



Westchester County Legislator
COLIN D. SMITH
Proudly Serving the 1st District



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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer/Fall 2023 Newsletter



Colin D. Smith

District 1 ~ Cortlandt, Peekskill, Yorktown
Chair, Legislation Committee

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

In spite of some challenges and changes recently at the Board of Legislators, we have not stopped moving forward important legislation aimed at helping the residents of Westchester live their best lives. As Chair of the Legislation Committee, I am proud of what we have accomplished so far in 2023, which includes passing the **Access to Counsel Bill** which guarantees legal representation for tenants in need, and the **Truthful Disclosure Bill** which holds candidates and elected officials accountable for their records.

We have implemented other safeguards in the “back-to-school” season to protect our children and our environment. 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. On September 2, our **“Upon Request” Single-Use Foodware Law** is in effect. This legislation aims to reduce the consumption of plastics by limiting the use of single-use foodware products to only when specifically requested by the customer. In addition to promoting sustainability, this will lower costs and waste for businesses since they will no longer have to provide items that go straight into the garbage.

We also have some big achievements right here in our backyard. Close to \$10 million has been allocated for much needed road improvements on Route 6, and on North Division Street in Peekskill. And our lobbying to stop Holtec from dumping over a million gallons of radioactive wastewater into the Hudson River as it decommissions Indian Point paid off. The Governor signed the **“Save the Hudson”** legislation, aimed at protecting the economic vitality of the Hudson River Region, into law in August.

As we head into the fall, always a beautiful time in Westchester, I look forward to connecting with you at community events throughout District 1. I also look forward to the Board’s celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month on September 18, when I will have the honor of recognizing one of our own, Dinora Pachecho, President of Peekskill Hispanic Community Corp., at this special occasion.

As always, feel free to reach out to my office with your thoughts, suggestions and concerns.

Sincerely,

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 the holiday season
- **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!

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.

“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.



Single-Use Plastic Foodware Committee Meeting

Enjoying Our New and Improved County Parks

From rolling hills to shore line parks, Westchester is fortunate to have a wide variety of beautiful outdoor spaces to enjoy. Creating new recreational opportunities and consistently maintaining and upgrading our Parks facilities is a top priority:

- The County's first full **CRICKET PITCH** is up and running at Croton Point Park and can be rented hourly or daily. Reservations and fees are required and available through the Parks permit office at 914-231-4575.
- Restoration planning for the **KINGSLAND POINT LIGHTHOUSE** in Tarrytown
- Reopening of the **WESTCHESTER COUNTY CENTER** after serving as an overflow hospital, testing center and vaccination site during the pandemic. The County Center has returned to its regular operations – including **SECTION ONE BASKETBALL**



- **HILLTOP HANOVER FARM** is now under the stewardship of our County Parks, Recreation and Conservation department, which will ensure its ability to flourish and grow as a community asset.
- **MUSCOOT FARM** groundbreaking on July 20th kicked off its upcoming site work and unveiled the beautifully restored Main House.



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-American 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.
- The **TRUTHFUL DISCLOSURE BILL** establishes an effective mechanism for transparency and accountability in our elected County officials. They must complete a comprehensive Candidate Disclosure Form that captures essential biographical and financial information, as well as educational, military and employment histories. Candidates must certify the accuracy of the information provided.

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.



Dominican Community of Hudson Valley Helping Dominicans Obtain Passport IDs



Women's History Month Celebration



Public Safety Award Ceremony for Chief Calabrese



Yorktown Eagle Scout Court of Honor



Walk Out Peekskill Police Officer



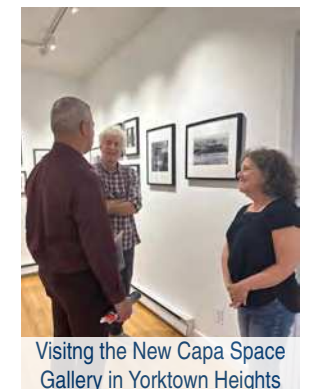
Peekskill Sun River Healthcare Tour



Peekskill Rally for Dorie Miller



Cortlandt Memorial Day Service



Visiting the New Capa Space Gallery in Yorktown Heights



Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce Scholarship Breakfast



Peekskill Pride Flag Raising



Launch of the WMC's Center for Women's Health Equity