



Dear Friends,

We are in the home stretch on the budget, with the Governor and the Legislature in the final stages of negotiations. Ideally, the budget would be passed by the start of the state's fiscal year on April 1, but more often than not a few extra days are required, with measures taken to ensure the state has the funds needed to bridge the gap. I am expecting that to be the same this year.

Since my [last newsletter](#), the Assembly and Senate each released their own One-House budget proposals, with both chambers and Governor Hochul now working to find a **compromise**. Details of the Assembly's One-House budget are discussed below, and I remain optimistic that we will adopt a prudent, fiscally-sound budget, responsive to the needs of the state and my district.

For those of you who may not know, **March is Developmental Disability Awareness Month**. The Assembly will be passing a resolution shortly in recognition of the month, and next month **members of the Assembly and I will be offering a package of legislation aimed at benefitting people with disabilities, including improving their employment opportunities.**

I have or soon will be introducing the following measures:

- **A bill to expand civil service employment opportunities for people with disabilities** by allowing some full-time positions, already set aside for people with disabilities, to be split into part-time positions (*while many with disabilities are fully capable of working, many are unable to do so on a full-time basis*).
- **A bill that would require state agencies to make their websites more user-friendly** for people with disabilities.
- **A bill to create a volunteer task force within the NYS Department of Labor to study opportunities within state government to create positions for, and promote the hiring of, people with disabilities.** Each state agency and department would be studied, and the task force would issue annual reports with recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.



My colleagues will also offer legislation for inclusion in the package, to be presented to the Assembly for action.

The Assembly One-House Budget

The NYS budget touches on so many aspects of our daily life and activities. Therefore, **we need to be sure the budget truly reflects the values we embrace.**

Those whom I represent tell me that they want the budget to serve the needs of our state, including in the areas so many of us care about most: education, infrastructure, affordable housing, the environment, and help for our most vulnerable. All that being said, they want a budget that is fiscally responsible. The NYS Assembly's response to the governor's proposed 2023-2024 state budget attempts to achieve that balance.

While I disagree strongly with certain aspects of the governor's proposed budget, I also agree with significant portions of it. Unfortunately, public discussion of some of her more controversial proposals, such as the Housing Compact (*discussed in the next section*), may overshadow those areas of the budget on which both the Legislature and Governor agree. In fact, there is more on which we agree than on which we disagree.

First, I'd like to offer a quick recap on the process. The Governor presented her proposed \$227 billion budget to the NYS Legislature on February 1. After that, the Legislature held hearings and conferences, and the Senate and the Assembly each came up with their own revisions (their respective "One-House" budgets). Currently, negotiations are ongoing among the three to develop the final budget.

The Assembly's One-House budget proposal is based on our view that we need to do more and can do so in a fiscally responsible and prudent manner. It calls for important funding increases for infrastructure (including aid to municipalities for local roads), environmental protection (including a viable and achievable all-electric building plan), higher education (including a rejection of SUNY and CUNY tuition hikes and increased access to childcare and pre-K), health care (including reproductive health care services and support), and increased wages for health care workers and direct service providers for people with disabilities. It also provides support for tenants and homeowners, and additional funding for gun violence prevention programs.

Here are the highlights of the Assembly One-House budget:

- **Public Schools, Pre-K & Childcare:** In agreement with the Governor, we are appropriating \$2.6 billion to the largest portion of State funding for public schools, Foundation Aid. This funding is the third and final step in the State's commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid for the first time since the formula was created in 2007. This investment is critical to maintaining the excellence of our public schools while holding down property taxes. Every school district in my Assembly District will receive a meaningful increase. We also are proposing \$200 million in additional funding for the Statewide Universal Full-Day Prekindergarten grant program, \$280 million in additional funds to make school meals free for all students, \$137.5 million for childcare funding, and a two-year tax incentive for employer-provided childcare.
- **Higher Education:** The Assembly rejects the Governor's proposed SUNY and CUNY tuition hikes. The proposal would provide additional operating and capital funds to offset the proposed hikes and provide for critical facilities maintenance. It also increases the income

threshold for the Tuition Assistance Program from \$80,000 to \$100,000 and provides an increase in funding for the State's community colleges.

- **Environmental Protection:** The Assembly proposes to increase funding for the Environmental Protection Fund by \$35 million to \$435 million and the clean water infrastructure program by \$100 million to \$600 million. It also provides \$200 million to expand the Energy Affordability Program (which provides income-eligible consumers with a discount on their monthly electric and/or gas bills, as well as other benefits), \$200 million to support NYSERDA's EmPower Plus program (which provides free energy-efficiency upgrades to income-eligible New Yorkers), and adopts a plan to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution arising from new construction projects.
- **Roads, Infrastructure, and Public Transit:** The Assembly believes we need to make a greater investment in this area, proposing an increase of \$100 million over the Governor's proposal for a total of \$1.33 billion in capital aid to localities for their local roads and highways. The proposal also would provide \$240 million for non-MTA transit capital projects, which supports the development and improvement of transit authorities outside of New York City (an increase of \$80 million over the executive's budget proposal), \$64.3 million in funding for passenger rail operation and construction efforts (an increase of \$20 million over the executive's proposal), and \$679.3 million for downstate non-MTA transit operating assistance (an increase of \$157 million over the executive's proposal, for a total year-to-year increase of \$197 million).
- **Access to Affordable Housing:** The Assembly proposes \$1.5 billion in assistance to tenants with arrears and for homeowner assistance, \$250 million for Homeownership Funds (to support investments in community land trusts, conversion of rental housing to homeownership housing, and tenant organization ownership of housing accommodations), and \$500 million in incentives to cities, towns, and villages for new housing development targets – removing the mandates (*see the discussion below*).
- **Medicaid, Hospitals & Health Care Workers:** The Assembly would provide \$2.7 billion in total funding to Medicaid, \$1.32 billion to hospitals in need, restore \$42.7 million to the voluntary Hospital Indigent Care Pool (subsidizing care for low-income patients while ensuring that hospitals are paid for their services), \$266.5 million to nursing homes, and \$50 million more for Community-Based Organizations. With a critical shortage of health care workers, many of whom seek employment elsewhere for higher wages, it also would provide a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) of 8.5% for human services providers, including mental hygiene agency workers, elder care workers, and foster care workers.
- **Business and Economic Development:** The Assembly would provide \$205.4 million, an increase of \$25 million, to support a workforce development grant program for green jobs training, and \$50 million for small-business grants, including for minority and women-owned businesses.
- **Libraries and the Arts:** The Assembly proposal restores and increases by \$5 million funding for libraries (to \$104.6 million) and provides an additional \$40 million in library capital, for a total of \$54 million. It also provides \$102.5 million for New York State Council on the Arts grants, which here in Westchester have been instrumental in revitalizing the arts throughout the pandemic and beyond.
- **Assistance to New Americans:** The Assembly proposes \$25 million for community-based programs (\$15 million above the executive's proposal), \$20 million to assist people pursuing citizenship, \$10 million to community programs that prevent bias-based crimes, \$40 million for immigration legal services, \$7 million for the Refugee Resettlement program, and an

expansion in health coverage for undocumented immigrants by rejecting a delay in expanding Essential Plan coverage, relieving increased pressure on emergency rooms.

- **Public Safety & Criminal Justice:** The Assembly proposal provides \$100 million for defense discovery funding, \$100 million for prosecutorial discovery funding, and \$69.3 million for anti-gun violence prevention programs.

[Click here for additional information on the Assembly's One-House Budget.](#)

[An Update on the Housing Compact](#)

As I mentioned in my [last newsletter](#), Governor Hochul's budget proposal included a housing plan with the goal of producing 800,000 new housing units within 10 years. The Governor intends to implement the new plan, the Housing Compact, by imposing targets on local governments to increase within three years their housing stock. The targets are 3% for downstate communities (including Westchester) and 1% for upstate communities.

To achieve this, the plan would require every downstate community with a non-seasonal rail station (including subway stations) to change its zoning to allow significantly greater housing density within a one-half-mile radius of the station – the closer to New York City, the greater the density. The Hochul plan also would mandate additional zoning changes to achieve the goal if it can't otherwise be met, setting aside environmental review. If the targets still aren't met, a state-level housing review board (created by the legislation) would be empowered to approve a proposed housing plan that the locality did not approve.

I fully agree with the need for a bold housing plan, but take issue with the Governor's approach. Unlike the five-year affordable housing plan already in place, this plan is aimed at increasing the overall housing stock with little attention to affordable housing – which is the overwhelming need here in Westchester County and throughout the state. I also take issue with the Governor's plan to override the zoning control needed to ensure that the proposed development does not overwhelm police and fire protection or adversely impact the environment. It also disregards the fact that many local governments have already tried to stimulate housing development with new local laws such as promoting accessory dwelling units and creating new multifamily zoning districts.

On March 15, the NYS Assembly – with the State Senate following suit – responded with a housing growth plan system built on incentives and rewards for local governments that adopt the growth targets in the Hochul plan and achieve them. It would provide an initial incentive payment, scaled by population, to any locality that adopts the growth targets and files with the state a suitable growth plan by April 1, 2024. Once the target is reached, the locality would receive another reward payment. Meanwhile, it would be entirely up to the local government how to reach that target. If the locality fell short of the target, the state would “claw back” the initial payment in the form of a reduction of its aid from the state.

The next step is an ongoing negotiation between the Governor and the Legislature. While there will be a compromise, I am hopeful that the final plan will be incentive-based.

THIS WEEK! Apply for TSA Pre-Check at the Westchester County Airport

A reminder that this week, through Friday, March 31, Westchester County Airport will be working with the TSA to offer travelers the opportunity to enroll in the TSA PreCheck program here in Westchester.

This special five-day enrollment period will be available daily at Westchester County Airport, 240 Airport Road in White Plains, from 9 am-noon and 1-5 pm. Enrollment will be available in the terminal arrivals area near the baggage claim carousel.

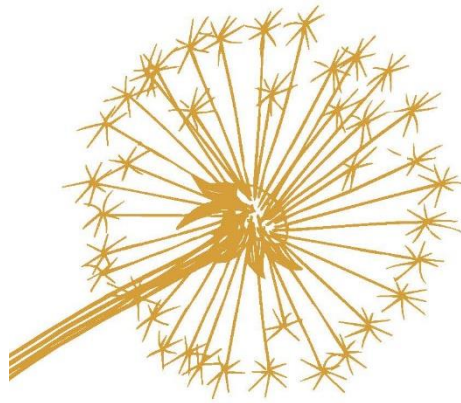
[Click here to learn more, including the documents required to enroll.](#)



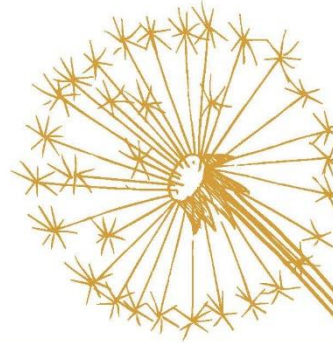
An Opportunity for the Children of Military Families

April is the [Month of the Military Child](#). In honor of that, and to celebrate our resilient military kids both past and present, **on April 16, Vet2Vet of Westchester and the Blue Star Families of the New York Tri-State area are sponsoring the 2nd annual Dandelion Festival at Lasdon Park.**

Please see the invitation below for additional information. **To register and learn more, [please click here](#).**



MONTH OF THE **Military Child**



Register



Dandelion Festival 2023

Did you know that the dandelion is the flower of the military child? It puts down roots almost anywhere and is impossible to destroy.

We invite you to join Vet2Vet of Westchester and Blue Star Families of the New York Tri-State Area for the 2023 Dandelion Festival: a fun-filled day of celebrating our resilient military kids — both past and present — with Lasdon park's newest exhibit of the interactive Amazing Butterflies, Interactive Dinosaur garden, Trail of Honor, food, games, music, giveaways, Veteran Service Organizations, Military Service Organizations, local partners, and much more!

Advance registration is not required but is appreciated for planning purposes.

Sunday, April 16th | 1pm - 4pm

Lasdon Park, Arboretum & Veterans Memorial

2610 Route 35, Katonah, N.Y. 10536



Reminder! Home Energy Upgrade Tax Credits Are Here

For those who might have missed the discussion in my [last newsletter](#), if you are considering

making upgrades to your home to make it more energy efficient, or purchasing a new electric vehicle, now might be a perfect time. New tax credits are here!

You can help create a green future!
Inflation Reduction Act tax credits and rebates are here



You could save thousands on:

- ★ Energy-efficient home renovations
- ★ Appliances
- ★ Vehicles purchased this year

The federal Inflation Reduction Act's new tax credits and rebates can save you money on goods and services that can make your home more energy-efficient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (including a credit covering up to 30% of qualifying purchases of renewable energy technology, with no cap on the total purchase price, including labor, permits, and inspection). For more information, including availability and income eligibility, [please click here](#).

Not sure where to begin? The [EmPower New York Program](#) is offering free home assessments and clean-energy technology to eligible participants.

The EmPower New York Program
is here to make your home energy-efficient – for free!



Find out today if you're eligible for no-cost assessments and clean-energy upgrades to your home!

To find out if you are eligible, [please click here](#). You can apply for EmPower [online](#), by mail, or by calling 1-877-NYSMART.

Considering purchasing a new electric vehicle? The Inflation Reduction Act's tax credits can also help you save money on both new and used energy-efficient electric vehicles purchased after Jan. 1, 2023.



Take charge of your green future!

Tax credits are available for electric vehicles and charging equipment!

- Up to \$7,500 for new
- Up to \$4,000 for used
- Up to \$1,000 to install charging equipment

For more information, [please click here](#).

[Become a Summer Reading Buddy!](#)

Become a Summer Reading Buddy! **Volunteers are needed to help prevent the “Summer Slide,” where children lose their literacy skills and “slide back” over the summer months.** Reading delays have become an even greater problem since the pandemic. Be part of the solution by reading and doing other literacy work with historically underserved children. Volunteers will be given books and worksheets to work one-on-one or in small groups with children in preschool through fifth grade. Scheduling is flexible and volunteers may sign up for their choice of sessions. The program will be held as follows:

**Yonkers Riverfront Library:
Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 12:00 pm–2:30 pm
July 5th through August 9th**

For more information, contact Madeline Finesmith at mfinesmith@fssy.org or 917-273-1116.



FAMILY SERVICE SOCIETY OF YONKERS

SUMMER READING BUDDIES PROGRAMS
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
 HELP CHILDREN BUILD
 LITERACY SKILLS THIS SUMMER

PROGRAM LOCATION:
 YONKERS RIVERFRONT LIBRARY

For more information
 contact Madeline Finesmith
 mfinesmith@fssy.org
 917-273-1116

The Lorraine O'Brien Foundation | EDITH W. BETHLE | St. Faith's House Foundation | WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

M&T Bank | Westchester GOV.COM | WebsterBank | YONKERS LIBRARY

FSSY PROGRAMMING IS ALSO FUNDED (AND PARTIALLY FUNDED) THROUGH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR AGING, AND THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SENIOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

As always, **please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions or if there is any assistance we can provide.** You can always reach me at burdickc@nyassembly.gov or by calling (914) 244-4450. My staff and I are always ready to help. Please also follow me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) for continued up-to-date information.

Miss any of our previous newsletters? You can [find them here](#).

Sincerely yours,

Chris Burdick

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