

Call 3-1-1 to Save Our Libraries

This afternoon (Monday, May 18, 2009), Queens Civic Congress and the Queens Borough Public Library called a [rally](#) of concerned New Yorkers to fight City Hall (aka Mayor Michael Bloomberg) which seeks to impose drastic cuts to our public libraries. In Queens that means 300 fewer librarians and a corresponding significant reduction in library days and hours of service. The Mayor should know better and rescind this dumb and irresponsible budget cut. Speakers included our Queens Borough President Helen Marshall City Council Members Tony Avella and Elizabeth Crowley. Electeds represented included Assembly Members Catherine Nolan and Grace Meng, and Council Member John Liu. Community Board 11Q chair Jerry Iannece and several candidates for local office this year lent their presence to support our libraries.

In my remarks, following my introduction by Queens Library Executive Director Tom Galante, who the Borough President called the best in the country, I urged everyone to call 3-1-1 to tell the Mayor: “No Cuts to Our Libraries.” I also raised the same points made [November 2003](#) in my column, [The Public Ought to Know](#):

- *The role of public library branches changed since I was a student.
- *People of every religion, ethnicity and background use libraries.
- *Each Queens library branch serves as a multimedia center offering much more than books and periodicals.
- *Persistent underfunding leave our libraries to operate unable to open as needed seven days a week, 10-12 hours each day.
- *Our mayor needs to get over his atrocious annual act that severely impacts and really kills service when most of our kids are out from school. When mayors — no matter their politics — submit preliminary and proposed budgets with cuts in library service, the QBPL (and its sister New York and Brooklyn systems) must take immediate actions to conserve resources, reducing staff and hours.
- *Annually, this means fewer summer hours. By the time the Council’s restoration in June takes hold, the summer is over.

Five and one-half years ago, I wrote,
I long for the day the occupant on the west side of City Hall “gets it” and leaves our libraries out of budget cuts. This still applies!