

# WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



*In A WE ACT Minute*

*Vol. 2, Issue 6 (November 27, 2006)*

## **Governor-Elect Eliot Spitzer Appoints Peggy Shepard to Transition Team on Energy and Environment**



Peggy Shepard has been appointed to Governor-Elect Eliot Spitzer's Transition Policy Advisory Group on Energy and Environment, where she will help shape energy and environmental goals for New York State along with its new governor. Built from a broad constituency, Policy Advisory Groups include Labor and Workforce Development, Economic Development, Education, Transportation and others.

Visit [Transition: New York](#) for more information.

## **WE ACT Co-Sponsors 1<sup>st</sup> City Council Hearing in Northern Manhattan on MTA Bus Operations**

On October 18, 2006, WE ACT co-sponsored a City Council hearing with Council Member John Liu, Chair of the Transportation Committee, to address the safety, health and environmental impacts of MTA bus operations. During the hearing, City Council members heard testimony from community residents, physicians, transit workers, environmental advocates, scientists, and representatives of elected officials – among others.



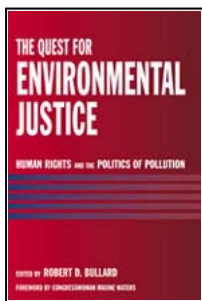
A significant portion of Harlem's asthma epidemic is attributable to or exacerbated by diesel exhaust from buses and the disproportionate placement of diesel bus depots in this community. In addition, community residents cite the idling, traffic and maintenance of the buses as impacting their health and quality of life because of the diesel emissions, noise, vibrations and soot associated with the buses and the depots. Diesel particles are carcinogens and contribute to heart disease.

A wide range of individuals had the opportunity to voice their concerns to public representatives at the well-attended hearing. WE ACT believes that this will provide momentum for policy changes to improve oversight of bus depot operations in Northern Manhattan.

## **WE ACT Wins Funding for Lead Outreach and Sustainable Food Policy Initiative**

WE ACT has been awarded grants for citywide multi-lingual lead outreach and a new Sustainable Food Policy Initiative. You'll find details in the articles below.

## **Robert Bullard's New Book *The Quest for Environmental Justice* Features Preface by Shepard**



Edited by Robert Bullard – and featuring a preface by Peggy Shepard – *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution* is a new collection of essays from leaders in the environmental justice movement.

The anthology encompasses a broad range of voices from early participants in the movement to individuals living in extremely polluted areas such as Louisiana's "cancer alley," to men and women fighting environmental and human rights injustices around the globe. The book captures both the broad arch of the

Read press coverage and hearing testimony, and learn more about the health impacts of diesel bus depots in Harlem [here](#).

## **Mayor Appoints Peggy Shepard to New York City's Sustainability Advisory Board**

WE ACT is pleased to announce that Mayor Bloomberg recently appointed Executive Director Peggy Shepard to the City's new Sustainability Advisory Board.

The Sustainability Advisory Board is made up of leading environmental professionals, activists and business people. With input from the Advisory Board, the City's new Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability will create and implement a long-term, sustainability plan for New York City. The Office will work to make City government branches and practices "green" and – once the sustainability plan is completed – it will measure the City's progress in achieving sustainability goals. Together, Peggy Shepard and other members of the Advisory Board will identify high-priority areas for the City to address, set goals for the City to reach, and determine the best means of achieving these goals.

With her recognized commitment to fighting for environmental justice in Northern Manhattan and beyond, Peggy Shepard will serve as a strong voice in creating a sustainable and equitable future for all residents of New York City.

For more details on the Sustainability Advisory Board and the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, please see the [press release](#) from Mayor Bloomberg's Office.

## **WE ACT Wins HUD Funding for Citywide Multi-lingual Lead Outreach Campaign**

In 2006, a significant portion of New York City's children are still testing as newly lead poisoned. The majority of these new cases of lead poisoning live in communities of color and low income, as well as in immigrant communities, and there is a pressing need for targeted outreach to these populations.



Thanks to a multi-year grant recently awarded to WE ACT by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), WE ACT will build a broad-based, collaborative initiative to increase

environmental justice movement, as well as stories of the day-to-day struggle of those working on its front lines.

Look for a copy at your local library, or purchase *The Quest for Environmental Justice* through the University of California Press [here](#).

### **Support WE ACT**

Your contributions make the difference! Support WE ACT's work fighting for environmental justice by making a tax deductible, secure donation through our [website](#) or by contacting Development Director Ursula N. Embola at (212) 961-1000, ext. 318.

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public knowledge in New York City on childhood lead poisoning, its prevention, and the remedy for existing threats.

Through our organizing experience and long-term relationships with other community-based nonprofits, WE ACT's lead outreach campaign will focus on raising awareness of new City regulations and procedures that can help building owners and renters address lead hazards, reduce risk in homes, and improve children's environmental health.

Working with several community groups and the New York City Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Housing Preservation and Development, WE ACT's lead outreach campaign will target eight New York City communities with high rates of new lead poisoning cases: East Flatbush-Flatbush, Bedford Stuyvesant-Crown Heights and East New York in Brooklyn; Washington Heights-Inwood, East Harlem and Central Harlem-Morningside Heights in Manhattan; and Crotona Tremont and Highbridge-Morrisania in the Bronx.

### **WE ACT Awarded Noyes/Kellogg Grant to Support New Sustainable Food Policy Initiative**

Everyone has a right to fresh and healthy food, but all too often it isn't readily accessible when you live in a low-income, urban neighborhood. The growing food justice movement is working to improve access to fresh, healthy food through activism, education, and local, sustainable food networks. A grant recently awarded to WE ACT by the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation will enable us to launch our Sustainable Food Policy Initiative to address food justice issues – and diversify the food policy arena.

One relevant issue is access to fresh food in local schools. In New York City, a majority of public school children eat at least two full meals a day at school. Studies show that more than 20% of school-aged children in the City are overweight, with most of these children coming from low-income communities. Studies also show that only a small amount of the food served in NYC public schools is fresh and plant-based.

Working with local farmers to improve food quality in NYC schools would reduce produce transport time, enabling farmers to cut down on costs and stay in business. And it would ensure that school children in the City have daily access to fresh, plant-based foods. This is just one of the food justice issues that WE ACT's Sustainable Food Policy Institute will seek to address through advocacy, education, and recommendations for policy changes at the City and State level.

### **WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

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