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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

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Winter 2024/25 Newsletter



Emiljana Ulaj

District 9 ~ Cortlandt, Ossining, Croton, Briarcliff, Buchanan
 Chair, Committee on Labor & Human Rights

Serving as the Chair of Labor & Human Rights Committee

Dear Neighbors & Friends:

It's been the greatest honor of my life to serve as your Westchester County Legislator. I want to thank my predecessor Catherine Borgia for leaving big shoes to fill and for all of her guidance and support.

County Executive George Latimer and Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins have also been incredible collaborative partners with the Board of Legislators on affordability, sustainability, and so much more.

Over the past year, the Board passed legislation to increase eligibility for the senior citizen tax exemption, protect survivors of domestic violence, and invest in infrastructure all throughout the county.

Many constituents have turned to my office for help with issues ranging from consumer protection to social services. We do our best to resolve the issues we directly impact or guide constituents to the appropriate agency. Thank you to all of those who reach out to me with new ideas. My office is working on new initiatives to promote family recreation in the region and sustainability all due to constituents who made their voices heard.

The Board of Legislators does not have many opportunities to send print newsletters per year, so, I encourage you to sign up for my e-newsletter to stay up-to-date on the latest news from the county.

As always, if there's anything my office can do to help you, please don't hesitate to e-mail me at ulaj@westchesterlegislators.com or call (914) 995-2812.

Sincerely,

As Chair of the Labor & Human Rights Committee, I've brought together stakeholders to investigate challenges and opportunities, including:

- **Briefing on the status of non-compete agreements in work contracts since the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a final rule banning their use nationwide in April 2024.** The FTC argues that noncompetes stifle wage growth and reduce choices for consumers. Every worker deserves the right to leave one job behind for something better. Approximately 1 in 5 workers in Westchester County are directly impacted.
- **Presenting before stakeholders on the benefits of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs):** how PLAs are used to ensure the timely completion of capital projects while staying at or under budget; and the economic development, workforce development, and community benefits offered through PLAs.
- **Inviting leaders from the American Jewish Committee (AJC) to present on the AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2023 Report.** The rise in antisemitism is extremely disturbing. No one should fear for their safety because of their religion. We will be working closely with the AJC, the County's Human Rights Commission, and other groups to address these challenges.
- **Shining a spotlight on the reproductive harms felt across the industry for nail salon workers as reported by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH).** The impact is felt predominantly by Asian and Hispanic workers that make up the majority of those in the industry. The coalition is pushing for statewide legislation to raise standards to protect these vulnerable workers.
- **Promoting the NYS Department of Labor's dashboard: Exploring Occupations by Green Topic.** This new feature on the DOL website includes 72 green topics and over 300 occupations offering comprehensive details on educational requirements, salary ranges, and the outlook for the number of positions in that field within the state. Whether your passion lies in renewable energy, environmental conservation, or sustainable agriculture, this resource can guide job seekers toward new career pathways and opportunities within the expanding green sector.



2024 Infrastructure & Housing Investments in a Snapshot

• **74 AFFORDABLE UNITS ON CROTON AVENUE IN OSSINING:** County is investing \$3 million toward the development of 74 affordable rental units in Ossining that will further fair housing and remain affordable for a minimum of 50 years.

• **PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINTS SYSTEM (PSAP) BOND ACT:** A \$1.3 million investment to modernize 911 Call Centers that handle emergency calls and coordinate responses.

• **FOOD SCRAP RECOVERY PROGRAM:** Supported by a \$1.3 million capital project and Bond Act for the study, design, and development of a major composting facility to reduce County waste and generate valuable compost.

• **BEE-LINE BUSES & BUS SHELTER RENOVATIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY:** The Board approved replacing 95 old 40-foot buses with new hybrid and all-electric models and upgrading bus shelters with solar power, ADA accessibility, and other improvements.

• **109 AFFORDABLE UNITS ON WATER STREET IN OSSINING:** County is investing \$4.36 million toward the development of 109 affordable rental units in Ossining at 30 Water Street that will remain affordable for a minimum of 50 years.

• **\$1.1 MILLION INVESTMENT IN THE BLUE MOUNTAIN SPORTSMEN CENTER IN CORTLANDT:** The Bond Act will finance the cost of design for the second phase of rehabilitation, including design of the main lodge, lodge addition and infrastructure improvements at the Sportsmen center including electrical service, water supply, sanitary system, communications and security, lighting, site drainage, roadway and pathway pavement and other associated site work and landscaping improvements. ■



SEE SOMETHING ON A COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY THAT NEEDS FIXING? LET US KNOW! EMAIL ME AT ULAJ@WESTCHESTERLEGISLATORS.COM.

Domestic Violence Lock Changes Legislation

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their home, but what happens when your abuser has the key to the front door? This past year, the Board voted unanimously to pass the Safety Measures for Survivors of Domestic Violence Act which provides no-cost installation of new home locks and/or security cameras for domestic and gender-based violence survivors.

The Westchester County Office for Women will now be empowered to contract with designated community-based organizations to do the following:

- Conduct intake with survivors to determine program eligibility;
- Coordinate with licensed vendors regarding the installation of the dwelling safety measures (lock changes and/or security camera installation); and
- Conduct an education & outreach program to ensure survivors know about the program.

I was glad to co-sponsor this legislation, and I thank lead sponsor Legislator David Imamura for all of his work and advocacy. The Act was developed collaboratively with the Westchester County Office for Women, the County Executive's Office, and informed by the work of the Pace Women's Justice Center. For resources to help anyone in need struggling with domestic violence, please visit: <https://women.westchestergov.com/domestic-violence> ■

Securing Funding for Community Nonprofits

\$10,000 FOR OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER GIVING GARDEN PROGRAM

For over 20 years, OCC's Preschool Garden Program has provided children ages 3 to 5 with hands-on experience in planting, nurturing, and harvesting their own vegetable and herb garden. With this grant, the Giving Garden will extend the program to include elementary students in grades K-6. The children will plant, care for, harvest, and enjoy their vegetables while learning about plant life cycles, the local ecosystem, and the nutritional benefits—and delicious flavors—of locally grown foods.



\$10,000 FOR CROTON CARING COMMITTEE'S FOOD BASKET PROGRAM

Croton Caring's Food Basket Program offers essential food support to families in need four times a year during school holidays—Spring, Summer, Thanksgiving, and Winter Breaks—when access to school meals is limited. Each family receives four to six boxes filled with perishables (such as milk, butter, eggs, bread, and meat) and non-perishable items for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. In December 2023, the program assisted over 300 local individuals, including 160 children.

Is there a community nonprofit doing great work that you think I should meet with? Email me at ulaj@westchesterlegislators.com to connect us. ■

Office of Housing Counsel Expected to be Operational in 2025



In 2023, there were 8,264 eviction filings in the county. In response to this need, Westchester County created the Office of Housing Counsel to provide support to income-eligible residents facing eviction and other housing-related challenges.

Director George Asante presented his implementation plan for the office in

September 2024 and projected that the office will be operational in early 2025.

In July, thanks to constituent Geoff Haynes, I was glad to bring together Director Asante with Pace University's Legal Hand Call-In Center to discuss ways for the new County Office to best serve those in need.

I want to thank Director Asante for the diligence and heart with which he does this work. He has already been extremely helpful in doing all that's possible to help constituents in crisis who have turned to my office for support. ■

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Congratulations to Cortlandt residents Detective Brett Hochron and his brave K9 Harley on their well-earned retirement from the Westchester County Department of Probation. We are grateful for your many years of service including working for the FBI and NYPD.

AROUND THE DISTRICT



The year started off spectacularly celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Eaglefest at Croton Point Park. The sun came out just in time for a vibrant event filled with families from all over the region. Thank you to Teatown and all of the volunteers for their hard work putting this event together.



Ossining's Summer Concert Series is always a fun-filled community event—particularly when you're with great friends like our Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg! Thank you to the Town of Ossining for all that they do to bring the community together.



Angela Outhouse, a Cortlandt resident, has been a trailblazer throughout her career. In September, I was glad to honor her for her service as the President of the Westchester Volunteer Firefighters' Association. We are grateful for all you've done and continue to do.



Congratulations to Troop 49 on raising another four Eagle Scouts: Shane Quadras (Ossining), Ryan Sarson (Cortlandt Manor), Christopher Grant (Ossining), and Andrew McNamee (Croton-on-Hudson)! Your community leaders, neighbors, family, and friends are all deeply proud of you for this tremendous accomplishment.



Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Ossining does so much to nurture the community. This year, I was glad to sponsor their Back to School Sneaker Giveaway. Thank you to Gwen Jordan and Gwen Sargeant (pictured above) for their big, big hearts and all that they do.



This past summer, I participated in the Reading Buddies Program out of the Claremont School in Ossining operated by FSSY. Students like my buddy Nahomie read books with a mentor to combat the summer slide.



Hendrick Hudson High School student, and 2024 Senior Class Salutatorian, Chiara Quick was the winner of my Women's History Month Essay Contest! Thank you to Principal Lauren Scollins and the entire Sailors community for all that they do to inspire hard work, curiosity, and courage in our students.



Glad to join officials from the Town of Cortlandt at the ribbon cutting for the newly renovated Jim Martin Aviation Playground located at the Cortlandt Waterfront Park in Verplanck. The project received \$200,000 in funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program that the County operates for the Urban County Consortium.



Thank you to Horac Ministries and Bishop Joan Whittaker for inviting me as they honored the work of Ossining resident Jermain Smith. Jermain founded two community-based organizations—Project105 and ENU Builds—dedicated to community engagement and youth development in Ossining.