



Westchester County Legislator
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Strengthening Protections for Building Service Workers

It is important that as legislators we do more than just pass laws and hope they work out -- we must continually monitor their effectiveness and make changes if necessary to ensure that they continue to do what they were intended to do. That is just what we did this year when the Board voted 16-1 to strengthen County protections for building service workers like cleaning staff and maintenance personal, who face displacement when building ownership or service contracts change hands.

These workers, who may spent decades working in a building, sometimes face sudden displacement through no fault of their own. Displaced Service Employees Protection Law, originally passed in 2013, created a required transition period, during which new employers must offer workers the chance to remain on the job. It also created a time frame for those offers and for that transitional employment, and created limits on the size of contractors who are covered.



But when we heard from workers about situations in which landlords and contractors were using loopholes to evade the spirit of the law, we closed those loopholes -- lowering the threshold for covered contractors from 15 to 5 employees, extending the transitional employment period from 60 days to 90 days and expanding re-

quirements for information sharing so that workers know in a timely manner precisely whom they must communicate with at the new employer.

As Vice Chair of the Board of Legislators, I am proud of this Board's continuing commitment to the protection and well-being of Westchester's working families. ■

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2019 Newsletter

Alfreda A. Williams

District 8 ~ Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, Elmsford, Greenburgh

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As we enjoy the holiday season, I count among my blessings the ability to serve as your legislator in Westchester County's 8th Legislative District, which includes a part of Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, Elmsford, Greenburgh and a part of White Plains.

In my role as Vice Chair, I was able to assist in initiating and guiding important legislation that affects you -- the residents of my district -- in significant ways. A fairer criminal justice system, environmental safeguards, protections for renters, domestic violence victims, and building service workers were all part of the legislative package that we passed this year. These accomplishments, in addition to affordable senior housing and improved public health management, are what improves the everyday lives of everyday people. This has been my mission since I first began as a legislator.

In addition to my leadership role, I serve on the following committees: Budget and Appropriations, Labor and Housing, Legislation, Rules, Social Services, and Seniors and Constituencies. These committee memberships allow me to continue to work for responsible financial choices that maintain necessary social services and essential programs while also working with local municipalities to reduce costs via collaboration and consolidation.

I welcome you to share your concerns or ideas by contacting me using any of the methods listed on the cover page.

Sincerely,



Union Baptist Church Soup Kitchen

Backing Reforms for a Fairer Criminal Justice System

This year I joined a bi-partisan group of my colleagues in passing a resolution in support of reforms in Albany that will make New York's criminal justice system fairer.

I'm glad to say our effort paid off when the state enacted the reforms we backed.

These reforms include new state laws that will end cash bail in most misdemeanor and non-violent felony cases. The new laws also will ensure that people accused

of crimes will have speedy trials and give defendants full access to information about the charges against them at the outset of the process, instead of just on the eve of trial.

These are not measures to protect criminals or free the guilty. These are measures that preserve the presumption of innocence and to make sure that the protection of the law applies equally, regardless of a person's financial situation. If two defendants accused of the same of-

fense are each granted bail, but only one can afford to pay the bail while the other languishes behind bars because they don't have the same means, that's simply not fair.

And no one accused of wrongdoing should have to consider their trial or plea options without first having rightful access to the necessary information that will be used against them at trial.

I'm gratified that by lending our support to these reforms, Westchester was able to help lead the state forward. ■

Safeguarding Our Environment by Eliminating Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Food Containers

There are few things more important we can do as legislators than protect and preserve Westchester's environment for our health and safety and the health and safety of future generations.

That's why I'm proud to say this May we passed legislation to eliminate the use and sale of expanded polystyrene take-out food containers in Westchester.

Americans throw out billions of tons of EPS coffee cups and other food containers every year. This material clogs landfills, winds up in marine ecosystems, absorbs other pollutants and is difficult to recycle economically.

This new measure applies to take-out food containers – both those used by vendors and those that have been sold in bulk in stores. The measure also prohibits the sale of loose-fill EPS pack-



ing foam in Westchester. Prepackaged food that arrives sealed in EPS package, packaging for raw egg, and butcher case packaging are exempted.

This is common sense legislation

that passed with bi-partisan support and with it Westchester joins our neighbors in Nassau and Suffolk Counties and New York City in working to leave our environment cleaner than we found it. ■

Safe Leave Law Passed to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

I am proud to say that this year I joined my colleagues in creating a new law to protect victims of domestic violence and human trafficking in Westchester.

Under the new law, victims of domestic violence or human trafficking are entitled to take up to 40 hours of paid leave to attend or testify in court proceedings related to their situations, to move from an abuser's residence, or to confer with lawyers or other advisers.

This is a law that protects people when they are at their most vulnerable. No one who has been victimized this way should have to choose between their safety and their jobs, or should have to struggle to maintain their incomes when they are at their most fragile through no fault of their own.

We all hope that few people will ever have to take advantage of these protections, and we must continue to work to

prevent this kind of violence. But giving victims a margin of safety and security in their situations is just the right thing to do.

The Safe Leave Act creates protections beyond those which were created in 2018 by our Earned Sick Leave Law which ensures access to sick time for workers. Under that law, workers who had no sick time before can earn up to 40 hours of sick leave per year. ■

Empowering Our Public Health Officials to Respond to a Crisis

As a member of the Westchester County Board of Health, I know from first-hand experience how imperative it is for our health professionals to be able to get in front of unexpected outbreaks of infectious diseases. This is especially true now when these outbreaks appear to be occurring more frequently, as was the case earlier this year with the severe outbreak of measles in the region.

That's why I was proud to sponsor a new law, passed by the Board of Legislators by a unanimous, bi-partisan vote, giving our public health officials the legal resources they need to act quickly and effectively to keep Westchester resi-

dents safe.

The changes we've made give the Board of Health and the County Commissioner of Health the power to issue orders, adopt provisions of the health code and take other measure to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, because when an outbreak occurs, time is of the essence for the protection of public health to contain the crisis.

This is not a measure that mandates vaccinations; this is a measure that empowers our public health professionals to act quickly and responsibly when an infectious disease outbreak threatens public health and safety. ■

Affordable Housing Development for Seniors Moving Ahead

A plan to build 74 new units of affordable rental housing for seniors in Greenburgh is closer to completion.

The development's builder, Marathon Development Group, with the help of the local organization Community Housing Innovations, has arranged for construction financing through several New York State programs.

As I shared in my last newsletter, the Mayfair project, at the Knollwood Road entrance to the Westchester Community College campus, will transform long-vacant buildings once used as tran-

sitional housing for homeless families into 60 one-bedroom apartments, eight two-bedrooms, and six studios for residents 62 and older with low and moderate incomes.

Last year, the County agreed to lease the property to the developer who in turn will pay \$900,000 to Westchester and \$600,000 to the town of Greenburgh.

This has been a long time coming. I look forward to opening day. Westchester is an aging county and 74 units of affordable senior housing is a great thing both for the Town of Greenburgh and the whole County. ■

Supporting State Protections for Renters

I'm proud to say that I joined my colleagues this year in passing a bipartisan resolution in support of efforts in Albany to strengthen and extend rent stabilization protections for renters under New York's Emergency Tenant's Protection Act (EPTA). Happily, the state passed the legislation that we advocated.

The new laws will end the practice that allows landlords to raise rents for rent-controlled apartments by as much as 20 percent when new tenants move into the units;

end the practice of "vacancy decontrol"; keep landlords from using the cost of major repairs to raise rents beyond the cost of the repair; and prohibit evictions and non-renewals of leases without good cause.

By making sure that more, and more affordable rental housing stock remains on the market, these laws will not only protect renters in stabilized units, but should also help keep rents more affordable across the board in Westchester County and the entire region. ■

PHOTO GALLERY



Celebrating African-American History Month



Greenburgh Health Center Fair



Greenburgh Community Action Program at TYCC



Women's History Celebration