



WARD 4
MURIEL
BOWSER COUNCILMEMBER



FOCUS ON

April 1, 2009

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Dear Neighbors,

The economic downturn has caused hardships for many in our community. In these trying times it is important for our residents to know what services and benefits are available to them. Here is a short list of some of the important benefits available. Please share this information with friends and neighbors who may need it.

- ★ I co-introduced legislation to allow District workers who have been involuntarily terminated or laid off to enjoy the health coverage benefit subsidy provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

This legislation, "Mini-COBRA", will allow District workers who have been involuntarily terminated or laid off to enjoy health coverage benefit subsidy of 65 percent of the costs of continuing coverage under COBRA or Mini-COBRA for a period of 9 months. This means that District workers will only be responsible for 35 percent of their health care premium during this time period. This measure extends the period of time for which District workers can continue with their employer's health benefits plan from 3 months to 9 months. Without the subsidy, workers are responsible for the entire premium.

- ★ Unemployment Compensation benefits program has been extended by 7 weeks.

Individuals with regular Unemployment claims and existing Emergency Unemployment Claims that expired before March 28, 2009 may be eligible for an extension of benefits for up to 7 additional weeks, for a total of 20 weeks. The extension of benefits will end August 29, 2009. In order to be eligible, an individual cannot be currently employed or collecting benefits from another state. If you would like additional information or have specific questions regarding a claim, please contact the Department of Employment Services (DOES) at 202-724-7000.

- ★ Food Stamp benefits will increase beginning in April.

This increased benefit will apply to both current and new food stamp customers. The additional benefits will be automatically added to the customers Electronic Benefit Transfer card (EBT). If you would like additional information on Food Stamp Benefits or how to apply please contact the District of Columbia Department of Human Services, Income Maintenance Administration at 202-724-5506.

Muriel

Legislative Corner

Legislative Update:

The Council of the District of Columbia will continue consideration of the Mayor's proposed budget for FY 2010, which begins October 1st. The Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs held budget oversight hearings on the Office of the Tenant Advocate and the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs on Wednesday, April 1st. On April 3rd, the Committee will hold a joint roundtable with the Committee on Economic Development to review the D.C. Auditor's recent report that was critical of the Certified Capital Companies (CAPCO) program. The CAPCO program is a public-private partnership intended to create jobs for District residents by providing capital to District businesses.

The Committee will hold a public hearing next week on two bills which Councilmember Bowser recently introduced: (1) B18-134: Demolition or Raze Permit Community Notification Amendment Act of 2009, which would require the owner of a structure to be demolished to post notification on the exterior of the structure 30 days prior to the date of demolition, so that neighbors will know that demolition will occur. (2) B18-173: Continuation of Health Coverage Amendment Act of 2009, which will ensure that District workers who have been involuntarily terminated will be able to collect the continuing health coverage benefit subsidy provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Upcoming Hearings:

Friday, April 3

11:00 AM, Room 120, Joint Public Roundtable, Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs and the Committee on Economic Development, Muriel Bowser and Kwame Brown, Chairs, agenda item: District of Columbia Auditor's Report on CAPCO.

Thursday, April 9

10:00 AM, Room 120, Budget Oversight Public Hearing, Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs, Muriel Bowser, Chair, Agenda item: Public Service Commission FY 2010 budget proposal.

11:30 AM, Room 120, Public Hearing, Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs, Muriel Bowser, Chair, agenda items: B18-134: Demolition or Raze Permit Community Notification Amendment Act of 2009 and B18-173: Continuation of Health Coverage Amendment Act of 2009.

Wednesday, April 22

10:00 AM, Room 412, Budget Oversight Public Hearing, Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs, Muriel Bowser, Chair, agenda items: Office of the People's Counsel FY 2010 budget proposal.

1:30 PM, Room 412, Budget Oversight Public Hearing, Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs, Muriel Bowser, Chair, agenda items: Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking FY 2010 budget proposal.

Please visit the new DC Council website for more details at: www.dccouncil.us.

Around the Ward

Last Saturday, along with more than 100 Ward 4 residents and guests, Councilmember Bowser honored three Ward 4 residents as “Exceptional Women in the Media.” In recognition of Women’s History Month, the Councilmember honored Jonetta Rose Barras, Eleanor Clift, and Andrea Roane. Jonetta Rose Barras writes for the Washington Examiner and is also a well known author and radio commentator. Eleanor Clift of the McLaughlin Group is also an author, and a writer for Newsweek. Andrea Roane is an anchorwoman on Channel 9 News and founder of the Buddy Check 9 Program, which encourages women get mammograms. The event was held at the Brightwood Bistro, a wonderful restaurant in the heart of Ward 4. We are so proud that these exceptional women are part of our Ward 4 family!

On Monday, March 30th, Councilmember Bowser, along with Mayor Adrian M. Fenty, Councilmember Graham, community members and other invited guests, inaugurated the brand new 16th Street Express Bus service. This service will operate on 16th Street, NW between the Silver Spring and McPherson Square Metrorail stations. The new bus line will feature new blue and gray clean-fuel, hybrid-electric buses, operating hours of: 6:30 am-10:00 am and 3:00 pm -7:00 pm, and 6-8 minute travel/time savings. The 16th Street Express makes only 16 stops round-trip between the Silver Spring and McPherson Square Metrorail stations. For more information about the 16th Street Express, visit: www.metroopensdoors.com.

Yesterday, Councilmember Bowser, along with Mayor Adrian M. Fenty, attended the Ribbon cutting of the brand new Residences at Georgia Avenue. The project is located at 4100 Georgia Avenue in the heart of Petworth and boasts 72 apartment units which are 100% affordable. In addition, there will be ground level retail which will include a Yes! Organic Market set to open in summer 2009. “I am pleased that even in tough economic times we are opening this brand new affordable housing complex in the heart of Ward 4 in the Petworth community,” said Councilmember Bowser. “The addition of a new grocer is especially exciting for Petworth residents, who have been demanding a quality grocer for decades. Petworth has long demanded this vital public and private investment. This project is pivotal to the rebirth of Georgia Avenue.”

Consumer Alert

The District of Columbia Government has filed suit against Cash Point & Loan Max money lenders that issue consumer loans by securing a motor vehicle title. The lawsuits are part of an effort by the Attorney General’s office to increase enforcement of consumer protection laws in the District.

The District’s suits allege that in making loans to District consumers, Cash Point & Loan Max charged interest rates above 300 percent per year. Such interest rates are well-above the maximum amount allowed under District law, which is 24 percent per year. The suits also allege that when District consumers were unable to make repayments, Loan Max in some instances employed illegal tactics to collect payment, including abusive collections practices and unauthorized repossession of consumers’ motor vehicles.

The Attorney General’s Office encourages District residents who have had any dealings with Loan Max, CashPoint, or any other lender that has loaned them money at interest rates exceeding 24 percent per year, to contact the Consumer Hotline at (202) 442-9828, or e-mail consumer.protection@dc.gov.

Digital TV- Update

District residents should request replacement TV Converter Box coupons by contacting the United States Department of Commerce, which is accepting requests for replacement coupons from eligible households whose coupons expired without them being able to redeem them, as well as others who may need them. Residents may request a coupon by downloading an application at www.DTV2009.gov, calling 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), mailing an application to P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208 or faxing an application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632). Deaf or hard of hearing callers may use 1-877-530-2634 (TTY).

The date for the digital conversion was changed from February 17, 2009 to June 12, 2009. Funds were allocated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to provide enough coupons for everyone who was on the waiting list and for most other eligible households.

Fenwick Tributary Clean-Up- April 4th

Join the Friends of Rock Creek Environment (FORCE), Civic League of North Portal Estates, Shepherd Park Citizens Association, and many other community organizations and community members for the 21st Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, on Saturday, April 4, 2009, from 9:00 am- 12:00 pm at the 8100 block of East Beach Drive, NW (near the Kalmia Road Bridge). Last year, volunteers hauled over 291 tons out of the watershed, including more than 18 tons of recyclables, 2,625 tires, and 13,000 balls, and much more. If you would like additional information contact Jerome Paige at 202-726-3081 or jpaige@paigeandassociates.com or Clif Grandy at clifgmail-fenwick@yahoo.com.

Health Fair this Saturday- April 4th

Attend the Whittier-Sidwell service health fair, which is an annual All-School community service event on Saturday, April 4, 2009 from 10:00 am-1:00 pm at Whittier Education Center located at 6201 5th Street, NW. The fair will include a Book Nook, a Fruit Smoothie Station, an Exercise Station, Stress and Relaxation workshops, a Garden project, experts on Alternative Medicine, Health and Tax organizations, and medical professionals. If you would like additional information, e-mail Kathleen Kaye at kmkaye@aol.com.