

Westchester County Legislator

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Proudly Serving the 4th District



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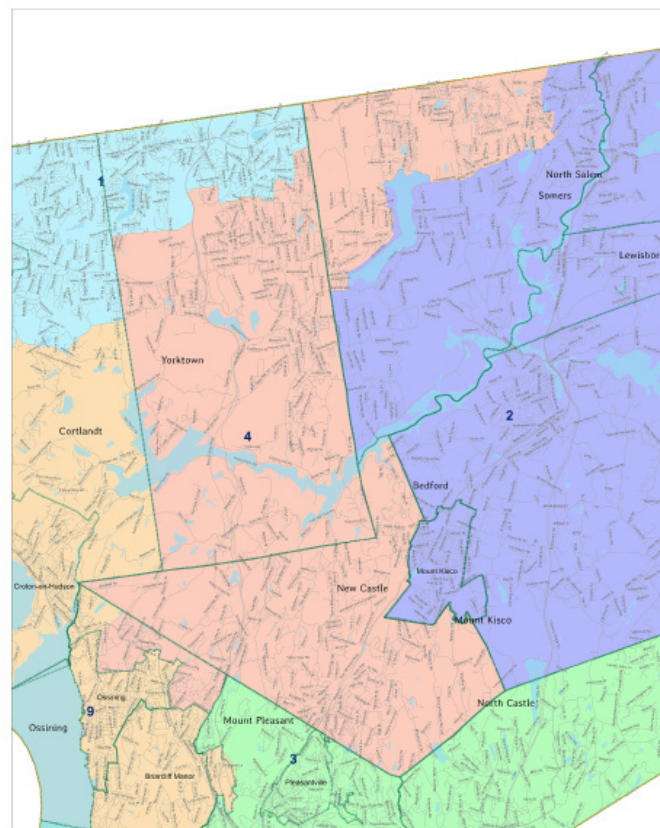
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Reassessing Westchester County's Legislative Districts

A major undertaking at the Board has been the process of reassessing Westchester County's 17 legislative districts, as is required every ten years after a new census. The 2020 U.S. census revealed that our County's population had increased, putting us over the one million mark for the first time in our history. Because the increase is greater in some parts of the County than others, the challenge was to readjust the district lines to make the population of each district as equivalent as possible. We conducted five public input sessions throughout the County to engage residents in this important process. We worked to ensure that our legislative districts reflected our local municipalities accurately and accounted for our increased County population; the goal being equity in representation for all our residents. ■

Westchester County Legislature: Draft Redistricting Plan LD4



Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Fall/Winter 2022 Newsletter



Vedat Gashi

Legislator, District 4 ~ Yorktown, New Castle, Somers
Chair, Budget & Appropriations Committee

Fiscally Sound

The County's 2023 Operating Budget lowers the Westchester property tax levy for the 4th year in a row. This was done without borrowing money for operating costs, while adding money to the fund balance. Responsible fiscal management is reflected in our ratings -- Moody's reaffirmed the County's bond rating at "Aa1" with a "Stable" outlook, Fitch Ratings assigned an "AA+" rating and upgraded our outlook to "Positive" from "Stable," and Standard and Poor's issued an AA+ rating with a "Stable" outlook. ■

Food Allergies

FOOD ALLERGY SAFETY TRAINING FOR RESTAURANTS: Food allergies are a major health concern for many Westchester families. Every 3 minutes in the U.S., a food allergy reaction sends someone to the emergency room, and around 1 in 11 Westchester residents live with food allergies. I was the lead sponsor of a bill that will put new guidelines on restaurants to protect diners with allergies. This law will ensure that restaurants have personnel on-site who have been trained in food allergy safety, including designated food safety officers during operations hours. ■



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

These past couple of years have been extremely disruptive, as we head out of the COVID-19 pandemic. We at the Board of Legislators have been working hard to provide new services and help ease rising costs for residents of Westchester County. In case you missed it, all our Committee and full Board meetings are now once again open to the public. There is still the option for remote viewing for all meetings if that is more convenient for you. Please take a look at our website to find out more information about when meetings are happening and how to view them.

I was pleased to have been elected by my colleagues to chair the Board's Budget & Appropriations committee, which oversees all spending done by the County. I'm also extremely proud of all the work this Board has done to improve the lives of all residents in Westchester County. We have had one of the most productive years in recent times -- most certainly since I have been on the Board. We passed a significant number of local laws, continued our commitment to new projects in Westchester, and helped ease costs, all while providing vital services to our constituents.

This year, we received the second installment of funds from the American Rescue Plan in June 2022 and used it in a number of ways from wastewater infrastructure projects to public health investment to small business development assistance. With this money, we have been able to complete initiatives and projects that are extremely important and a priority for us. We have made 120 appointments to almost every advisory board that the Board oversees, while addressing COVID-related health issues and the long-term effects of the pandemic. Another important bill passed this year was the Flood History Disclosure law, making sure that property owners disclose the flood history of a building prior to the signing of a lease. This law will impact both residential and commercial leases. As we have seen the rise in flooding across the country and here in Westchester, we have made a commitment to update our infrastructure as well as to provide transparency to tenants about the history of their homes before moving in.

Under the leadership and partnership of County Executive George Latimer and Chairwoman Catherine Borgia, we have continued to dedicate ourselves to you, the constituents, and the residents of Westchester County. I am proud of the work that we have been doing and look forward to what the next year of this term brings. As always, I welcome hearing from the residents of Yorktown, Somers, and New Castle, as well as the entire County. Please continue reaching out to let me know how I can better serve you.

Sincerely,

Inflation Relief for Taxpayers

SENIOR CITIZENS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES HOME OWNER'S TAX EXEMPTION: This bill will help ease the financial burden on some of our most vulnerable populations: seniors and the disabled community. It will increase the maximum income eligible for New York's property tax exemption to \$50,000 for people aged 65 and over and those with disabilities. This is an increase from the previous cap which was \$29,000, passed in 2009. With this increase, we will help a larger number of Westchester residents get some much-needed relief. This bill will ensure affordability for seniors, people with disabilities, and those with limited income allowing them to make ends meet. This will also allow those who live on limited incomes to stay in their homes in the communities where they have a network of friends and relatives. Our communities have benefited from having these residents in them. They have spent years dedicating their lives to our communities

and now it is time that we help support them. I am very grateful to be the lead sponsor of this bill to decrease the tax burden on some of our most vulnerable populations.

GAS TAX HOLIDAY: Over the summer we saw an increase in oil prices which caused a jump in local gas prices. The Board of Legislators took action as fast as possible, passing a Gas Tax Holiday for all residents. This tax holiday capped County taxes on gas at \$.12 per gallon from June 1 – August 31, 2022.

ELIMINATION OF SALES TAX ON RESIDENTIAL ENERGY: This applies to home heating oil, propane, natural gas, electric, coal, and wood, on a quarterly basis beginning December 1, 2022. The savings benefits not only homeowners, but renters as well, depending on the structure of the unit's heat and electric use.

Throughout my time on the Board, we have seen a property tax cut each year. I look forward to trying to

find other ways to ease the tax burden on residents to provide an easier, less expensive cost of living for all.

SUSPENSION OF FEES: In collaboration with the County Executive, we made sure to give residents who use public transportation through the Bee-Line Bus system some relief from fares. Throughout the summer, June 1 – August 31, 2022, we suspended all transportation fares for the bus system. We also suspended weekday fees



for all County pools as well as Glen Island Beach from July 5 – August 31, 2022. This gave families the opportunity to enjoy County facilities throughout the summer at a considerable savings. ■

Protecting Our Health, Safety, & Well-Being

FIREARM WARNING LABELS: I was also the lead sponsor of a firearm warning label law. This law will require gun stores to post signs warning those with access to firearms of the increased risks of suicide, homicide, death during domestic disputes, and the accidental deaths of children or others.



Firearms Warning Label Press Conference

VETERAN SERVICES: I was proud to secure a contract for My Brother Vinny Inc., as well as a number of other organizations within District 4, that provides critical services for our families, veterans, and community members. We have continued to improve services for our veterans, including but not limited to new mental health resources and cost-cutting measures. We waived the fees for all civil service tests required for employment in Westchester County.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS MOBILE RESPONSE TEAMS: One of the biggest results of our Police Reimagining Task Force last year was the creation and implementation of the new Mental Health Crisis Mobile Response Teams. Throughout the County, we now have teams which are trained to respond to emergency situations that involve individuals who require mental health intervention. If you are ever in need of one of these teams, you can call 911 and request their services. This also frees up police officers to handle the

criminal law enforcement situations that they were trained for.

SALARY RANGE TRANSPARENCY LAW: On May 9, 2022, we passed a law that will require employers to include the expected salary range when posting jobs. This will help to close the gap on gender- and race-based pay inequity. Any job that is located within Westchester County will have to follow these guidelines.

HEALTH CARE FACILITIES ACCESS: The board passed a law that will protect healthcare facility workers and people seeking medical treatment from being physically prevented or otherwise intimidated while trying to obtain private services. It bars physical harassment of people entering or exiting, damage to the premises, and attempts to intimidate people within 25 feet of the building.

REPORTING OF HATE INCIDENTS: Statistics show hate incidents have been on the rise since the coronavirus pandemic started. The majority of these incidents go unaddressed by federal and state laws because they do not rise to the level of criminality. For this reason, the Board passed a law requiring local law enforcement to report all bias-related crimes and incidents. These incidents will be tracked by the Commissioner of Public Safety and the County's Human Rights Commission. ■



Hate Incidents Bill Signing

Westchester County Parks

HILLTOP HANOVER FARMS: The Board recently approved monies for Hilltop Hanover Farms for various infrastructure improvements. These improvements include rebuilding the winter barnyard, new livestock fencing, and general updates to a number of buildings. We are also continuing to work on a master plan to determine future improvements. I am extremely excited to be continuing to improve our parks through various projects so that generations to come will be able to enjoy them.

MUSCOOT FARMS: This year we have also appropriated thousands of dollars towards infrastructure improvements to Muscoot Farms in Somers. This park has been a place for families to come and enjoy for years and I am very excited to have worked alongside Legislator Erika Pierce to help bring much-needed updates to this landmark. ■

SUNY Westchester Community College

We have continued our commitment towards our community college, making sure that is affordable for residents as well as continually being updated to provide students and staff with the latest technologies. This year alone we have replaced roofs on a number of buildings on the main campus. We have also continued with various infrastructure upgrades in Academic Arts, Science, and Maintenance Buildings, and updated the technology available on and off campus. Most importantly, we passed a budget in collaboration with SUNY WCCC that included a zero percent tuition increase. ■



Chappaqua's Memorial Day Parade



Attending a roundtable with the Attorney General about public safety



Speaking at the Albanian Heritage Celebration at Kensico Dam



Groundbreaking at Granite Knolls Playground, an inclusive/accessible playground in Yorktown



Non Profit Westchester Budget Forum



County Memorial Day Ceremony at Lasdon Park