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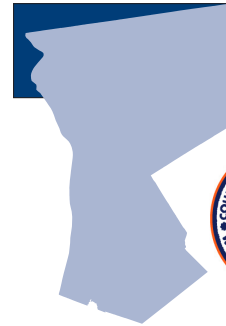
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# Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

*Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years*



Fall 2018 Newsletter



## Catherine Borgia

District 9 ~ Cortlandt, Croton on Hudson,  
Ossining, Briarcliff Manor, Peekskill



## Budget 2018

Last December, the Board of Legislators unanimously overrode the outgoing County Executive's veto of the 2018 county budget. That bipartisan action helped begin Westchester County's financial turnaround. After eight years of fiscal mismanagement, fake revenue projections, and accounting gimmicks by the previous county administration, my colleagues and I are working closely with County Executive Latimer and his staff to get our finances back on track. As Chair of the Budget & Appropriations Committee, I work every day to make the most of our tax dollars so Westchester County can provide outstanding services in the most cost-effective manner.

For years, the County Executive submitted budgets that drained county agencies of talent, ignored needed infrastructure repairs, and depleted the rainy day fund. We're quite literally paying the cost of this negligence today. New leadership in the County Executive's office brings opportunities to innovate in getting the most bang-for-our-buck from county revenues, while getting real about the financial situation we've been left. Moving forward, we must be clear: unrealistic, unsustainable pledges and catchy slogans are not fiscal policy. Good budgeting requires long-term thinking, smart investment that will save money down the line, and listening to expert input. I am actively fighting for sound policymaking on this front, so that the county can deliver its essential services as efficiently as possible. ■



Dear Neighbor,

This past year, we the people chose a Westchester County Board of Legislators who represent all that we are as a county and a nation. I am proudly one of nine women on the Board, the first time in its 335-year history where that is the case. We have more women—and more people of color—representing the county than at any point in our history. But if our diversity is the symbol of our forward-looking ideals, our work toward equity and dignity for Westchester residents is the substance. My colleagues and I at the Board of Legislators passed the landmark Immigrant Protection Act in April, which ensures county resources are not wasted in the name of the federal government's costly and cruel immigration crackdown. We barred employers from discriminating against job applicants based on their salary history—an important step in the fight toward equal pay for equal work, especially for women. We worked to guarantee earned sick leave throughout Westchester. We're getting our fiscal house in order after eight years of unsustainable accounting by the previous County Executive. And we're just getting started.

My aspiration is for a county government that works for all, and is responsible to all. So I can't do it alone. If you want to help make Westchester a more fair, more livable place, and have suggestions for me or the Board of Legislators, don't hesitate to give me a call at (914) 995-2812 or email Borgia@westchesterlegislators.com. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

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## Tobacco 21

**TOBACCO 21**  
For a healthier  
WESTCHESTER  
COUNTY, we're  
changing the tobacco  
purchasing age.  
~~eighteen~~ **21**



In June, my colleagues and I passed, with a 16-1 bipartisan majority, a law to ban the sale of tobacco products to people under the age of 21. I was proud to be a primary sponsor of this legislation. Smoking is the number 1 cause of preventable death in the U.S., and nineteen of every twenty adults who smoke start before turning 21. The research is clear: raising the age when people can legally purchase tobacco products reduces smoking. The law will save lives and taxpayer dollars, and is the right thing

to do to protect the health and welfare of everyone in Westchester.

The law also classifies e-cigarette products among the products banned for sale to people under 21. We heard much testimony on the Board of Legislators from experts and parents alike about the explosive growth of vaping among young people. Making sure highly addictive and credibly carcinogenic vaping products stay out of the hands of young people is crucial in the fight against addiction and chronic illness. ■

## Wage History Anti-Discrimination

The Wage History Anti-Discrimination bill, of which I was the primary sponsor, passed unanimously by the Board of Legislators and was signed into law by County Executive George Latimer on April 10th, 2018, taking effect on July 9th. The new law bars Westchester employers from asking job seekers about past wages during the hiring and salary negotiation process. This law is a

crucial step in combating wage inequality for women and people of color in the face of continuing wage discrimination.

Salaries should reflect employees' experience and talent; not the whims and biases of their prior employers. When future pay becomes tethered to old salaries, people who have faced wage discrimination in the past lose out on crucial opportunities to nego-

tiate appropriate salaries with new employers. The law also protects people who have taken time off to raise children or care for loved ones in need; if their industries get a pay raise, they shouldn't be left behind. This legislation will help level the playing field by ensuring that all prospective employees get a fair shot at negotiating salaries that reflect their talents. ■

## Immigrant Protection Act

One in four people living in Westchester was born outside the United States, and six percent of Westchester residents are undocumented. Immigrants are our friends, neighbors, and community leaders. They work hard every day to be loving family members, caring community members, and enthusiastic followers of the American Dream. That's why I introduced the Immigrant Protection Act, and was thrilled to join my colleagues in passing it into law this past April. The law sets ground rules for how county agencies share information with federal immigration authorities. It makes everyone in Westchester safer, by ensuring that immigrant Westchester residents who are victimized by crime feel unafraid to report it.

Westchester law enforcement leaders and officers agree that their responsibility is first and foremost to protect Westchester; not act as agents of federal immigration enforcement. When people fear that they, or their family or friends,



will be reported to ICE if they interact with law enforcement, they stop reporting crimes. Under the new law, people in county jail cannot be released into ICE custody—ripped away from their families after already having done their time—without a judicial warrant. County agencies can no longer ask for unnecessary information about residents' immigra-

tion statuses. Finally, county police will not stop or detain anyone based on their suspected immigration status. County resources are best used for county functions, not enforcing immigration laws that the federal government already has the resources to enforce. In Westchester, the Immigrant Protection Act makes us all safer. ■

## Earned Sick Leave

Health care is a basic human need. Workers' access to health care is compromised if they are penalized or lose their jobs when they take time off work to stay healthy. On October 1st, I was delighted to join with my colleagues to pass the Earned Sick Leave legislation that I first introduced in 2015. We have worked toward this legislation for many years, and I want to thank the members and leaders of labor unions, advocacy organizations, and the business community who came together to support, provide input, and help us pass the best version of the law. All Westchester employers with five or more employees must now allow their workers to accrue one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours they work, up to 40 hours a year. It's crucial for worker health and safety, increases productivity, and is the right thing to do. We hope that New York State soon follows the example of Westchester and joins 7 other states to guarantee the right to paid sick leave.

Thirty-six percent of workers in Westchester County did not have paid sick time before passage of this law. Now, almost all will, and even those workers in businesses with fewer than five employees will be



guaranteed (unpaid) sick time. The law also prohibits retaliation from employers that don't let their workers take off when ill or caring for a sick family member.

Earned sick leave is a win-win for everyone. It lets businesses be more productive by reducing turnover and increasing workplace productivity. It protects public

health—fifty-four percent of Westchester service workers, including food service workers and home health aides, did not have paid sick leave before the passage of this law. And it guarantees the essential right of workers to get the care they or an ailing family member need to stay happy and healthy. ■

## Bronx Veterans Court Visit

On June 1st, I visited the Bronx Criminal Court along with other Westchester County public officials, to sit in on highly successful Bronx County Veterans Treatment Court. Veterans Treatment Courts are aimed at promoting alternatives to incarceration for veterans caught up in the justice system. We owe it to our veterans to provide the services due to them for the hardships they have endured in service to our country. When veterans get caught up in the justice system for reasons related to drug abuse or mental health issues, we must recognize the unique circumstances that may have gotten them there, and find productive ways to promote their successful transition to civilian life. Veterans Treatment Courts recently received an overwhelming, bipartisan endorsement at the national level. Both

houses of Congress unanimously approved a bill this summer mandating that VA medical centers hire Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to advocate on behalf of veterans going through Veterans Treatment Court proceedings.

The sacrifices we ask of the people in our armed forces must be paired with our promise to support these individuals when

they return from combat. Crucial to that promise is to recognize how the unique traumas of combat may impact veterans' lives as civilians. As with our responses to drug addiction and mental illness in general, our society cannot afford, morally or economically, to criminalize veterans for the difficulties they've faced. When we sat in on the Bronx Veterans Treatment Court, we witnessed the alternative: grateful graduates of a rehabilitation program. It was clear that this is a better way than bars and handcuffs to see to our veterans' reintegration into civilian life. I'm working hard with Chief Administrative Judge Kathie Davidson, other Westchester County and New York State judges, as well as County Executive George Latimer, to see to it that a Veterans Treatment Court becomes a reality in Westchester. ■

