



Westchester County Legislator
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Proudly Serving the 8th District



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Relief For Our Hard-Working Taxpayers

Ensuring that Westchester County is an affordable place to live for working families, seniors, veterans, and residents across the entire economic spectrum is vital to our growth as a county:

- **COUNTY PROPERTY TAXES CUT** for the fourth consecutive year
- **SUSPENDED BEE-LINE BUS FARES** for two summers and both the 2022 and 2023 holiday seasons
- **COMMITMENT TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING** by allocating \$90 million so far in 2023 towards affordable housing projects
- **RESOLUTION PASSED OPPOSING CON EDISON'S PROPOSED DELIVERY RATE INCREASES**

There are thousands of dollars in **UNCLAIMED FUNDS** currently being held by the NYS Comptroller's office.



Visit <https://ouf.osc.state.ny.us/> to verify if you have money waiting and, if so, file a claim!



Mother & Daughter at Lyndhurst Mansion 2023 Holiday Decorations Tour

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2023/24 Newsletter



Jewel Williams Johnson

Legislator, District 8 — Elmsford, Greenburgh, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, White Plains
Chair, Committees on Budget & Appropriations and Health



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This year has been an unusual one for the Westchester County Board of Legislators, but we know the strength of our county depends on the success of the people who live within it – support of the knowledge, innovation, imagination, creativity, drive, security and opportunity of every resident of Westchester County all depends on good leadership and governance. This is the foundation of my service on the Board, I recognize and honor our shared common interests, our common humanity, and, yes, ideas and principles that are universal. This definitely was top of mind last May as I rose to become the first to serve as Chair of the Board's Committee on Budget and Appropriations in their first term since the inception of the board.

As Chair of both the Westchester County Board of Legislators' (BOL) Committee on Budget and Appropriations and the Committee on Health I understand the importance of ensuring residents in our County are well-informed about aspects and structure of the County budget and the issues surrounding healthcare. The Budget & Appropriations Committee approached the review of the proposed 2024 budget with a lens focused on both its effectiveness in strengthening our economy, equally with the values of the residents of Westchester and I am confident we passed a balanced and sensible budget for 2024. Both Committees meet weekly, the Budget and Appropriations Committee meets most Mondays and the Health Committee meets most Tuesdays. Since my last newsletter, the Committee on Health held meetings on many relevant topics (see list on next page).

This year I was a co-sponsor on the new Single Use Foodware law which is a step towards protecting our environment. I also supported and voted to approve the tax exemption for Volunteer Firefighters and Volunteer Ambulance Services Members as well as the creation of a committee to study the high rates of asthma in communities of color in Westchester County. I also supported and voted to approve the new Office of Housing Counsel to provide free legal counsel/representation to low-income households facing eviction and a new law establishing a demo program to impose vehicle owner liability for failure to stop for a stopped school bus displaying a red visual signal and stop-arm for the safety of Westchester children. I was also successful again in advocating for and securing funds in the budget to offer free therapeutic/mental health services to children, as well as funds for many of the community based organizations in District 8 operating food pantries, art programs, support programs for domestic violence victims, community event programs, youth enrichment and STEM programs and so much more!

As we start the new year, I am even more focused on health issues, especially the lack of mental health resources and how New York State's changes to Medicaid billing affects our County budget. Beginning in 2023, the state started withholding federal dollars it usually passes to counties to fund Medicaid. This means counties are paying millions more per year in Medicaid costs. I still hold firm to the quote from Teddy Roosevelt, the person who first called for health care reform – that Republican – all those years ago... He said, "Aggressively fighting for the right [to healthcare] is the noblest sport the world affords."

To everyone who lives in District No. 8: Thank you for the honor of representing you! We know we're in a climate of uneasiness, globally and right here at home, but the goal remains constant. I will continue with the objective of enhancing the lives of the residents of Westchester and seek out all possibilities to represent this District strongly and effectively.

Sincerely,



WC 2024 Budget Approval



Moms Demand Action Wear Orange for Common Sense Gun Laws Event



WP Puerto Rican Flag Raising



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!**

Scan QR code or visit westchesterlegislators.com/subscribe-to-district-8-enews

Health Committee Topics

- Infant Suffocation Education
- Opioid Settlement Funds
- How Digital Access Inequities Leads to Health Disparities
- Westchester County Dept. of Health Inspectors' Challenges with Storage of Flavored Vape Products
- Youth and Social Media: Mental Health Effects & Healthy Use
- Extreme Risk Protection Orders & Gun Safety
- Prevalence of Fentanyl
- Inflation Reduction Act Lowers Health Care & Prescription Costs
- NYS Mental Hygiene Statute Requiring Ambulances with Involuntary Mental Health Patients to Transport to Nearest Hospital, Not Their Choice
- Abortion - Recent Rulings on Oral Medication & How Some States Are Stocking Up On Medication
- Autism Rates Have Skyrocketed in the NYC Metro Area + Autism More Common in Children of Color
- Risks of Diabetes: Prevention, Detection & Actionable Steps + Diabetes Billing Disputes
- HPV Vaccine & Its Benefits
- Long COVID & Its Mental Health Effects + Paxlovid Non-Effective in Young Adults
- Understanding Energy Insecurity and Why It Matters to Health
- EMS Should Be an Essential Service in NYS
- Suicide Remains the Second-Leading Cause of Death Among 10 to 34-year-olds in the US
- Air Quality Compromised Due to Canadian Forest Fires
- Gun Violence - US Gun Death Rates Increased
- Re-Emerging Diseases/Infections: Leprosy Endemic in Florida, Flesh-Eating Bacteria in Suffolk, Long Island, Malaria in Florida, Maryland & Texas, Langya (COVID-like virus recently leaped from animals to humans), Syphilis in Europe & the United Kingdom, Cholera in Africa & Haiti, Dengue in India"
- College Students & Food Insecurity
- Tour of the NY-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital, Cortlandt, NY
- Cancer Screening Test Must Be Made Available to Most Vulnerable, New Yorkers Who Need Access to Biomarker Testing & Sick/Paid Leave Should Include Chemotherapy Recovery
- League Coaches, Team Managers, and Umpires Should Be Required to be CPR Certified
- Our Country Has A Chronic Pain Problem - Relieving Pain w/o Exacerbating It

Green Accomplishments and Initiatives

The Board is committed to practical and progressive solutions to staving off climate change, increasing sustainability, and reducing the proliferation of toxic agents in our environment:

- Additional **ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS** for both County and residential vehicles, increasing the inventory from 40 operating stations currently installed, to 189 stations by the end of 2023.
- The **LEAD-FREE PARKS ACT** to prioritize the safety of our residents by monitoring and remediating drinking water in all County parks.
- The **RENEWABLE ENERGY DATABASE ACT** to empower municipalities by providing access to a database that assists in siting renewable energy infrastructure.
- The **EQUITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION ACT** to guarantee fairness in our decision-making processes by considering the historical cases of environmental justice.
- **HOLDING HOLTEC ACCOUNTABLE** to monitor the safe decommissioning of Indian Point and prevent incidents like radioactive water being dumped into the Hudson River from occurring. As the result of our lobbying, the Governor signed the **"SAVE THE HUDSON"** legislation, aimed at protecting the economic vitality of the Hudson River Region, into law in August.
- **"UPON REQUEST" LEGISLATION FOR SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FOODWARE** to lower waste in plastic usage by only including eating implements for take-out food orders when requested.

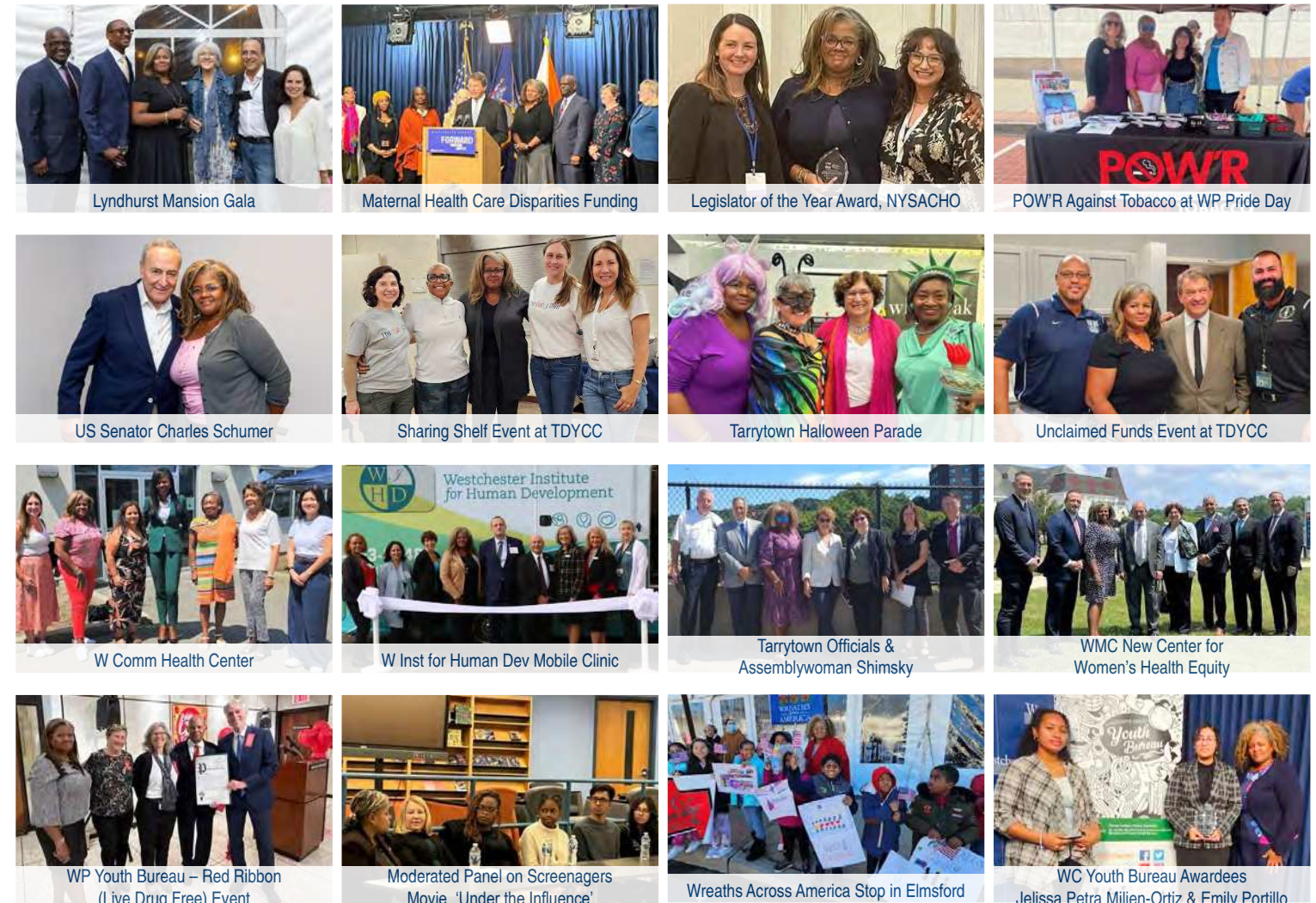


PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS & FREEDOMS: Promoting Transparency & Accountability

Responding to issues raised by community leaders and advocates, the Board strives each year to implement innovative legislation in the areas of social and economic justice to benefit all Westchester residents:

- The **ASIAN-AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAPI) NEEDS ASSESSMENT**, conducted in 2022 by the County's Asian-American Advisory Board and funded by the County, is the first study of its kind in Westchester's history. 800 Asian-Americans Westchester residents were surveyed. The findings, disclosed in May 2023, illustrate its value as a tool for collecting vital information to inform anti-discrimination policies for all groups within our County.
- The **ACCESS TO COUNSEL BILL** ensures legal representation to household tenants facing eviction and other covered proceedings when the household's annual income is at or below 300% of the federal poverty line, or 60% of the County's Area Median Income (AMI), whichever is higher. Approved unanimously, this new law levels the playing field and gives low-income households facing eviction access to free legal representation.

AROUND THE DISTRICT



ENSURING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF COUNTY RESIDENTS

Investing in programs to assist the most vulnerable in our community is how good government improves the lives of everyday people:

- **FREE THERAPEUTIC SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH** offered for the first time by the County Youth Bureau to those enrolled in the 63 *Invest in Kids* programs throughout the County.
- **INCREASED FUNDING FOR CHILDCARE** by lowering the parent contribution from 10% to 5% for subsidized programs, as well as **EXPANDED ASSISTANCE FOR FOOD INSECURITY PROGRAMS**
- **DIVERSE ABILITIES JOB FAIRS** for job seekers with disabilities to connect with potential employers, since people with disabilities suffer from among the highest rates of unemployment of any group in the County.
- **SUNFLOWER LANYARDS PROGRAM** at the County Airport to help those with hidden disabilities travel independently, knowing that they will receive the support that they may need at every stage of their journey -- in the terminal, boarding the plane, on the flight and finally arriving at their destination.
- **NARCAN TRAINING FOR COUNTY EMPLOYEES INITIATIVE** to kick off a public service campaign for County residents to better understand the opioid crisis and be better prepared to combat it.
- **AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR OUR SENIOR LGBTQ+ RESIDENTS** in the works at a new apartment complex, Court Street Residences, on the southwest corner of Court and Quarropas Streets in White Plains. The plan consists of at least 140 residential units for applicants aged 55 and older. The facility will be all-electric and incorporate green technology, making it environmentally friendly and sustainable, as well as provide social programming for LGBTQ+ seniors from The Loft.
- Under the **SCHOOL BUS STOP-ARM LAW**, the County is authorized to install monitoring systems on school buses to catch and ticket vehicles that fail to stop for a school bus's red visual signal and stop-arm.