



## Westchester County Legislator Jewel Williams Johnson

*Proudly Serving the 8th District*



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## Westchester County Working For You

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 Elmsford, Greenburgh, Tarrytown, Sleepy Hollow, White Plains, and the entire County. Please keep in touch with me to let me know how I can better serve you.

**Happy Holidays!**



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# Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

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

Fall/Winter 2022 Newsletter

## Jewel Williams Johnson

Legislator, District 8 — Elmsford, Greenburgh,  
Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, White Plains  
*Chair, Health Committee*



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

When former President Obama advocated for the Affordable Care Act in 2009 & 2010, he often referenced former President Teddy Roosevelt, who was the first to advocate for everybody having health care in this country. Every decade since, we've had Presidents, Republicans and Democrats, from Harry Truman to Richard Nixon to JFK to Lyndon Johnson — every President has said we need to fix this system. It's a debate that's not only about the cost of health care, but also about the people who aren't getting a fair shake from their insurance companies. It's a debate about the character of our country-- about whether we can still meet the challenges of our time; whether we still have the courage to give every citizen, not just some, the chance to reach their dreams. It's a debate we continue to have in 2022 and, at the heart of it, is whether to accept a system that works better for the insurance companies than it does for the American people.

As Chair of the Westchester County Board of Legislator's (BOL) Committee on Health, I am committed to ensuring residents in our County are well-informed about the issues surrounding healthcare. The many committee meetings I've held are concrete proof. In fact, my Committee holds the record for the most committee meetings held so far this year. We've held meetings on...

- Lack of Mental Health Resources
- Mental/Behavioral Health Insurance Parity
- Conflict Resolution & Interpersonal Skills - because our country is lacking in this area and we need to do our part to change this
- Pandemic's Impact on Preventative Health
- Suicide Prevention
- Veterans Services
- Getting Kids to Move More/Incorporate More Physical Activity
- Maternal Health Disparities (town hall: Spring 2023)
- School Safety
- Prescription Affordability
- Baby Formula Shortage
- Medicare Watchdog Report Found Denied Claims Which Should Have Been Paid with representative from the Federal Health & Human Services Department
- Social & Mental Health of School Age Children
- Fire Arm Injuries as a Pediatric & Public Health Crisis
- Community-Based Mental Health Partnerships & Programming

Yes, I also proposed a ban on flavored tobacco because it is highly addictive; it can harm and delay brain development in kids. Along with Alison Lake, Executive Director of the Westchester Children's Association, Kathy Halas, Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Westchester, BOL Vice Chair Nancy Barr and I are exploring designating the County's own definition of homelessness to better count and be a greater support to children in need.

I encourage all of you to attend as many meetings of the Committee on Health as possible and if you can't attend, to be sure to watch them on our website: <https://bit.ly/BOLHealthCommittee>

Lastly, a quote from Teddy Roosevelt, the person who first called for health care reform — all those years ago... He said, "Aggressively fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords."

Ensuring our fellow residents living in Westchester County, especially the children in our County have accessible and affordable healthcare, especially mental healthcare is the goal of the BOL Committee on Health and I know it's right. To everyone who lives in District No. 8: Thank you for the honor of representing you! This has been a very rewarding and fruitful year. I will continue the good fight and seek out all possibilities to represent this District strongly and effectively.

Sincerely,



Westchester County Recognizes Month of May  
as Mental Health Awareness Month



# County Surplus Results in Inflation Relief for Tax Payers

To counteract inflation and price increases, the County was able to use surplus sales tax revenue to fund relief measures aimed at keeping more money in your pocket. In partnership with County Executive George Latimer, we were able to deliver the following money-saving policies:

- **GAS TAX HOLIDAY** (capping tax at \$0.12 per gallon from June 1 – August 31, 2022)
- **NO-FARE BEE-LINE BUSES** (from June 1 – August 31, 2022)
- **FREE WEEKDAY ADMISSION TO COUNTY POOLS & GLEN ISLAND BEACH** (from July 5 - August 31, 2022)
- **FREE COMMUTER PARKING** (North White Plains commuter lot & County Center parking lot from July 1 – August 31, 2022)
- **COUNTY CIVIL SERVICE EXAM FEE-WAIVERS** (through December 31, 2022)
- **CONVENED ROUND TABLE WITH UTILITY COMPANIES** to combat spiking energy prices
- **ELIMINATION OF THE SALES TAX ON RESIDENTIAL ENERGY:** Home heating oil, propane, natural gas, electric, coal, & wood on a quarterly basis beginning December 1, 2022. The savings applies not only to homeowners, but to renters as well.
- **THE BOARD OF LEGISLATORS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE ANNUAL BUDGET FOR SUNY WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE WITH ZERO TUITION INCREASE.** This marks the second consecutive year without a tuition rate increase.

Additionally, through the **AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA)**, Westchester County was allocated \$187,926,698 in March 2021 & received its second installment of \$93,963,349 in June 2022. The County has until December, 31, 2024 to obligate the funds according to the Federal guidelines, and has allocated them to these critical areas:

- Public Health Investment
- Healthy Mom, Healthy Baby Home Visiting Program
- Non-Profit Grant Program
- Small Business Development Assistance
- Tourism & Hospitality Development and Promotion
- Workforce Development Job Training
- Affordable Housing Development & Multi-Family Unit Rehabilitation
- Wastewater Infrastructure
- Revenue Replacement



## Leveling the Playing Field for County Residents

Recognizing the importance of equity, this year the BOL passed a vital piece of legislation and supported the proposal of a state law that will level the playing field for all. The job market is very competitive in our post-COVID world. We know that there can be uncontrollable factors that make landing the job of your dreams a lot more difficult.

- **THE SALARY RANGE TRANSPARENCY LAW**, passed on May 9th, requires employers with more than four employees to include expected salary range when posting jobs to combat gender- and race-based pay inequity. Employers are now required to include an expected salary range when they post a job opportunity in Westchester.
- The Board backed the proposed **NYS CLEAN SLATE ACT**, which would automatically seal criminal records from civil review for qualifying people who have served their time and maintained a clean record. While the bill did not pass the State Assembly, we acknowledge the monumental effort of the advocates for it to pass in the State Senate. We look forward to seeing this legislation return for consideration next session.

# Reassessing Westchester County’s Legislative Districts

A major undertaking of the Board has been the process of reassessing Westchester County’s 17 legislative districts, as is required after a new census. The 2020 U.S. census revealed our County’s population has 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, readjusting the district lines to make the population of each district as equal as possible. We conducted five public input sessions throughout the County to engage residents in this important and challenging process. We worked to ensure 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.

## Reopening to the Public

In-person meetings officially resumed at the Board of Legislators on September 12, In order to provide fair civic involvement, we instituted a hybrid model, requiring participants to register through WebEx (an online teleconferencing system) to participate remotely and attend via livestream, as well as permit physical attendance for all board meetings. Aside from its bi-weekly Board meetings, all County legislative committee meetings are subject to the new model. Information on how to participate for Public Comment and Public Hearings by video conferencing, telephone, or in-person, can be found on the Board’s website at [westchesterlegislators.com/meetings](http://westchesterlegislators.com/meetings).



188th Year of Jamaican Emancipation and 60th Anniversary Independence Day Celebration in White Plains



Speaking in appreciation of funds directed by NYS Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, to repair the stretch a route 9A in Greenburgh & Elmsford. Also, pictured with community advocate Jennifer Glen

## Protecting Our Health, Safety and Well-Being

In addition to the COVID pandemic response, the Board sought additional ways to help keep the general public healthy in mind and body. We passed extensive and substantial legislation to address public health, safety, and well-being:

- Reproductive Healthcare Facilities Act
- Hate Incident Reporting Act
- Firearm Warning Label Law
- Food Allergy Safety Training Law
- Revised long-standing offensive mental hygiene language in sections of the County Charter to reflect person-centered approach to policy and programs.
- Flood History Disclosure Law for Tenants

## Flood Tour Town of Greenburgh

On September 16th I conducted a flood tour with the Town of Greenburgh Commissioner of Public Works, Rich Fon and Legislator Mary Jane Shimsky. We saw first-hand the damage the Town’s waterways cause when they flood. I also serve on the BOL’s Environment, Energy & Climate Committee and I am dedicated to being responsive and addressing important issues like environment effects. The Town has made huge strides in addressing flooding problems and we held a follow-up meeting in November and look forward to rectifying more. Please call my office if you’ve experienced unmitigated flooding.



Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.

The Early Education Hall of Heroes on September 30, 2022, at Manhattanville College Redd Castle



WP Youth Bureau Summer Pathways to Careers in Health & Medicine Project, August 12, 2022



Spoke at the Westchester Children’s Association (WCA) Hope Quilt Project unveiling on Oct. 3, 2022