



**Mid-Year Report from Chairman Benjamin Boykin II**

June 2018

## STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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The first half of 2018 has been a period of fast-paced achievement and historic change for the Westchester County Board of Legislators.

Thanks is due to all legislators for their work done in committees, providing due diligence and conducting hearings on issues. Legislators also deserve thanks for cooperating with one another on behalf of all the residents of Westchester -- all but one piece of legislation enacted this year has passed with bipartisan support.

The Board's staff deserves special recognition as well. Our ability to serve the people of this county depends on the staff's thoroughness, intelligence and dedication.

These are challenging times for Westchester. The county's fiscal condition underpins everything we've done over the first six months of 2018, and it will affect everything we do for the rest of the year and for several years to come.

But with new leadership and with a new majority, we have begun to face these challenges and to deliver for the people of Westchester.

Our first major piece of legislation was banning gun shows on county-owned property.

The Board passed the Immigration Protection Act to protect public safety and to ensure that Westchester remains a welcoming place for all its residents.

We enacted an anti-wage discrimination measure to combat gender and race-based wage gaps by banning questions in hiring about a job applicant's prior salary. This legislation also protects workers returning to the work force after a hiatus and those looking for work after being downsized.

Legislation to ensure that workers earn sick time on their jobs also is in the pipeline.

We've taken action to protect the health and welfare of our children by raising the age for the purchase of tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21.

We've moved to promote opportunities in county contracts for businesses owned by service-disabled veterans and by small businesses.

We've undertaken a continuing examination of the woefully inadequate responses by utility companies to storms that left thousands of Westchester residents without power, many for a week or more, by holding a series of public meetings with utility executives. These meetings will continue until we are assured that fundamental changes will be made in the way utilities prepare for and respond to storms, and in the way they communicate with customers and local officials.

The Board has approved the county's acquisition of land for dozens of units of desperately needed affordable housing for seniors.

We've approved more than 60 appointments. Those include new commissioners and directors of departments, as well as new members of organizations like the Housing Opportunity Commission, the Fair Housing Board, the Women's Advisory Board and appointees to fill a re-vitalized Human Rights Commission.

Long-stalled public works projects are moving forward again. We're repairing and improving our roads and walkways. Aging equipment at crucial county facilities and aging county vehicles are being replaced with more energy efficient ones. These changes will save us money in the long run, improve the environment and quality of life in the county and make Westchester more attractive to businesses.

We've conducted numerous hours of committee hearings to make sure that the county is continuing to effectively and efficiently provide the food, housing, medical and child services that form our critical social safety net.



Advisory boards to examine flooding and other issues along the Saw Mill and Bronx Rivers and health and safety concerns for some sewer districts have been reactivated, and environmental legislation to ban plastic bags is being discussed in committee.

We've taken action to clean up ethics in county government. We've approved new appointments to the Board of Ethics. We've passed legislation to ensure that the appointments of public safety chaplains is a transparent process, involving only those qualified for the job. We've passed legislation ensuring that signs in county parks and on other county property aren't used to boost any politician's profile.

These are just some of the actions and initiatives the Board has undertaken in the first six months of 2018.

Every one of these actions was undertaken after thorough, transparent review. And as noted, all but one piece of legislation was passed on a bi-partisan basis. This is what it looks like when we govern from our values – fairness, openness, inclusion, comity.

The Board of Legislators is committed to taking the actions needed to make Westchester more vibrant and more sustainable, and to make Westchester government more open and more responsive than ever before.

We've returned the county to the people. Government does matter. It's a new day in Westchester.

For evidence of that, one needs look no further than the makeup of the Board. For the first time in

history, a majority of Westchester County legislators are women. In addition, the current Board has the largest number of African-Americans and people of color in our history.

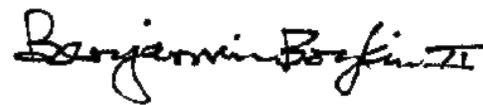
The voters of the county have assembled legislators whose diversity represents Westchester; and the responsibility of representing our county's nearly one million residents is one we take very seriously.

We know that there will be challenges ahead in the second half of 2018 as we deal with structural fiscal imbalances created by years of financial imprudence and reliance on one-shot revenues to balance our budget.

We know that we will have hard choices to make regarding some of the county's most valuable assets, like Playland and the airport.

But we will approach these challenges the same way we've approached everything we've done in the first half of 2018 – head-on, engaging the public with transparency and openness, adhering to our values, working with all our colleagues, with one goal in mind: making Westchester a better place for all residents to live in, work in and enjoy, now and for the future.

What follows is a review of some of the Board's actions over the first half of 2018. And it is action that this Board is focused on, not talk.



**Benjamin Boykin II**  
*Chairman of the Board*



## BOARD PASSES LAW PROHIBITING GUN SHOWS ON COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY (FEB. 5)

- "County-owned property should not be used as a place for people to obtain firearms, rifles, shotguns or ammunition that could potentially result in the death of Westchester County residents whether by suicide or by rampant gun violence"

## BOARD APPROVES LONG STALLED PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS FOR ROADS, PARKS AND CRITICAL FACILITIES

Long-stalled projects to repair and improve roads and walkways, to replace aging equipment at crucial county facilities, and to improve and repair county parks have been voted on and are moving forward; these include but are not limited to:

- Rehabilitation of Bronx River Parkway/Cross County Parkway ramps
- Rehabilitation of Columbus Avenue in Mt. Pleasant
- Replacing and repairing equipment at wastewater treatment facilities in Yonkers and Mamaroneck
- Purchase of new energy efficient vehicles, including nearly 80 new Bee-Line buses which will have nearly double the mileage per gallon of the previous buses and be almost pollution free
- Approval of county parks improvements and repairs including Glen Island sea wall and Maple Moor Golf Course
- Completion of the design and construction of pathway from Rye Metro North Station to Playland
- Updating technology infrastructure and physical plant repairs at Westchester Community College

## BOARD PASSES IMMIGRATION PROTECTION LAW (MARCH 12)

- Measure passed with bi-partisan support; governs information sharing between county officials and federal immigration authorities
- Designed to protect the safety of all Westchester residents by removing any trepidation that immigrants – regardless of immigration status -- may have about reaching out to law enforcement if they have been victims of crime, or reaching out for services for which they may be eligible
- Not a “sanctuary” measure – in fact, requires that county authorities cooperate with federal authorities in non-immigration criminal investigations, in terrorism investigations and when there’s reason to believe a convicted felon has re-entered the U.S. illegally
- Supported by County Departments of Public Safety, Corrections and Probation



## BOARD LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION OF INADEQUATE STORM RESPONSE BY CON ED AND NYSEG

- Following storms in March and May that left thousands in Westchester without power, many for a week or more each time, the board called representatives of utilities to appear before a committee of all legislators twice (March 19 and June 4) for several hours each time
- Utilities were questioned extensively about broken system of reliance on recovery aid from utilities across the country; poor coordination between utilities and local officials; and horrendous communication between utilities and customers
- More meetings will be called until Board is convinced that utilities have plans to change the nature of their storm preparation, response and communications
- Board has urged the PSC to impose stiff financial penalties for Nor'easter response
- Two legislators have asked for state permission for an independent assessment of NYSEG's electrical operations
- Two legislators are members of Westchester United, a group of federal, state and local officials organized by Westchester County Executive George Latimer and NYS Assemblyman David Buchwald to examine poor storm response



## BOARD PASSES RESOLUTION SUPPORTING STATE BILL TO CREATE EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDERS (MARCH 26)

- Unanimous, bi-partisan vote; measure would allow courts to issue an order to keep guns out of the hands of people who have been shown to be a danger to themselves and/or others

## BOARD PASSES LAW TO COMBAT WAGE GAP, BANNING SALARY HISTORY QUESTIONS IN HIRING (APRIL 9)

- Unanimous, bi-partisan vote; prohibits questions about salary history as a condition of a job interview or as basis for setting salaries
- Combats gender and race-based wage gaps – women and people of color often enter the workplace at lower salaries than counterparts, and when future salaries are tied to past salaries, that gap becomes institutionalized
- Protects people of all genders who have been laid off from higher paying jobs and may be discounted by employers offering lower paying work the job applicant may really need
- Protects people who are returning to work after a hiatus – maybe to raise children or to care for a sick family member – by not tying new wages to old wages that may no longer be industry standard

### **BOARD PASSES LAW TO SPUR HIRING OF DISABLED-VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES IN COUNTY CONTRACTING (APRIL 23)**

- Passed unanimously; encourages use of New York State-certified service-disabled veteran owned businesses in County contracts

### **HISTORY MADE AS WOMEN TAKE MAJORITY IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOL FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER (APRIL 24)**

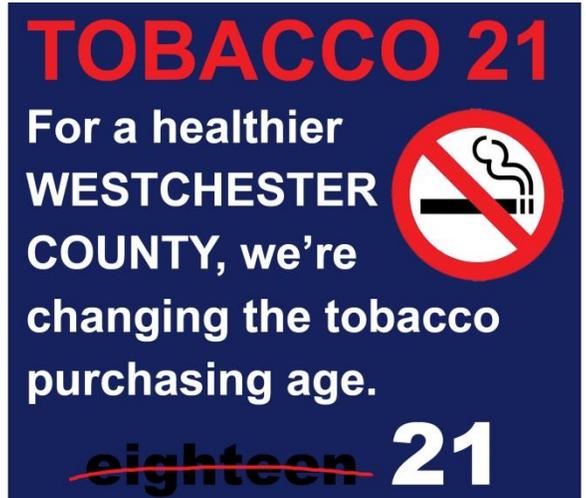
- With Terry Clements' victory in an April 24 special election in District 11 (New Rochelle, Pelham & Pelham Manor), women take majority on Westchester County Board of Legislators for the first time in history
- In addition, new Board complement includes highest-ever number of African-American legislators and legislators who are people of color (6)

### **BOARD PASSES RESOLUTION OPPOSING CITIZENSHIP QUESTION ON 2020 CENSUS SHORT FORM (MAY 7)**

- Passed with bi-partisan support; Westchester residents already send more federal tax dollars to Washington than they get back in federal benefits; if citizenship question discourages some residents from responding, the result could be a population undercount leading to losses of federal funding and even losses of Congressional representation for Westchester

### **BOARD RAISES AGE FOR SALES OF TOBACCO AND VAPING PRODUCTS FROM 18 TO 21 (JUNE 4)**

- Passed on a bi-partisan vote of 16-1; aimed at reducing new youth smokers, not only in the 18-21 age group but among even younger people who may have 18 and 19-year-olds in their social circle who may buy or give them tobacco
- Measure also applies to nicotine vaping products whose use has become prevalent among middle and high school students



## **BOARD APPROVES COUNTY ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY FOR AFFORDABLE SENIOR HOUSING (JUNE 4)**

- Unanimous vote to approve funding for the purchase of Mount Hope Plaza site on Lake Street in White Plains for 56-unit development offering affordable housing for seniors

## **BOARD BANS USE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE NAME, LIKENESS ON COUNTY PROMOTIONAL SIGNS (JUNE 18)**

- Passed by a 16-1 vote; measure stops the use of County property for political promotion by banning the use of the name or the likeness of a sitting County Executive on promotional and informational signs on County property or property leased by the County, such as informational signs in County parks



## **BOARD PASSES LAW TO ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY CHAPLAIN ACCOUNTABILITY (JUNE 18)**

- Passed by unanimous vote, measure requires that Westchester County police and public safety chaplains be active members of the clergy either residing in or presiding over congregations in Westchester, after revelations in 2017 that two Department of Public Safety chaplains were neither clergy members nor Westchester residents

## **BOARD VOTES TO LOWER THRESHOLDS FOR PROJECT LABOR AGREEMENTS IN COUNTY CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS (JUNE 18)**

- Passed unanimously; measure lowers thresholds for consideration of the use of project labor agreements in county construction from projects of \$1 million or more to those of \$250,000 or more; and from projects whose estimated time of completions is 36 months or more to those where the estimated time is 18 months or more
- Project labor agreements, which establish terms and conditions for employment on a project, are considered when they further the purposes of competitive bidding laws

## **BOARD APPROVES KEY APPOINTEES TO DEPARTMENTS, ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

- More than 60 new appointments approved including not only commissioners and directors of departments, but new members of crucial organizations like the Housing Opportunity Commission, the Fair Housing Board, the Women's Advisory Board, and appointees to fill a revitalized Human Rights Commission