

Westchester County Legislator

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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

Winter 2024/25 Newsletter



Colin D. Smith

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



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

As we begin the new year, I'm excited to reflect on and share some of the great work accomplished at the Board of Legislators. Our commitment to making Westchester County safer and more affordable never wavers. As Chair of the Legislation Committee, I'm proud of our accomplishments in 2024, especially the passage of the "Anti-Trafficking Task Force Program Act." This initiative supports the Westchester County District Attorney's Office and local law enforcement in their investigations of human trafficking. By facilitating inter-municipal agreements (IMAs), we've secured crucial grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, enabling the District Attorney's Office to collaborate with law enforcement and community partners in this essential work. Protecting our most vulnerable residents is a priority, and this step is vital for our community's safety.

With the new school year, we faced proposed cuts to Foundation Aid by the Governor, threatening a loss of \$20 million across Westchester County's 40 public school districts. Our local districts, including Hendrick Hudson CSD by \$155,371, Lakeland CSD by \$504,391, Peekskill CSD by \$747,292, and Yorktown CSD by \$178,105. The Board held a press conference and wrote a letter to the Governor, expressing our concerns and opposing these cuts. Fortunately, the reductions were averted, and Foundation Aid funding was reinstated.

District 1 continues to grow and diversify, welcoming new businesses that reflect our community's vibrant culture—from restaurants to clothing shops and fitness studios. I allocated \$479,237 in funding for community organizations in District 1 this year, supporting their invaluable work in fostering community bonds.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to connect with many of you at local events throughout the year. I'm particularly excited for the Senior Citizens Hall of Fame in December, where we honor our seniors for their lifetime of contributions. We need to protect and love our seniors. Also, be aware that there are still unclaimed funds workshops being held throughout the County. Please don't hesitate to reach out with your thoughts, suggestions, or concerns. Together, we can continue to make District 1 a wonderful place to live.

Sincerely,



Go No Sen Karate

Chairman Gashi's office and I had the pleasure of celebrating Go No Sen Karate's 25th anniversary! It was exciting to see their growth, especially with the opening of their new facility in Yorktown. Congratulations to Lauri and Adam McCauley for their dedication and hard work in enhancing children's, adults, and seniors' self-confidence and making such a positive impact in our community. Here's to many more years of success and achievement!



Alchemy Post Sound

Along with Chairman Gashi, I had the honor to celebrate and recognize a post sound studio based in District 1. But, they aren't any studio, they are an Emmy Award winning Post-Production Foley stage and sound design studio in Peekskill, NY! 6 Emmy awards, but who is counting?! Congratulations to Andrea and Leslie Bloome, and Ryan Collison for all the hard work and dedication over the years and being able to celebrate two decades of success.



Eduardo Guzman Valverde

I attended an art exhibition at Sun River Health in Peekskill featuring Eduardo Guzman Valverde, a distinguished self-taught artist from Oaxaca, Mexico, born in 1954. His lifelong passion for art shines through his ability to transform dreams into tangible works that reflect the rich folklore of his homeland. Thank you, Eduardo, for sharing your incredible talent and culture with Northern Westchester!



Michelle Keller

On March 8th, I had the privilege of presenting a Proclamation from the Westchester County Board of Legislators to Peekskill's own Michelle Keller. A true community stalwart and advocate for justice, Michelle's determination recently made International Women's Day an official NYS holiday. Thank you, Michelle, for your unwavering dedication and the positive impact you continue to make in our community!

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!





PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION TASK FORCE: A recent CDC report shows U.S. gun deaths at a 30-year high, with fire-arm injury the leading cause of death among children and teens. The Board and County Executive have launched a County-wide Gun Violence Prevention Task Force.

SAFETY MEASURES FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT: The Board passed legislation to provide free home locks and security cameras for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. Developed with the Westchester County Office for Women, the County Executive's Office, and Pace Women's Justice Center, this Act aims to enhance safety for victims.

COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECH UPGRADE

PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINTS SYSTEM (PSAP) BOND ACT: A \$1.3 million investment to modernize 911 Call Centers that handle emergency calls and coordinate responses.

PUMPING STATION REHABILITATION PROGRAM: An \$18 million bond to fund improvements at the Mamaroneck Water Resource Recovery Facility, enhancing infrastructure and efficiency.

ROADWAY CULVERT RESTORATION: This Bond Act finances a project to inspect and evaluate culvert structures along County roads. It will address flooding and determine necessary maintenance, rehabilitation, or replacement, establishing a priority-based schedule.

GREEN ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INITIATIVES

FLOOD MITIGATION BOND ACT: Provides \$2 million to enhance flood planning and grant applications, complementing the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Resilient NY program for broader flood mitigation.

FOOD SCRAP RECOVERY PROGRAM: Supported by a \$1.3 million capital project and Bond Act for the study, design, and development of a major composting facility to reduce County waste and generate valuable compost.

BEE-LINE BUSES & BUS SHELTER RENOVATIONS: The Board approved replacing 95 old 40-foot buses with new hybrid and all-electric models and upgrading bus shelters with solar power, ADA accessibility, and other improvements.

ENHANCEMENTS TO COUNTY PARKS

PARKLAND AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Revitalizes a segment of the RiverWalk trailway in Tarrytown, enhancing the trail and preserving over 2,000 acres of open space.

MOHANSIC GOLF COURSE IMPROVEMENTS: Upgrades the Yorktown Heights facility with enhanced electrical services, a new maintenance complex, and modernized recreational areas.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As of September,, the Board approved funding for land acquisitions, development, and rehabilitation in several municipalities: 528 rental units in Mount Vernon; 583 in Yonkers; 404 in White Plains; 128 condominiums in New Rochelle; and 180 rental units in Ossining. In total, 1,821 Affordable Housing units are planned with amenities like parking and community rooms, and marketed by income eligibility.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR RESIDENTS

A \$1 million bond will fund reopening a mental health clinic in White Plains, providing support for urgent mental health needs.

RELIEF FOR TAXPAYERS

SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS: xcludes Social Security income from eligibility calculations, increasing relief for seniors with fixed incomes.

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Connecting with Constituents: Highlights from the District

PHS RISE STUDENT INTERVIEW: I had the pleasure of virtually joining Peekskill High School's RISE class for an interview. The students' energy was amazing, and their thoughtful questions covered political issues, my educational background, and personal likes and dislikes. They were respectful and open to other viewpoints. Thank you, Tara, for organizing this. A special thank you to the dedicated teachers who work with these students daily, helping them achieve their goals.

FEEDING WESTCHESTER TOUR: I had the opportunity to tour Feeding Westchester's facility and gained valuable insights into their impactful work. In 2023, Feeding Westchester distributed 21 million pounds of food and receives about 220,000 monthly visits, including 80,000 children and 36,000 seniors. I am proud to support organizations like this. Thank you, Ciara, for the tour, and CEO Karen Erren for your leadership in ensuring Feeding Westchester thrives and supports residents across the county.



PHS ROBOT DOG: On February 10th, Peekskill High School's Robotics program hosted the "First Tech Challenge Competition," featuring 28 teams statewide. I was impressed by the students' projects



and had the pleasure of meeting Spot, a robotic dog created by Boston Dynamics and supported by Slalom. Spot uses 3D cameras to navigate, climb, and even assist in search-and-rescue scenarios. Weighing around 300 pounds, Spot is battery-operated, with a lifespan of 1.5 hours per charge. The future is bright!



NORTH WESTCHESTER NEUROLOGICAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM: On January 25th, I attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the North Westchester Neurological Rehabilitation Program, the first subacute brain injury rehab in Westchester County. Located in Mohegan Lake, the facility tour was inspiring, and I met several dedicated doctors, nurses, and patients. Thank you for your commitment to patient care.

SENIOR FORUMS: This year, I attended two senior workshops, hosted by Senator Harkham and Assemblywoman Leven-

berg in the Town of Cortlandt. It was a pleasure to see seniors actively engaged and receiving valuable information on fraud prevention, unclaimed benefits, and health resources. These informative events highlighted the importance of supporting our senior community. As colder weather approaches, take steps to safeguard your health.



PNW BOCES SPECIAL EVENT: On May 3rd, I attended the PNW BOCES Legislators Event with colleagues, superintendents, and state representatives to advocate for educational issues. The campus tour showcased a wide range of programs, from cosmetology to physical therapy, opening doors for students who thought education might not be within their reach. I also met Maria Chinchia, who shared her migration story through a children's book. Thank you to BOCES staff for inspiring students like Maria to succeed and shine.

