Assemblyman Steve Otis
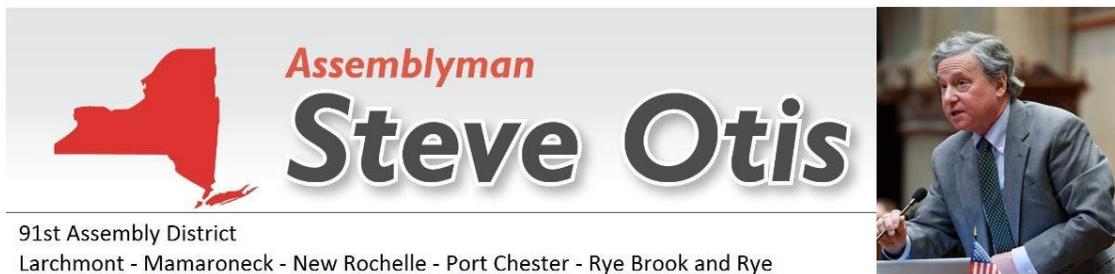91st Assembly District
Larchmont - Mamaroneck - New Rochelle - Port Chester - Rye Brook and Rye

October 29, 2021

Dear Friends,

This newsletter provides links with information about the ballot propositions that are before you on next Tuesday's election day. You can also vote Friday, Saturday or Sunday at any early voting location in the county.

New pop-up vaccination locations have been announced. Vaccine locations and information on boosters are available through a variety of sources.

This past week I participated in Assembly Committee hearings on the NYS Open Meetings Law and on the environmental and climate change issues associated with one form of cryptocurrency authentication called "proof of work" mining. This newsletter includes information about each hearing.

Below you will find:

- Open Meetings Law hearing
- "Proof of work" cryptocurrency mining hearing
- Early Voting & Ballot Amendments
- Latest on vaccination efforts

My office continues to work to assist families and businesses seeking assistance from flood relief agencies. Please contact my office at 914-939-7028 for help on any issue.

Warm regards,

Steve

**The Importance of the Open Meetings Law
During and After the Pandemic**

During the pandemic, temporary changes were made to the NYS Open Meetings Law to allow local governments, boards of education and other government entities to conduct meetings safely, using remote meeting technologies and to make those meetings accessible to the public. In New York State local government, meetings are meant to be held in public places, properly noticed and welcoming to public observation and participation. Decisions and deliberation are supposed to take place in these public meetings. These policies are outlined in New York State's Open Meetings Law and Freedom of Information Act.

Due to the pandemic, in-person local government meetings were replaced with online meetings. The mixed positive and negative consequences of the covid-19 meeting rules quickly became obvious. One positive was that through remote access, members of the public could view and participate in public meetings from the comfort of their homes. In some ways access to meetings increased. One negative was that the public lost the ability to view the decision-making process in person or to connect with others that may attend a meeting with concerns about the same issues. Many felt officials were more insulated through the remote process. The remote format deprived residents wanting to make a statement on an issue by filling a meeting room were deprived of that opportunity.

On Monday I participated in an Albany Hearing of the Assembly Local Government Committee to hear comment on what rules we should use after the pandemic is over. We heard testimony from representatives of local governments, school boards, newspapers, groups representing disabled individuals and others interested in taking the positives from the remote access model while bringing back in-person meetings. We will be reviewing the many issues and proposals discussed at the hearing before crafting new legislation to be adopted next year. The current pandemic rules expire on January 15, 2022.

As a former mayor, I follow these issues closely. The success or failure of local governments around the state in conducting remote meetings often depended upon the technology choices they made in providing remote access. My goals in this process are to make sure that the public's access to the decision-making process, their ability to speak and to have access to key information are protected.

Please let me know your thoughts on how the remote process worked and what things you would retain or change.

NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE
ASSEMBLY MEMBER
HON. STEVEN OTIS
(D) 91ST A.D. - CHAIR, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Assembly Hearing on Energy Usage and Climate Change: Impact of One Form of Cryptocurrency Authentication

On Wednesday the Assembly Committee on Science and Technology, which I chair, hosted a hearing with two other Assembly committees on the important but obscure issue of the impact of "proof of work" cryptocurrency mining and the State's ability to meet greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Cryptocurrency is a form of currency that only exists digitally and is managed through a decentralized system for verifying and recording transactions or for issuing new coins into circulation. Operating outside of the centralized banking system, transactions are validated through a process of transaction authentication. There are several different methods of cryptocurrency authentication. In one method called "proof of work" mining, each transaction is assigned a complex mathematical equation that users within the currency compete with one another to solve. Successfully competing in this process requires the use of increasing amounts of computational power. This has led to a rapidly growing industry of cryptocurrency "miners" who run large- consolidated operations of thousands of computers operating 24 hours a day to validate as many transactions as possible. Given the high energy demands, cryptocurrency mining companies have been reactivating shuttered power plants to access electricity production at reduced costs.

At the hearing we heard from five professors, representatives of statewide and regional environmental groups, local advocates who have "proof of work" mining facilities in their regions and defenders of this form of cryptocurrency authentication.

The energy use and climate change issues raised at the hearing have been raised previously in and around the country, in Europe and Asia and by economic though leaders like Janet Yellin and Bill Gates.

The 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) established the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 85% of the 1990 levels by 2050. The Assembly is examining the impact of high-energy consuming industries, such as "proof of work" cryptocurrency mining as to the ability of the state to meet the CLCPA greenhouse gas reduction goals, state agency responses, and existing statutory and regulatory permitting processes for cryptocurrency mining to determine what, if any, changes are needed.

I will continue to follow this issue and work with our state agencies that have jurisdiction over some of these activities.

Election Day, November 2, Brings Six Propositions for Your Consideration

In addition to county, judicial and local elections on the ballot on November 2nd are five statewide proposals and one county proposition that will appear on the reverse side of the ballot sheet you will fill out when voting. When you vote, please remember to cast your vote on these propositions on the reverse side.

The NYS League of Women Voters has provided a pamphlet that includes objective descriptions of the five statewide proposals.

For additional information, the NYS Board of Elections has provided detailed descriptions of the proposals.

The county proposition is described in the memo HERE prepared by the Westchester County Board of Elections.

Early Voting 2021 Has Begun

Early voting this year has begun and ends on Sunday October 31st. To find early voting polling locations and scheduling information visit: Citizen Participation

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#VaxToSchool Campaign - Full List of Sites Updated Weekly Here

Governor Hochul announced New York State's Excelsior Pass Blueprint, a national framework to aid in the development and implementation of digital health credentials. *Download the Blueprint Here*

Area Pop Up Vaccine Clinics:

- o November 13, 2021 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
    - o **Rye High/Middle School**, Middle School Gym, 3 Parsons St. **Rye**, NY 10580
- o **Ongoing Vaccine Clinics:**
    - o **White Plains Vaccination Clinic**
      134 Court St., White Plains
      Fridays from 10-1pm
      Walk-ins accepted; offers Pfizer

Westchester County Department of Health will be holding **Pfizer vaccine booster clinics**, by appointment only, every Wednesday and Thursday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, at 134 Court Street in White Plains. To be eligible to **receive a Pfizer booster dose**, you must have completed your original Pfizer vaccine series **at least six months ago and you must fall into one of the following categories:**

- 18+ who lives or works in a high-risk setting
- 18+ with underlying medical conditions
- 65 years and older