



Westchester County Legislator
RUTH WALTER
Proudly Serving the 15th District



800 Michaelian Office Building
 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor
 White Plains, New York 10601
 (T) 914-995-2830; (F) 914-995-3884
 Walter@westchesterlegislators.com

[westchesterlegislators.com](http://www.westchesterlegislators.com)
[facebook.com/legislatorwalter](https://www.facebook.com/legislatorwalter)
[@legislator_ruth_walter](https://www.instagram.com/legislator_ruth_walter)

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ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

As the Chair of the Environment & Health Committee, I have invited many experts to speak about a variety of issues affecting our constituents. After learning from them, Legislators work to implement solutions based on their expertise.

NOISE CAMERAS — I convened a meeting last fall where the committee heard from an expert on the effect of noise on health and law enforcement officers. They described the effects of noise and the difficulties of policing the issue. In July, the Board approved a noise camera pilot study on the Bronx River Parkway. This study will look at the levels of noise on the parkway by combining existing technology with a decibel reader. Drivers whose vehicles have been deliberately modified will be penalized. This innovative new technology will enable violations to be issued at any time to drivers who wake up residents with deliberate noise.

FLOODING — Just this summer, we saw three cars submerged underwater on



Discussing the recent dramatic flash flooding with a resident of Garrett Place, Yonkers

the Bronx River Parkway due to a flash flood. Knowing this chronic problem is getting dramatically worse, I advocated for \$250,000 to fund a Bronx River Watershed hydrology study and \$200,000 to clean the Sprain Brook channel as another climate resilient measure to confront chronic flooding. Also, as Co-Chair of the Bronx River Advisory Board, we brought in experts on water quality and flooding to discuss steps to improve the waterway.

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH — My committee heard from a variety of advocacy groups about this crisis facing Black mothers. The representatives described

the maternal health deficit in the United States and how Black women are eight to twelve times more likely to die in childbirth than their white counterparts. In response, I have facilitated County contracts for organizations working to alleviate this problem.

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS — We've had a series of meetings with environmental stewards who described the toll that single-use plastics are taking on our earth. I responded by advocating for \$750,000 to be added to the budget for water bottle refill stations. These will be installed in County buildings and parks to reduce our reliance on single-use plastics.

LEAD POISONING — My committee invited County Health Department officials to discuss lead standards in drinking water. After the meeting, my colleagues and I promoted a program for free lead testing. Residents can email FreeWaterTesting@health.ny.gov directly or call the State Health Department at (518) 402-7650 to request a testing kit. ■

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Fall 2021 Newsletter

Ruth Walter

District 15 ~ Yonkers and Bronxville
Chair, Environment & Health Committee

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

I successfully advocated for many community-based organizations to be funded in the 2021 County Operating Budget, totaling over \$330,000. These contracts will be used to establish or continue community gardens, environmental mitigation and youth employment. Other organizations that received contracts are dedicated to educating students on healthy relationships, and to support low-income, first-time mothers.

- Family Services Society of Yonkers
- The One Love Foundation
- Greyston Foundation
- Groundwork Hudson Valley
- Andrus School
- Bronxville Seniors
- Yonkers Public Library
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Birth From the Earth
- Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network
- Bundles of Joy



Westtab Food Distribution, Spring 2021

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Last fall, we were in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like you, I was unsure about what the future would bring and how long we would be in lockdown with days of Zoom meetings, working from home, wearing masks and social distancing. As a public official, I was focused on bringing you accurate and timely information to keep our communities safe.

I am grateful to be writing to you fully vaccinated and to report that 80% of people 18 + in Westchester (as of September 2021) are vaccinated. The emergence of the Delta variant means that we cannot predict what the pandemic will look like in the coming months.

Getting vaccinated not only protects our community from the pandemic, it enables us all to thrive economically. As a small business owner, I understand the challenges that COVID has posed and have distributed timely and accurate information about programs at the Federal, State and County level to mitigate those challenges.

In this newsletter, you will read what we have done in the first part of 2021 regarding issues including taxes and budget, protecting our environment and residents and updating our infrastructure. I will update you on funding for crucial community-based organizations, including those focused on Black maternal health and community gardens. In addition, you will read about how we collaborated with our State representatives on laws addressing road noise, police reform and gun violence.

Thank you for reading! I welcome your input and concerns, and am eager to see you, my constituents, again in person.

Sincerely,

Ruth Walter

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

My office gets calls and emails from constituents who are experiencing difficulty navigating government or are having problems in their community. Recently I was asked to visit an intersection in front of a co-op in my district because residents reported motorists blowing their horns at all hours. Apparently, drivers were unaware of the right on red so I suggested County engineers install a green light arrow. This successfully mitigated the issue.

WORKING WITH OUR NEW YORK STATE REPRESENTATIVES



Meeting with Assemblymember Amy Paulin, and the husband and three children of Treva Thoms.

RED FLAG NOTIFICATION LAW — I worked with New York State Assemblywoman Amy Paulin to introduce and pass the Red Flag Notification Law. This law makes it mandatory for mental healthcare facilities to notify discharged patients and their representatives/families that they can obtain an extreme risk protection order to prevent the patient from

purchasing a gun. The purpose of this notification is to help those with mental health issues avoid gun violence. This was prompted by the tragic story of Treva Thoms, a mother of three who purchased a gun and committed suicide after being scared for and then released from a mental health facility in Westchester. Neither Treva nor her family were aware that the protection order was possible. This tragedy could have been avoided if this legislation had been in place.

SLEEP Act — Since I became County Legislator, I have heard complaints across my district about the constant noise on local roads and sought a solution. Thanks to the hard work of State Senator Shelley Mayer and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins, a bill called the SLEEP Act (Stop Loud and Excessive Exhaust Pollution) has passed both houses of the State Legislature. This year, I attended a press conference to announce the passage of the law that prohibits the modification,

sale, and installation of mufflers louder than manufacturers intended. Police vehicles will now be required to have decibel readers and fines will increase from \$150 to \$1000. This law will require the Commissioner of Transportation to suspend or revoke licenses from stations that provide these inspections upon a third or subsequent willful violation within an 18-month period.



Speaking at a press conference with State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, State Senator Shelley Mayer, and Yonkers homeowners Matt and Sweet Arigale Orefice. ■

POLICE REFORM

The Board of Legislators unanimously adopted a 177-page report from the Westchester County Police Reform and Reimagining Task force that met for

six months and included input from police officers, fellow Legislators, community leaders, and reform advocates. The report contains 52 recommendations

that will promote community engagement and address racial biases and the disproportionate policing of communities of color. ■

IMPROVING OUR PARKS

As the Vice-Chair of the Parks and Recreation Committee, I am committed to improving and protecting our parks.

SENIOR FITNESS STATIONS — The Board of Legislators approved the \$1 million dollars I added to the budget to create senior fitness stations in designated County parks. Our district will be the first to have this exercise equipment installed in our parks, allowing seniors to exercise and socialize safely outside.

NATURALLY ESSENTIAL CHALLENGE — I collaborated with the Office for Tourism, the Parks Department and the County Executive's office on the "Naturally Essential Challenge" to encourage people to visit County parks. Residents can participate at all Westchester County Parks

through October by logging visits via QR codes on posters at each facility. They will then be entered for a chance to win a \$50 Westchester County Parks gift card.

BRONX RIVER RESERVATION PARKWAY TRAILWAY — The Board approved a project to complete a connection of the Bronx River Reservation Parkway trailway from Midland Avenue in Yonkers to the Oak Street loop in Mount Vernon. In addition, the recent, long-awaited opening of a 1.5-mile connection between Crane Road in Scarsdale and Greenacres Road in Hartsdale creates a contiguous 11-mile trailway from Bronxville to the Kensico dam. We are working to extend greenways and open space through the heart of Westchester communities that are

accessible to everyone. Bikers, strollers, walkers and joggers are all able to enjoy this trailway! ■



With BOL Majority Leader Shimsky at Bronx River Reservation Trail

INFRASTRUCTURE

This legislative session, The Board took advantage of historically low borrowing rates and passed bonds for millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements. My colleagues and I voted on a wide range of capital improvements to our County's roads, bridges, parks and buildings. Improvement projects such as the South County Trail and Lenoir Preserve Mansion have begun. Regularly maintaining infrastructure is both fiscally responsible and avoids any emergency situations.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT UPGRADES — The modernization of the



Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Plant in Southwest Yonkers began in 2019 with a County-commissioned Odor Control Study that included several important recommendations.

Today, Phase IV of the odor control project will begin shortly, replacing the plant's 40-year-old gates and valves, engines, blowers, aeration system and flood prevention facilities.

Working with County Executive George Latimer, we requested \$69 million in federal grants for odor mitigation. The quality of life in the Ludlow neighborhood of Yonkers is diminished because of the odor from the treatment plant. The people who live there deserve an odor-free environment. These upgrades will benefit all residents whose wastewater is processed at the plant. ■

TAX RELIEF

This legislative session, the Board approved a budget that reduced the County portion of the property tax levy by \$1 million and reduced the overall budget

by \$15 million without cutting services.

In addition, this June the Board voted unanimously to increase the property tax exemptions for veterans to the maximum

level allowable under New York State law, raising the caps by nearly 39%. There are few things more important than supporting those who have served to protect us. ■

PHOTO GALLERY



Presenting a proclamation with Leg. Parker to Moms Demand Action for work on gun safety



With Maj Leader Schumer at St. John's in Yonkers at his Omnibus 2021 Bill announcement



Acknowledging the Bronxville Public Library with a certificate for their work during the pandemic



Co-Chairing the Labor-subcommittee meeting of the Board of Legislators



Working to fund Yonkers Family Y swimming programs with Rotary Clubs of Bronxville/Yonkers



With Lieutenant Sica at the Yonkers National Night Out



Presenting a Proclamation to William Kaung in honor of Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month



Congratulations to 4 new Eagle Scouts in Bronxville Boy Scout Cabin!



Honoring our fallen Veterans at Lasdon County Park on Memorial Day 2021