



Westchester County Legislator

KEN JENKINS

Proudly Serving the 16th District



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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2017 Newsletter



Ken Jenkins

District 16 ~ Yonkers



WESTCHESTER COUNTY

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Kenneth W. Jenkins

Legislator, 16th District
Chair, Federal & State Affairs Task Force



Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Committee Assignments:
Appointments
Budget & Appropriations
Labor/Parks/Planning/Housing

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As the weather heats up, most legislative bodies take a summer break. The Westchester County Board of Legislators does not take a summer break. Hot times in Westchester County.

The 2017 Westchester County budget stretches our operations to the thinnest they have ever been and remains structurally imbalanced. This is according to numerous independent opinions, including the League of Women Voters and the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee.

While we await the final reconciliation of 2016 County finances due by the end of June, I must report that the irresponsible 4% increase in Sales Tax receipts has failed to materialize. In fact, Sales Tax has increased approximately 0.5% for the first six months of the year. If this trend continues, Westchester County's budget will be short \$20 million. Adding in the fictitious \$15 million revenue from the proposed Airport sale, Westchester County budget has a \$35 million dollar deficit.

Moody's Credit Rating Agency recently released a report which listed three main factors that may lead to a downgrade of Westchester County's credit rating: additional declines in General Fund balance resulting in material change in reserve, large structural imbalances, and material increases in outstanding debt. These are three of the underpinnings of County Executive Astorino's 2017 operating budget.

As we have seen in surrounding counties, this practice can have very serious fiscal ramifications detrimental to the County's long-term fiscal health and it doesn't look good. Finally, a word about the people who keep Westchester working: the hard-working employees of Westchester County. You should know, every union contract is now expired. In fact, Westchester's largest union, CSEA, has been without a contract for over 7 YEARS. It is unacceptable. It's wrong. It's not how we should treat the people that work to keep Westchester the place we love.

I will keep fighting for them so they can serve all of our County needs. Have an enjoyable and safe Summer.

All the best,

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Paid Sick Leave

Standing in solidarity with dozens of union brothers and sisters and my Democratic Colleagues, I helped to introduce a proposed Earned Sick Leave Law for Westchester County. The newly offered policy states that all employees shall accrue a minimum of 1 hour of earned paid sick time for every 30 hours worked. Paid sick leave can be used for both physical and mental illness. It can also be used if an employee needs to take care of a sick family member.

In Westchester, 123,000 workers lack access to sick leave and that is unacceptable. The Earned Sick Leave Law is a policy which is both business friendly and worker friendly by allowing enhanced ability for workers to care for their and their loved one's health while also resulting in lower employee turnover.

This bill has further provisions for businesses with 5 employees or less that allows workers to accrue unpaid - but job protected - sick time. This grants workers' employment security should they need to care for a sick child or loved one. Once these laws are enacted they are popular with both business and workers. Businesses in New York City look very positively on their version of this law that now has been in effect for several years. 86% of employers surveyed in New York City said they had a positive view of the law and 98% said they had seen no instances of abuse.

This benefit, that would make a huge difference in the lives of Westchester residents, currently does not reach 54% of workers in service occupations and 47% in transportation and manufacturing careers. This includes food service workers, bus operators, and home health aides, three groups of workers which can very easily, and rapidly, spread disease.

It is about time we treat all workers in Westchester County with the dignity and respect they deserve. ■

Contact Us!

CITIZENS --- an important branch of county government.

Please attend our board and committee meetings when you can. The Board generally meets twice a month on Monday evenings at 7:00 PM. Committees meet at least weekly.

Visit our website for up-to-date calendar and meeting agendas and minutes.

www.westchesterlegislators.com

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Immigration Protection Act

Earlier this year, I, along with Democrats on the Board of Legislators, introduced the Immigration Protection Act to alleviate many of the concerns surrounding inhumane treatment of our immigrant brothers and sisters. Too often, immigrants fear working with local law enforcement, utilizing vital services which they are entitled to, and are subjected to unfair treatment in our legal system.

The bill, titled the “Immigrant Protection Act”, codifies existing County policy while also drawing from model ordinances put forth by the New York Attorney General’s office with the intent to ensure all Westchester County residents are protected.

Provisions to the Immigration Protection Act include:

- Safeguarding confidentially of information shared with all County departments
- Prohibiting County officers and officials from honoring ICE detainer requests which do not give rise to criminal probable cause
- Ensuring any service provided by a County Agency shall be made available to all who are eligible notwithstanding their immigration status
- Protecting the County from liability due to false arrests and imprisonments

We will not tolerate discrimination in Westchester County. Not against anyone, not for any reason. What we are aiming to do with this legislation is ensure that we are not perpetrators of discrimination while staying within the law. Westchester County will not assist in creating a registry, we will not use County resources for unlawful detentions, and we will make sure everyone is represented fairly in our justice system. It is on us to make sure our County departments follow these American ideals. ■



North 60

This past April, I voted to approve the plans for a \$1.2 Billion biotech research facility on the North 60 land in Valhalla. The project will result in nearly 3,000,000 sq. ft. for a tech and science development which will eventually generate \$9M in taxes and \$7M in rent for the County.

The development consists of the following components and will be built in 3 phases:

- A total of 2.3 million a square feet of biotech research space
- Medical offices totaling 400,000 square feet
- A 100,000 square feet hotel; consisting of 100 rooms
- Ground level commercial space consisting of 114,000 square feet
- Children’s living Science Center consisting of 34,000 square feet

My colleagues and I at the Board of Legislators worked hard to devise a comprehensive review process to ensure that the proposed project was the best deal for taxpayers. During the committee process, we negotiated various necessary analyses with the project’s developer, screened these potential analysts, and examined the wide-ranging legal, fiscal, and economic reports we received. We additionally made numerous changes to the lease to include labor protections, opportunities for minority and women owned businesses, internships for our local colleges and universities, and environmental protections.

Westchester County is ripe for smart development projects such as this biotech center. It is truly a forward thinking long-term investment for the County’s economic future. ■



County Airport Privatization

I do not support the proposed “privatization” of our County Airport. I have publicly stated that the RFP should be halted until there is an Airport Master Plan that has public input and is approved by the Board of Legislators.

County Executive Astorino’s 5 year delayed airport ‘master plan’ \$1.4 million later, has wasted enough taxpayer dollars and already the plan is flawed. This draft Airport master plan took so long to construct, that many of the plan’s projections are already out of date, and Westchester will have to spend more tax dollars to update it. It conflicts with the terminal use agreement already in place. All Astorino has done is delay plans to increase the Airport’s efficiency further.

There has been no word of the Airport Master plan since 2013, when it was first announced. For all these years, the plan has been kept a close guarded secret within the Astorino Administration.

The Astorino administration has not commented on plans to submit the plan to the Board of Legislators for approval, as is protocol.

The Airport RFP process must be halted until an approved Master Plan is in place. This plan is one I cannot support. It does not have all the facts, and leaves too many unanswered questions. ■



Ride Sharing

I introduced legislation March 2016 to safely legalize ride sharing services like Uber and Lyft into the County.

The Astorino administration has delayed discussion of safety regulations for the inevitable adoption of ride sharing services in our County. Although I am an advocate for these services in Westchester, I believe in preparing for the bumps in the road ahead. Given the need for other affordable transportation options in the County, and the safety concerns that come with a new transportation option, we must move quickly to find solutions for legitimate safety concerns.

My proposed legislation would add services like Uber and Lyft to existing regulations covering taxis and limousines. These regulations require drivers to go through fingerprinting, background checks, and have their vehicles inspected, for the safety of the passengers. It would also require drivers to have up to \$1.5 million in liability insurance. The bill would ensure that the person who orders the call on an app can see a photo of the driver, along with receiving a fair estimate, and an electronic receipt at the end of the trip.

Often, when the State adopts a new program they provide time for local governments to vet its impacts and allow the municipality to “opt-in.” In the case of ride-sharing, the State has chosen to allow local governments to “opt-out.” The State regulations, released in the middle of June, do not give sufficient time for proper review.

Our existing taxi and limousine regulations and guidelines have protected our residents and drivers for years. Our legislative body’s priority should be the safety of the people of Westchester. The backroom clandestine approach by the Astorino Administration in what should be a public review process has brought a major solution to ride sharing safety concerns to a place where the only legislative action is to opt-out. We cannot stand for this. ■

