianapolis. Check [www.now.org](http://www.now.org) for details.  
July 6 **Chapter Meeting** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-891-2490.  
Aug 29 or 30 Annual **Woman's Suffrage Day Celebration Pot-Luck**. Jackson Heights.  
Call 718-672-6399. Check our website or call for exact date and time.  
Sept 2 (**Wed.**) **Chapter Meeting** in Forest Hills. Call 718-263-7638.

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discuss this fun event. Our Women's Suffrage Potluck is in the planning stages, but mark your calendars for the last week in August for this fun event. We'll be holding it in Jackson Heights, Queens for the first time.

We've set our meeting dates through September, 2009. Check out our Calendar for details and don't forget to call the chapter contact number (718 769-0101) or check our website ([www.brooklynqueensnow.org](http://www.brooklynqueensnow.org)) for any changes in meeting time or place.

Finally, on a personal note, Sherry Rogers wants to remind us that good eye health is not to be taken for granted. One in every three persons will develop a retinal disease during the course of their lives. Sherry has a degenerative retinal disease, called Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). She reminds us that while research is making great strides to identify the genes which cause Macular Degeneration, RP, Stargardt's, and other retinal diseases, and clinical trials are being developed to treat and hopefully cure such diseases, it's up to us to protect our eyes.

Always wear sunglasses during daylight hours, increase Omega 3 in our diets (fish oil supplements or fatty fish consumption), and wear visors or brimmed hats/caps when out in the sunlight. Come join her on May 9th at Riverside Park when she participates in VisionWalk2009 to raise funds for the Foundation Fighting Blindness ([www.fightblindness.org](http://www.fightblindness.org)).

### BQNOW OFFICER NOMINATIONS

Nominations for chapter officers closed on April 1st, 2009. The following nominations were received:

President: Julie Kirshner  
Vice-President: Rachelle Suissa  
Treasurer: E. Barbara Sheren  
Secretary: Sherry Rogers

Chapter elections will be held at the June 1st Chapter meeting. Call 718 769-8901 for details.

## HERSTORY

The New York Times - January 24, 2009

### Constance E. Cook, 89, Who Wrote Abortion Law, Is Dead

By DENNIS HEVESI

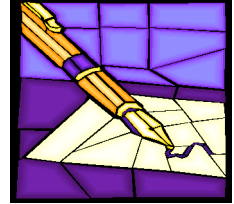
Constance E. Cook, a former New York State assemblywoman who was co-author of the law that legalized abortion in the state three years before the Supreme Court's landmark decision in Roe v. Wade, died Tuesday at her home in Ithaca, N.Y. She was 89. Her daughter, Catherine Cook, confirmed the death.

Mrs. Cook, a Republican, represented the 128th Assembly District, which then included Tompkins, Yates and Seneca Counties, from 1962 to 1974, and took pride in her support for the expansion of the State University system.

But her most significant influence came with the passage, on April

-Continued on Page 4-

# Letter from the President



Dear Members of Brooklyn-QueensNOW:

I hope we at BQ-NOW find you well and opening your home to spring. Enjoy our newsletter and remember, our bi-annual elections are coming up in June. Please continue to support BQ-NOW.

With that in mind, I am sending you this appeal for the chapter. As we have been checking our budget for the year, we've noticed that it is becoming more meager. Only a small portion of membership funds go directly to the chapters. Most of the dues sent in go to National NOW as well as NOW-New York State.

The printing and postage funds necessary to send out our newsletters to keep you informed, and the funds needed to maintain our office computers and supplies, just to name a few items, are dwindling.

Just this last month, we had a terrific event to celebrate International Women's Day. Events like this drain our chapter financially, but we think they are essential to our members as well as a way to reach out to potential members. Also, there are costs involved in lobbying at home and in Albany for essential legislation.

That's why I am turning to you. We hope that you will consider sending us a contribution at this time. All amounts are appreciated and will help to keep our chapter working at its best. We are grateful for your continuing membership and hope to see you at a future meeting. Remember, stay active with NOW!

Julie Kirshner  
President, BQ-NOW

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Each newsletter costs us \$400. Special events meetings costs us \$300. Maintaining our equipment costs us several hundred dollars. Please let us know where you'd like your contribution to go.

I would like to help the chapter continue it's work by making a contribution of:

\$50    \$100    \$150    Other

Make your check payable to Brooklyn-Queens NOW, and mail to P.O.Box 350-746, Brooklyn, NY 11235.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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If you're not receiving our email alerts, provide your email address here:

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Keep up the good work!

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### NYS Senator Velmanette Montgomery

*Chairperson, NYS Senate Committee  
on Children and Families*

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***Champion of Women's Rights, Supporter  
of Brooklyn-Queens NOW***

### Constance Cook -from Page 2-

10, 1970, of the abortion-rights law that she wrote with State Senator Franz S. Leichter, a Manhattan Democrat. Three decades later, she seemed modest about it.

"I didn't really have a sense at that time that we had done something momentous, though it was long overdue," Mrs. Cook told The New York Times in April 2000. "Looking back now, it seems like a bigger deal."

Attempts to loosen New York's abortion prohibition had failed throughout the 1960s. Then, on March 18, 1970, after a raucous five-hour debate, the State Senate passed the Cook-Leichter bill, which contained no restrictions on the procedure, by a 31-to-26 vote. That set the stage for an even more dramatic vote in the Assembly. With chances for passage deemed more difficult, the bill was amended to allow unrestricted abortion up to 24 weeks,

but after that only to protect the pregnant woman's life.

Midway through the roll call, Assemblyman George M. Michaels, a Democrat from a heavily Roman Catholic district in central New York, quietly voted no. The count ended at 74 to 74, with one Assembly member absent. The speaker, Perry B. Duryea Jr., a Montauk Republican, had not voted, in keeping with the tradition that the speaker votes only if it affects the outcome. Before the clerk could bring the vote to a close, Assemblyman Michaels stood and asked to change his vote. "I fully appreciate that this is the termination of my political career," he said. He was right.

-continued on back page-

# ACTION ALERTS



## Tell Congress to pass the MATTHEW SHEPARD ACT

Ordinary people are living in fear for their safety and their lives every day, in small towns and big cities. Hate crimes against LGBT people are on the rise, but the federal government has no direct authority to investigate, prosecute or help local law enforcement crack down.

We can't let this continue. We can't let friends and neighbors become targets for violence simply because of who they are.

Congress passed the hate crimes bill in 2007, but because of George Bush's veto threat, it never became law. And now, right-wing extremists are once again making outrageous claims that the bill would criminalize preachers, end free speech, and so on. This bill, which passed both houses of Congress in 2007 but did not become law, would protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people from bias-motivated hate violence.

While all violent crimes are heinous, hate crimes are uniquely destructive, casting a pall of terror over an entire community. They don't just target a single victim. They are designed to "send a message" that an individual and "their kind" will not be tolerated, often leaving large numbers of people feeling isolated, vulnerable and unprotected.

Attacks against LGBT people are one of the more common forms of hate violence but, illogically, one of the least protected. Hate crimes as a whole declined 1 percent last year, according to the FBI, but LGBT hate crimes increased 6 percent.

Contact your Congressional Representative and your US Senators to support this legislation. For more info, go to [http://www.hrcactioncenter.org/campaign/hate\\_crime](http://www.hrcactioncenter.org/campaign/hate_crime)

Follow up on **Breastfeeding Rights** legislation

Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, happily announced the creation of breastfeeding rooms in the US Capitol. However, here in NY, there are no guarantees that women who breastfeed their infants will be either accommodated or protected from arrest for "indecent exposure". There is a bill, known as the **Breastfeeding Protection Act**, which mandates (among other things) that women are informed, both before and after they give birth, of the benefits of breastfeeding and their right to breast feed. It also states that they have a right to breastfeed wherever they may be. This includes the workplace and public places. This legislation (A00789A) passed the NYS Assembly overwhelmingly but has yet to see action in the NYS Senate where it currently resides (Bill # S1107) in 3 committees: Health, Codes, and Finance. Contact your NY State senator to get this bill moving.

## NYS REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACT.

Last Newsletter's Action Alert supported the drafting and passage of this bill. This legislation will be the focus of our June Meeting's House Party. For those of you who cannot make the meeting, here's the follow up:

There is now a bill in the NYS Assembly (A01400) which would make it illegal to intimidate persons entering or leaving women's health clinics!

In the wake of clinic violence and the murder of doctors who work at these facilities, it is vitally important that the confidentiality of the people who use clinics and the people who work there be protected by all means. This bill simply seeks to safeguard patients and workers from those persons who would use any information to harm them. This bill has no corresponding NYS Senate bill. It was referred to the Assembly Codes Committee in January, where it will remain unless we demand action.

Contact your NYS Assemblymember and Senator to get behind this legislation.

## BQ NOW LEADERSHIP CONTACT NUMBERS

President: Julie Kirshner 718-769-9607  
Vice President: Rachelle Suissa 347-515-1410  
Secretary: Sherry Rogers 718-263-7638

Treasurer: Barbara Sheren 718-891-2490  
Membership: Marilyn Rogers 718-457-0703  
Editor: Shirley Ranz 718-769-8901

To locate and send messages to your elected officials go to:  
<http://capwiz.com/lwv/state/main/?lvl=L&azip=14215&state=NY&view=myofficials>

### **Constance Cook -from Page 2-**

Mr. Duryea cast the final “aye” vote, making it 76 to 73. The next day, Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller signed the law. In January 1973, the Supreme Court issued its Roe v. Wade ruling, patterned in part on the New York law.

Constance Eberhardt was born in Shaker Heights, Ohio, on Aug. 17, 1919, one of three children of Walter and Catherine Sellmann Cook. Besides her daughter, Mrs. Cook is survived by a son, John; a sister, Marjorie Haupt; and three grandchildren. Her husband, Alfred, died in 1998.

Mrs. Cook graduated from Cornell in 1941 and earned her law degree there in 1943. After law school, she went to work at a Wall Street law firm. Five years later, she moved to Ithaca, where she met Mr. Cook. She became a legal assistant to Assemblyman Ray S. Ashberry. When he retired, she successfully ran for his Assembly seat. In 1976, Mrs. Cook became the first woman to be a vice president of Cornell, as vice president for land grant affairs.

That year, she took up the cause of the Rev. Betty Bone Schiess, one of 11 women who had been ordained to the Episcopal priesthood by reformist bishops. But Bishop Ned Cole, of the Diocese of Central New York, refused to license her.

Mrs. Cook took the case to the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which ruled in Ms. Schiess's favor. In July 1976, the General Convention of the church passed a resolution declaring that “no one shall be denied access” to ordination on the basis of sex.

“The overwhelming support that we got in our efforts to challenge the church through the law was one of the things that made for change,” Ms. Schiess said on Friday. “Nothing significant would have happened without the attention of Constance Cook.”

National Organization for Women  
Brooklyn-Queens Chapter  
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