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Alumni Spotlight: Politician Daniel Rosenthal

Every Day is a New Opportunity for Youngest Member of New York State Assembly

December 28, 2017



At 26, he's the youngest member of the New York State Assembly. Elected in November of 2017, Rosenthal (D-Flushing) has had a long term interest in politics and government and traces his career path to his days at Touro's Lander College for Men.



What made you decide to go into politics?

I've been interested in politics and government as far back as 3rd grade. As a college student at Lander in Queens, I expressed this interest to a professor and he got me an internship with the Congressional campaign of Rory Lancman. Lancman lost the race and went back to his job as an Assemblyman and my internship with him continued throughout college. Lancman took office in the City Council the same day I graduated Lander so I went from my last exam to the City Council office and stayed for four years. I have a natural bug for politics and working in the City Council just confirmed that I made the right choice. The job opened a whole new world for me. I loved meeting people from all walks of life with so many unique interests and concerns. Every day on the job is so fast-paced and different. I believe everyone should contribute – there is so much to advocate for in every community and we can all contribute time and resources to politics and government and to making a difference in the lives of people we care about.

What is a typical day like for you?

There's no such thing as a typical day--every day is different. When I'm working in the local office, I meet with constituents and advocacy groups during the day and attend lots of community events at night. So it could be a public school at 11 am and a tree or menorah lighting at 7 pm. Of course, the routine changes when I'm in Albany.

What do you like best about the job?

My office is set up with constituent caseworkers and all types of people come in all day. I feel blessed to be able to help them navigate bureaucracy and solve problems. The other day someone came in with an issue and we said, "oh we can make a bill for that...let's do it!"

What are your top priorities in the Assembly?

Public health issues are very important to me. I used to be overweight and I'm really concerned about making the schools healthy and setting kids up to have a healthy lifestyle in the future.

Cost of living in NYC is also critically important. Affordable housing is a big issue in that category. People are moving away from beautiful communities because it's so expensive to live in NYC and the boroughs. While there's no magic bullet to solve this issue, I want to work on developing affordable housing units with proper zoning that will be near mass transit – a comprehensive approach.

You are the youngest sitting assembly member. What is that like? How are you gaining the trust of your colleagues?

I'm currently the youngest but not the youngest Assemblyman ever to serve NYS. People have been extremely warm and welcoming. The assembly has 150 members from all over the state and I feel it's important to have people of all ages. I bring a unique perspective on the issues affecting people of my generation. Our issues are different than those of the previous generation. People graduating college and trying to make a living today face different challenges than those who did it years ago. We need diverse voices in the legislature and I'm proud to represent millennials.

How does your religion shape your politics?

Judaism teaches us to be helpful and to do acts of kindness. Being in a political role offers me a great opportunity to help the community. Everyone who comes in looking for assistance is one more person who enables me to do a "chesed" or act of kindness. I feel we are all in this together. My constituents' problems are mine and when someone is helped, I feel grateful.

Did your education at Touro influence your career path?

Absolutely. I found my original internship through Touro and that put me squarely on my career path. I'm still close with a few of my political science professors and being in Queens, I stop in at Lander from time to time to say hello.

Were there any professors or classes that were especially helpful?

The two that stand out for me are political science professors Israel Singer and Ross Zucker. Professor Singer's classes were so interesting to me. He had lived in the political world through his high profile communal positions and I always appreciated his personal anecdotes and real life examples of how advocacy and community service works. Professor Zucker is a true expert in public policy so we always discussed political theory. Seeing that theory in practice in my job right now is very exciting.

What is your favorite book? Why?

One of my favorites is *The Prime Ministers* by Yehuda Avner. The book offers an epic history of the building of the land of Israel and is written by the speechwriter for four of the country's best known prime ministers. The firsthand experience and fly-on-the-wall perspective into major historical events was fascinating. I truly enjoyed learning from the innovative ways the early leaders built the government from scratch. The book is full of golden nuggets and added a human aspect to historical figures and events.

