

## The Committee System



The Board of Legislators accomplishes much of its work through a system of committees. When the County Board refers an item to committee for study, the committee Chair puts

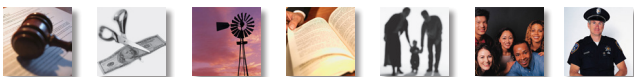
the item on the committee meeting agenda and the Legislators will begin to work on it. The item could be a rather simple matter that can be handled quickly, or it could involve a complex issue and take months to resolve.

Committee meetings can involve lengthy discussions and spirited debate, especially when the issues are controversial. Legislators often have strong views and are quick to defend their positions. A committee meeting is also where important research is discussed so Legislators have all the facts and information they need to take action.

## The Board's Committees

Every County Legislator serves on at least one of the following committees:

- Appointments
- Budget & Appropriations
- Energy & Regional Efficiencies
- Environment & Health
- Infrastructure
- Labor/Parks/Planning/Housing
- Litigation
- Legislation
- Public Safety & Social Services
- Rules
- Seniors & Constituencies



For details on committee responsibilities, visit:  
[www.westchesterlegislators.com/committees](http://www.westchesterlegislators.com/committees)

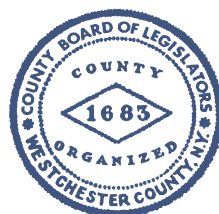
## How Can I Participate?



- **SEND AN E-MAIL OR WRITE A LETTER.**  
Contact your legislator to share your ideas and concerns. This is one of the many ways that legislators find out what people want government to do. Who knows, maybe one of your ideas will become a law or lead to a new County policy. *To find your legislator, visit [www.westchesterlegislators.com/Legislators](http://www.westchesterlegislators.com/Legislators).*
- **ATTEND A MEETING OR WATCH ONLINE.**  
The Board of Legislators typically meet every other Monday night at 7:00 PM. Visit our website or call (914) 995-2800 to check meeting dates and agendas. You can also watch meetings live or on-demand at <http://westchestercountyny.IQM2.com>. You can also attend committee meetings which are usually held during the day. *For up-to-date schedules, visit [westchesterlegislators.com/Calendars](http://westchesterlegislators.com/Calendars).*
- **SPEAK YOUR MIND.**  
Speak on any issue directly to the Board of Legislators during the **Public Comment** segment at the beginning of each Board meeting. *You should arrive a few minutes early and sign up for a 3 minute time slot.*

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### WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

800 Michaelian Office Bldg.,  
148 Martine Avenue  
White Plains, New York 10601  
Tel: (914) 995-2800; Fax: (914) 995-3884

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## WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

*Voice Of The People Of Westchester County  
For Over 300 Years*

## About The Legislature



# The Westchester County Board of Legislators

The Board of Legislators is the legislative branch of county government. The Board consists of 17 members known as County Legislators. For the purpose of electing the Legislators, the county is divided into 17 County legislative districts. One Legislator is elected from each district. In order for a person to serve as a Legislator, he/she must be a resident of the district from which he/she is elected. The term of office is 2 years and no person can serve as a Legislator for more than six consecutive two-year terms.

## Powers of the Board

- Enact legislation regarding the structure and operation of county government.
- Appropriate money, levy taxes and incur debt for the purpose of carrying out the duties of county government, mainly providing vital services to residents.

## County Board Leaders

At the beginning of each new two-year term, on the first Monday in January, the 17 County Legislators meet to elect a Chair to preside over the County Board. A Vice Chair is also elected. Prior to that meeting, the Legislators split up into two caucuses according to political party affiliation, Democrat or Republican. The leader of the caucus with the greater number of Legislators becomes the Majority Leader of the Board. The leader of the smaller caucus is the Minority Leader. These leaders organize their caucuses and present political party points of view on the issues that come before the Board.

# How an Idea Becomes Law



Ideas for new laws can come from many sources. An idea put into written form as a proposed act, local law or resolution and sponsored by a Legislator or the County Executive, can be placed on the agenda of the County Board for referral to a Board committee for study. For example, a proposal by the County Executive to spend money to purchase land for a park would be referred to the Labor/Parks/Planning/Housing Committee as well as the Budget & Appropriations Committee which considers spending requests. These two committees would then meet with the County Executive's staff and the Commissioner of Parks to discuss the details of the proposal

and how it would benefit the public. Once the details have been worked out and all questions have been answered, the committee members can vote to report the proposal to the full Board for consideration. Usually, one of three things happens to a proposal when it's reported to the full Board:



It's approved by a majority vote of the Legislators and sent to the County Executive to be signed into law, or



It's defeated as it fails to win a majority vote, or



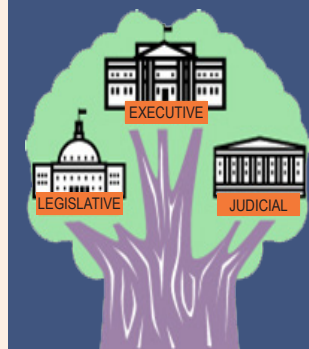
It's recommitted or sent back to committee for further work.

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## A System of CHECKS and BALANCES

Like our federal and state government, County government has separation of powers and a system of checks and balances. That's so no one branch of our government can become too powerful. Each branch is restrained by the other two. For example: the County Executive may veto a law passed by the County Board. The County Board can override that veto with a two-thirds vote. Another example: a court may check the County Board by declaring a law unconstitutional or by limiting its

### 3 Branches of Government



application or effect. In Westchester, within ten days after legislation is passed by the County Board, the County Executive may either sign the legislation into law or veto it issuing a written explanation for the veto. If the County Executive does not act within the ten days, the legislation passed by the County Board automatically becomes law. Legislation that is vetoed can still become law. The County Board can override the veto with a two-thirds vote of the members.