



Westchester County Legislator
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Implementing New York's Voting Reforms

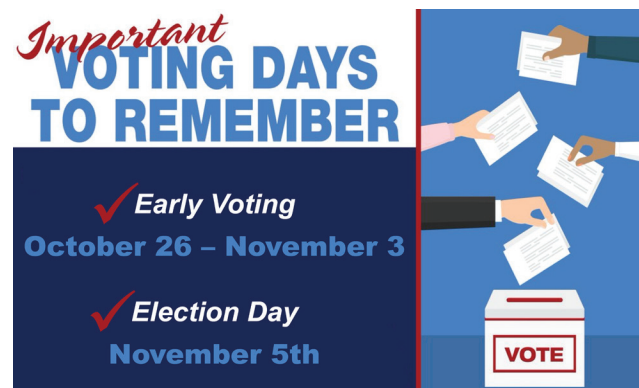
The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy, and it is the government's duty to make the ballot as accessible as possible. This January, New York State took huge strides toward making it easier to vote. Most significantly, they authorized nine days of early voting in every election and ended New York's outdated practice of holding separate primary elections for federal and state offices. Both changes will make it easier for people to vote.

I was proud to serve on the Voting Reform Working Group, established by the Board of Legislators this January to examine these new laws and make recommendations about how to implement these changes.

Here are some important changes that voters should know:

- **EARLY VOTING** – Voters in New York will have the option to vote early beginning with this November's general election. In 2019, the dates for early voting will be Saturday, October 26th through (and including) Sunday, November 3rd. The Westchester County Board of Elections will select voting locations specifically for Early Voting (which may not be your regular polling place). Keep an eye out for a postcard from the Board of Elections letting you know where your early voting polling place is located
- **ONE PRIMARY ELECTION DATE** – There is now one primary election date—the fourth Tuesday in June—for all federal, state, and local candidates
- **PORTABLE REGISTRATION** – When a voter moves from one county to another in New York and interacts with a state agency like the DMV, their voter registration will automatically transfer to the new county
- **PRE-REGISTRATION** – Beginning in 2020, 16- and 17-year-olds will be able to pre-register to vote, so they will be automatically registered and eligible to vote on their 18th birthdays

In a national environment where some states are seeking to limit ballot access, I am proud that New York is taking steps to make it easier to vote, and will work hard to ensure the successful implementation of these reforms. ■



Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Fall 2019 Newsletter

Catherine Borgia

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

Safe Leave Law

Last year, we guaranteed Westchester workers the right to up to 40 hours of accrued sick leave. This year, working in partnership with the business community, I introduced bipartisan legislation to provide paid leave time for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking to get the help they need. The Safe Leave law, passed unanimously in April and signed by County Executive Latimer in May, ensures that victimized individuals have up to 40 hours of time annually to consult with attorneys or other advisors about their situations, attend court proceedings, or physically move away from an abuser.

No one should have to choose between their physical safety and their job. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, domestic abuse affects up to one in three women and one in seven men during their lifetimes. It is our responsibility as elected representatives to say to people who have been abused by a partner: we believe you, we stand with you, and we will work to make sure you are safe. With the passage of the Safe Leave law, Westchester County took a significant step toward helping people at some of the most vulnerable times of their lives gain back a measure of agency and dignity. ■

Dear Neighbor,

After a historic year enacting the most ambitious legislative agenda in the modern history of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, my colleagues and I are steadfast in standing up for the dignity of all county residents. If a theme of last year's accomplishments was the principle of fairness—for example, to workers guaranteed sick leave or to immigrant residents' due process rights—many of this year's accomplishments can be characterized by a commitment to empowering people to be heard. We passed the bill I introduced extending additional leave time to survivors of domestic abuse so they can seek justice. We are working to implement New York State's new laws making it easier for citizens to vote so that We The People can be better heard in the electoral process. We supported historic reforms to the state's criminal justice system so defendants can avail themselves of their "day in court" with a bail system less stacked against them. We are working hard with County Executive Latimer and our state elected officials to get every person counted in the upcoming 2020 census.

It is critically important to me that you be heard. If you are seeking help accessing a county resource, have an idea for a piece of legislation, or just want to chat over coffee and learn more about what we do at the County Board, I am here for you. Please feel free to reach out to me at Borgia@westchesterlegislators.com or (914) 995-2812; my door is always open.

Yours truly,



Signing the 2019 Budget

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Supporting a Fairer Criminal Justice System



Everyone in the U.S. enjoys the presumption of innocence until they are convicted of a crime. Too often, however, jailing defendants before trial is used as a tool to get them to plead guilty before they have had reasonable opportunity to present a defense. This year I proudly joined a bipartisan group of my colleagues in passing a resolution supporting criminal justice reform in New York State. The state legislature passed most of these reforms, which will protect the due process rights of defendants and

avoid unnecessary and expensive imprisonment.

Many people held in jail before trial are there simply because they do not have the money to post bail. New York's new laws eliminating cash bail for most offenses will go a long way toward making sure we are not criminalizing poverty and expensively locking up people who are legally innocent. The new laws also work to uphold the constitutional guarantee of a speedy trial by giving defendants full access to information about the

charges against them. Before the recent reforms, New York's "pre-trial discovery" laws were woefully out of date. They allowed prosecutors to wait until the eve of trial to give defendants information that could potentially show their innocence. That is not nearly enough time for even experienced defense attorneys to help their clients defend themselves. By lending our support to these reforms, we added to the groundswell of support for this crucial legislation that will ensure a more equitable administration of justice. ■

Eliminating Expanded Polystyrene Food Containers

There is nothing more unpleasant when going out for a walk in the park than seeing plastic trash scattered around the natural environment. Americans throw out billions of tons of expanded polystyrene (EPS) coffee cups and other food containers every year. The material clogs landfills, chokes marine ecosystems, absorbs other pollutants, and is expensive to recycle.

I cosponsored bipartisan legislation that the Board of Legislators passed in May to eliminate the use and sale of EPS take-out food containers in Westchester. The new measure applies to take-out food containers used by vendors or sold in bulk

in stores. The measure also prohibits the sale of "loose-fill" EPS packing foam in Westchester. Pre-packaged food that arrives sealed in EPS package, packaging for raw eggs, and butcher case packaging are exempted. This is common sense legislation, and with it, Westchester joins our neighbors in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, as well as New York City, in sup-



porting environmental health by reducing the use of a particularly harmful type of plastic. ■

Supporting a Complete 2020 Census Count

A great number of important government decisions rest on using information obtained from the U.S. Census every ten years. These decisions include how \$800 billion in federal funding is distributed, the number of Representatives that New York State gets in Congress, and the manner in which legislative districts are drawn for all levels of government. With the 2020 Census coming up, Westchester County is committed to making sure everyone is

counted. I am working hard with my colleagues at the Board of Legislators, County Executive Latimer, municipal officials, and Westchester's Complete Count Committee to get the word out.

April 1st, 2020 is the day the census response process officially begins. Responses can now be sent online or via phone (in addition to the paper forms that will be mailed to households) and will remain completely confidential. The Census

Bureau is also hiring for many census jobs, from census takers ("enumerators"), to recruiting assistants and supervisory staff. Local offerings can be found by visiting 2020census.gov/jobs. The Census takes place only once every ten years—you have the opportunity to be a part of history and help your community by spreading the word, working to implement the census, and most importantly, getting yourself and your household counted. ■

Working to Improve the County ID Cards

Did you know that government-issued IDs are available to every resident from the Westchester County Clerk's Office? While these cards cannot replace a drivers' license or be used for federal identification purposes, this is an affordable option to get yourself properly identified that is ac-

cepted as proof of identity in all county offices. We are working to make the process of acquiring County IDs more accessible to residents for public safety purposes. In addition, we hope to use these cards as an engine for economic development by partnering with local businesses to provide

discounts to those who have a County ID card. Stay tuned for future news about resident discounts you may be entitled to by presenting a County ID at local businesses or cultural centers. Meanwhile, stop by the County Clerk's office in White Plains and pick up an ID for less than twenty dollars. ■

PHOTO GALLERY



With my Summer Reading Buddy



Jandon Scholars 2019



Celebrating Women's History Month



You're never too old to enjoy Playland!