



Westchester County Legislator Jewel Williams Johnson

Proudly Serving the 8th District



800 Michaelian Office Building
148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor
White Plains, New York 10601
(T) 914-995-2833; (F) 914-995-3884
WilliamsJohnson@WestchesterLegislators.com

Follow me online:

@jewelwms
 @jewelwmsjohnson

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Growing Together Westchester

Growing Together Westchester is a new health equity initiative launched in partnership with United Way of Westchester and Putnam, Westchester County's 0-6 Committee, and the Westchester County Board of Legislators. It aims to provide caregivers of newborns and young children with accessible, engaging information and resources in both English and Spanish.



Co-created by Legislator David Imamura and myself, the initiative serves as a centralized database of content from local organizations, agencies, and professionals. Caregivers who sign up will receive proactive texts and e-mails tailored to their child's developmental stage, offering tips and resources for children ages 0-6.

United Way is seeking ideas/contributions from local nonprofits, government agencies, and healthcare professionals to expand the repository. Please send suggested content for caregivers or children ages 0-6 to Olivia Diaz at odiaz@unwmp.org or Candace Kelliher at ckelliher@unwmp.org.



Happy New Year from Mr. & Mrs Johnson!

SUBSCRIBE TO MY MAILING LIST!

From public health alerts to information about upcoming events in our community to breaking news on legislation that affects you — **sign up now!**



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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2024/25 Newsletter



Jewel Williams Johnson

Legislator, District 8
Elmsford, Greenburgh, Tarrytown, White Plains
Chair, Committee on Budget & Appropriations



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As I reflect on the past year, I am deeply honored to continue serving in leadership roles that allow me to make a meaningful impact on our community. In my second term, I am privileged to once again chair the Board of Legislators' Committee on Budget and Appropriations, overseeing the strategic allocation of resources for Westchester County. In December, we approved the County's 2025 budget, which—for the sixth consecutive year—includes no increase in the property tax levy for the general fund. This balanced and forward-thinking budget prioritizes affordable housing, childcare scholarships, infrastructure improvements, flood mitigation, and public health, aligning with the values and needs of Westchester residents.

Our financial stewardship continues to yield positive results. Earlier this month, Westchester County earned AAA ratings from both Fitch Ratings and S&P Global Ratings, reaffirming the County's financial strength and stability.

As Chair of the Health Sub-Committee, I remain committed to addressing critical health challenges, and I am pleased that, as a direct result of my advocacy, the County's employee health coverage now provides parity between mental and physical health benefits—ensuring that, as of January 1, 2024, employees pay the same co-pay for mental health provider visits as they do for physical health provider visits. Over the past year, I also hosted two impactful town halls on Birth Equity and Maternal Health Disparities, bringing together all County hospitals to foster collaboration. We are on the cusp of achieving full cooperation to measure and improve outcomes for women of color during their maternity journeys. Another town hall is planned for 2025, and a full list of our 2024 meeting topics is available on the next page. Recordings can also be viewed online at <https://bit.ly/2024HealthSubComm>.

In 2024, I assumed a new role as Chair of the Board's Non-Profit Task Force. Community-based organizations are the backbone of Westchester, providing essential services to our most vulnerable neighbors. Through collaboration, solution-finding, and advocacy, we are strengthening the safety net that so many rely on.

Additionally, as Co-Chair of the County's Continuum of Care Task Force on Shockingly Severely Overcrowded Housing, I work alongside Karl Bertrand and County agencies to address overcrowding, rent instability, and eviction prevention. Together, we have been advocating to Governor Hochul for increased funding to provide meaningful relief to those in need.

I also serve on the County's Board of Health, the Community Mental Health Community Services Board, and the board of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Westchester, while actively participating in White Plains Hospital's Healthy Community Initiative Task Force. Each of these roles allows me to work with partners dedicated to improving lives across Westchester.

In 2024, I held another Unclaimed Funds Workshop, helping residents recover funds through district mailings in collaboration with the NYS Comptroller's Office. This year's budget includes expanded funding for free therapeutic and mental health services for children, support for local food pantries, arts programs, youth enrichment initiatives, STEM education, and community events.

Flood mitigation remains a top priority. I've worked closely with Dean Tarulli, the County's new Director of Flood Mitigation and Resilience, to address issues in areas such as Fulton Park and the Pondsides Development. Funding for flood mitigation in District 8 is included in the 2025 capital budget.

Finally, I've advocated for critical issues through letters to local, state, and federal leaders on topics ranging from implementing social media guardrails for youth to improving nonprofit contracting processes and encouraging careers in child and adolescent psychiatry.

These efforts reflect my unwavering commitment to addressing your concerns and advancing solutions that strengthen our community.

As we move forward in 2025, I am deeply grateful for your trust and partnership. Together, we are building a Westchester County rooted in resilience, compassion, and progress. I look forward to continuing this important work with you in the year ahead.

With gratitude and determination,



Receiving Proposed 2025 Budget



Delivering Commencement Speech at College of Westchester Graduation



Colleagues & I with Gov. Kathy Hochul



2024 Summer Interns & My Legislative Aide
Alain Mitra

2024 Health Sub-Committee Topics

- Intergenerational Living
- The STEM Alliance — Understanding Westchester's Digital Equity Needs & Innovative Solutions
- The STEM Alliance — How Y-Zone & Connect Westchester are Bridging the Digital Divide — Telehealth & Tech Education for Lower/Moderate-Income Community Members
- Medicare Advantage Leaves Some Older Americans Feeling Trapped
- Behavioral Health Clinic (A31) Will Include a Substance Use Clinic (A32) in Yonkers
- The STEM Alliance — Overcoming Internet Access Obstacles & Using the Internet to Build Workforce Skills
- NYS Plans to Introduce Social Care Networks/CBOs to Serve Regional Medicaid-Enrolled Organizations
- Westchester Medical Center Tour
- The Guidance Center of Westchester, Inc. — Essential & Lasting Support to Those Challenged by Mental Illness, Substance Use, Poverty, & Homelessness
- What Are PFAS? — PFAS Series Overview
- Westchester Needs Partial & Residential Mental Health Facilities Presented by Area Shelter Directors
- Metals in Baby Food
- PFAS Series-2: Plastics & Its Impact on Health
- Cancer Support Team — In-Home Services for Cancer Patients & Their Families Living in Westchester
- College Students Suffer Food Insecurity
- Westchester County African American Advisory Board's Blueprint for Change + High Rates of Asthma (research indicates highest rates in Peekskill, Mt. Vernon & Yonkers)
- Epidemiology Update: Avian/Bird Flu (H5N1), Dengue, Mpox & Oropouche Viruses
- Update on Opioid Response & Overdose Prevention Initiative
- Narcan Education & Training: How To Recognize the Signs of an Opioid Overdose & Administer Narcan
- Racism in Schools Significantly Negatively Impacts Student's Psychological & Mental Health
- Progress on Opening of County's New Mental Health Clinic
- Birth Equity & Maternal Health Disparities (Held 2 Town Halls)

PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES

SAFETY MEASURES FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT: The Board passed legislation to provide no-cost home lock changes and security cameras for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, helping to protect survivors.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION TASK FORCE: A recent CDC report shows U.S. gun deaths at a 30-year high, with firearm injury the leading cause of death among children and teens. The Board and County Executive have launched a Countywide Gun Violence Prevention Task Force to address this issue at the local level.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE PROGRAM ACT: Funded by a Federal Department of Justice grant, this Task Force will improve victim identification, investigative methods, and prosecution strategies, partnering with police to target trafficking hotspots.

SCHOOL BUS STOP-ARM PROGRAM: This traffic enforcement program, rolled out this fall, will strengthen protections for children



at school bus stops and better ensure their safe travel to and from school.

UNIFIED SUICIDE PREVENTION NUMBER – 988: By establishing a new local Suicide Prevention number, 988, Westchester County is guaranteeing that every at-risk resident who calls the Suicide Line is connected with local resources.

HERRO SCHOLARSHIPS: Westchester's Volunteer Higher Education Recruitment and Retention Opportunities (HERRO) scholarships continue to provide tuition or student loan reimbursement to fire and ambulance volunteers. Over 400 volunteers, including 79 in District 2, have received scholarships. ■

COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE & TECH UPGRADES

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.

SEWER IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS: Enhancing infrastructure and improving energy efficiency, these projects include improvements to Force Mains in Peekskill, Port Chester and Tarrytown, restoration to County-owned sewer lines in multiple districts, a new relief sewer in Peekskill, and plant-wide upgrades in Ossining, among other wastewater projects.

NEW LABS & RESEARCH FACILITY: \$4.2M to design a much-needed new Department of Laboratories and Research facility in Valhalla, which is responsible for scientific tests in matters ranging from public health to criminal evidence.

NEW PARATRANSIT VEHICLES: \$1.75M has been approved to purchase new vehicles, which will provide more reliable Paratransit services to area residents.



HOUSING: Westchester continues to be a partner in the creation of new and affordable housing, supporting nine new projects around the County with \$35.675M in New Homes Land Acquisition funding and \$8.134M from the Housing Implementation Fund.

REPLACEMENT OF FIRE TRAINING FACILITIES, AND IMPROVEMENTS TO BLUE MOUNTAIN: Multiple programs to support the training of our first responders including: \$2M to design a new Fire Training Tower, \$2M to purchase a new Smoke House, and \$1.1M to design improvements to a facility used by County and local first responders for target practice and training. ■

AROUND THE DISTRICT



NAMI Walk at Ridge Road Park



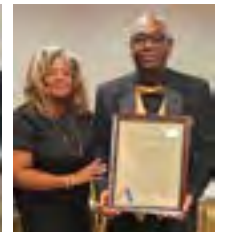
N Elmsford Civic Assoc Annual Summer Celebration



Hon. Andy Spano & Hon. Vito Pinto



Dist 8 Annual Women's History Month Townhall



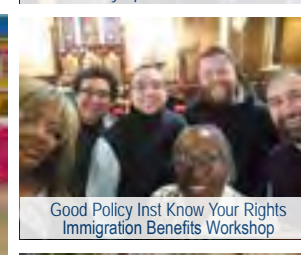
Honoring Lemuel Davis



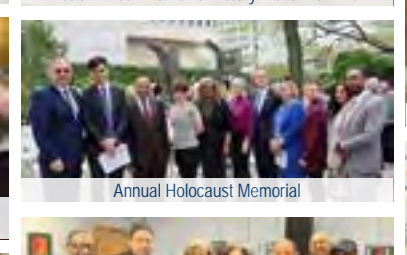
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Anniversary



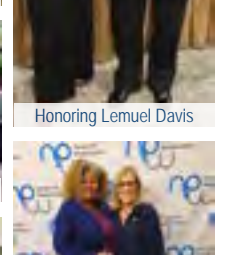
Dare To Be Different Annual Women's History Month Luncheon



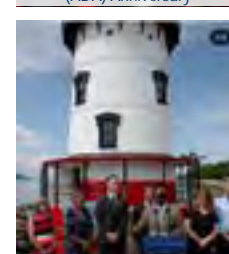
Good Policy Inst Know Your Rights Immigration Benefits Workshop



Annual Holocaust Memorial



Jan Fisher, Non-Profit Westchester Exec Dir.



Re-Opening of Tarrytown Lighthouse



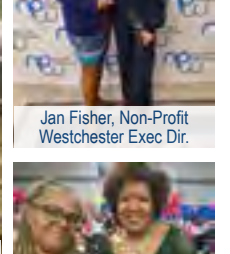
Pastor Edward O. Williamson's 20th Pastoral Anniversary, Bethel Baptist Church



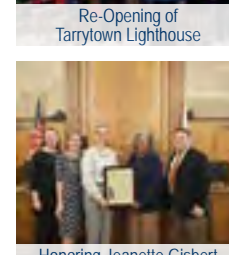
WC Parks Storytime Program



Jazmyn Concert



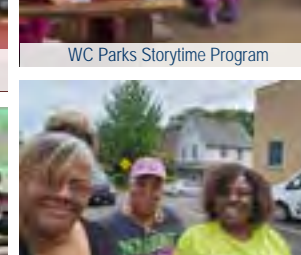
Dr. Belinda Miles, WestchesterCC Pres.



Honoring Jeanette Gisbert & VolunteerNY



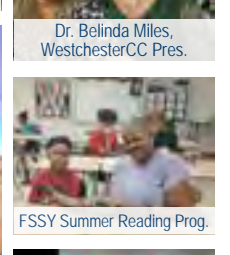
NAACP Dec 2024 Meeting



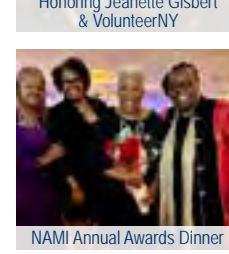
Echoes Africa Initiatives Mental Health Walk



WC Corrections S.O.A. 2024 Holiday Party



FSSY Summer Reading Prog.



NAMI Annual Awards Dinner



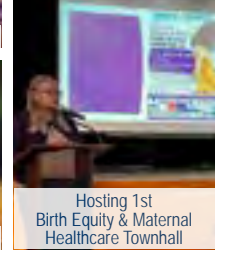
WP Youth Bureau Awards



NYS Foundation Aid Press Conference



Hon. Eddie Mae Barnes Human Rights Award



Hosting 1st Birth Equity & Maternal Healthcare Townhall

GREEN ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INITIATIVES

FLOOD MITIGATION: Westchester introduced a new Director of Flood Mitigation this year, and passed \$2M to develop projects designed to reduce flooding and prepare technical materials needed for related grant applications.

ROADWAY CULVERT RESTORATION: A program to inspect and evaluate culverts and structures along County roads, identifying and prioritizing areas where

work would reduce flooding.

COMPOST FACILITY & WASTE REDUCTION STUDIES: Two important studies have been initiated: one to design and develop a large-scale composting facility, which will keep organic matter out of our waste stream, and another to reduce waste overall.

SOURCE SEPARATION AMENDMENT: This amendment updates the law to require

separate waste and recycling bins in public areas and clarifies food composting and reporting rules.

INVESTMENT IN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: Westchester welcomed our new County Forester this year, and continues to grow native plants and trees. A Tree Canopy Study, a critical tool for planning projects, will be initiated in 2025. ■

TAXES

SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS: Excludes Social Security income from eligibility calculations, increasing relief for seniors with fixed incomes. ■