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Queens' female leaders meet in Maspeth to launch effort to elect more women to City Council



Photo courtesy of Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley's office

The City Council passed three bills introduced by Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley focused on women's health.

By [Anthony Giudice](mailto:agiudice@ridgewoodtimes.com) / agiudice@ridgewoodtimes.com / Friday, January 13, 2017 / 3:20 PM

A group of female City Council members, a coalition of women's organizations and good government advocates unveiled the "21 in 21" initiative, which looks to bring in more women into local government.

On Friday, Jan. 13, New York [City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito](#), along with Councilwomen [Elizabeth Crowley](#) and Margaret Chin, came together at the Knockdown Center in [Maspeth](#) to explain the “21 in 21” initiative.

The goal for “21 in 21” is to elect at least 21 women to the 51-member New York City Council by the year 2021.

The New York City Council is the largest municipal legislative body in the United States, representing 8.2 million New Yorkers, and more than half of those represented are women. Yet, there are currently only 13 women serving in the City Council, which is down from 18 in 2009.

However, because four of the seven current members who will be term-limited out of office this year — including Mark-Viverito — are women, that number is in danger of decreasing.

“It is shocking that in the most progressive city in the United States, only one quarter of our City Council members are women,” Mark-Viverito said. “All New Yorkers suffer when we don’t have equal representation in government and I intend to do everything I can to bring true equity to the Council at long last.”

“New York City prides itself on its diversity — yet less than a quarter of our local representatives are women,” she continued. “We must make sure that our elected officials reflect who we are as New Yorkers and I’m proud to launch ‘21 in 21’ to encourage more women to get out and run for office.”

The “21 in 21” initiative will initially be an autonomously run branch of [EffectiveNY](#), a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization created and led by Bill Samuels.

Samuels is an experienced businessman, entrepreneur and CEO, and has made an initial pledge of \$25,000 to get the “21 in 21” initiative going. He will also work to raise more money so the initiative can continue to grow and thrive.

“Men and women alike must step up if we are to right this injustice,” Samuels said. “The fact is that legislatures function better and have a broader perspective on critical issues when we have greater equity in representation, so anyone serious about good government and reform should embrace this initiative as a top priority for New York City. ‘21 in 21’ is just the start. Our ultimate goal is to get to at least 25 or 26.”

“21 in 21” is focused solely on supporting candidates running for open seats, not incumbents. Instead of giving money to candidates, the initiative looks to bring worthy female candidates to New Yorkers’ attentions with the hope that voters will decide to contribute directly to the candidates, enabling them to benefit from the city’s 6-1 matching funds system.

“The goal of ‘21 in 21’ is to level the playing field,” Crowley said. “We have exceptional women candidates and potential candidates in every neighborhood in this city, but unfortunately they face so many unique hurdles to getting elected. Our initiative will arm women with the financial, structural and experiential support they need to succeed.”

“While there are many great organizations fighting to elect more women on the federal level and to state government here in New York, there is no initiative focused exclusively on increasing female representation in the City Council,” Chin added. “That’s why ‘21 in 21’ is so important — and given the declining number of women in the Council — so timely.”