

Assemblyman **TOM ABINANTI**

303 South Broadway, Suite 229 • Tarrytown, New York 10591 • 914-631-1605

Email: abinantit@assembly.state.ny.us

WEBSITE: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Thomas-J-Abinanti>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/assemblymanabinanti>

TWITTER: [@tomabinanti](https://twitter.com/tomabinanti) <https://twitter.com/tomabinanti>



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Making a difference for our community

JACKSON AVENUE

A new law sponsored by Assemblyman Abinanti authorizes some local land swaps to facilitate long overdue **road and drainage improvements** to Jackson Avenue between the Sprain Ridge Park entrance and North Sprain Road where there were two deaths and 80+ accidents during the last three years. Improvements include realigning the road and installing a traffic light at the Jackson/North Sprain Road intersection.

GREENBURGH-NORTH CASTLE

Both legislative houses passed Assemblyman Abinanti's legislation to authorize the Greenburgh-North Castle Union Free School District, a **special act school** district headquartered in Dobbs Ferry, to expand its boundaries to provide instruction to students in locations in Yonkers, Valhalla, West Harrison, and New Windsor. The bill awaits the Governor's action.

SAW MILL FLOODING

Assemblyman Abinanti has been pushing the State Departments of Transportation and Environmental Conservation to **permanently** alleviate the Saw Mill River's constant flooding which makes the parkway unusable in Pleasantville and Ardsley and drowns parts of Elmsford and unincorporated Greenburgh. DOT has promised another **temporary** fix for Pleasantville shortly.

HOTEL TAX

The Assembly passed Assemblyman Abinanti's legislation to permit Greenburgh, its six villages, and Sleepy Hollow to impose a 3% hotel/motel occupancy tax to help **keep property taxes down** and fund some economic development and tourism initiatives. The bill is stalled in the Senate.

TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE

Generally seen as a state—or even national—issue, replacing the 50-year-old Tappan Zee Bridge with two new spans has significant local impacts—some positive and some negative. Assemblyman Abinanti is working to ensure that our **local concerns** are met—from traffic and mass transit to noise and visual impacts.

- **FINANCING AND TOLLS**

Assemblyman Abinanti has called for a public discussion on how the State will pay back \$4 billion in loans. He urged that Westchester and Rockland residents be given **toll discounts**. He also urged a **new funding formula** to prevent bridge tolls from skyrocketing.

- **WATER SAFETY**

Assemblyman Abinanti, six other Hudson River Assemblymembers, and two boat owners associations hosted a **forum** in Tarrytown where Tappan Zee Bridge construction experts, the Coast Guard, and boaters discussed the challenges local commerce and recreation activities face from the construction activity and the 80+ ever-moving barges, cranes, equipment, and crews.

Affordable Care Act

Sign up at
healthbenefitexchange.ny.gov
or call 1-800-318-2596



Assemblyman Abinanti addressing the boating safety forum at Tarrytown Village Hall.

Reforming elections — and Albany

Our democracy works when everyday people speak at the ballot box and influence the work of their elected officials. We must insure that every vote counts and that citizens, not special interests, control government decisions.

ABINANTI CHAIRS ELECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Assemblyman Abinanti has been named the new chair of the Subcommittee on Election Day Operations and Voter Disenfranchisement, charged with making election practices **more voter-friendly**. Abinanti is a practicing attorney with some expertise gained from years of handling contested election law matters.

REMOVING BIG MONEY

The best way to remove big money's influence on government is to remove big money's influence on elections.

- **STATEWIDE REFORM**

The Assembly passed The 2013 Fair Elections Act, co-sponsored by Assemblyman Abinanti. Modeled on New York City's successful approach, the bill reforms New York's campaign finance system by: (1) establishing optional **public financing** of elections for statewide offices, state legislative offices, and constitutional convention delegates; (2) creating an **independent enforcement entity**; and (3) increasing **disclosure** of independent expenditures. The bill is stalled in the Senate.

- **LOCAL REFORM**

In response to concerns that big money tries to influence local decisions by influencing local elections, Assemblyman Abinanti has introduced a local version of the Fair Elections Act to permit municipalities and counties to **opt in** to reform financing of local campaigns.

EARLY VOTING

The Assembly passed another measure co-sponsored by Assemblyman Abinanti to institute early voting in all general, primary, and special elections. Early voting would give voters **additional time to vote**—starting three weeks before Election Day. The bill is stalled in the Senate.

LEVER MACHINES IN VILLAGE AND DISTRICT ELECTIONS

With state permission for villages and local districts to use the lever-style voting machines soon to expire, Assemblyman Abinanti has introduced legislation that would allow their use **permanently** as long as there is at least one voting machine available that meets the needs of special needs voters.

“The Assembly has repeatedly passed legislation that the Governor’s Moreland Commission now recommends.”

—Assemblyman Tom Abinanti



ABINANTI'S INDOOR SMOKING BAN – 10 YEARS OLD

Clean-air advocates recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of Westchester's ban on smoking in restaurants, bars, and workplaces passed by Assemblyman Abinanti when he was a county legislator. Recognizing that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, Nassau, Suffolk, and New York City immediately followed. Together they spurred passage of the state law just weeks later.

Protecting our communities

Gun violence, prescription-drug abuse, boating accidents, trucks, and wrong-way drivers on parkways are all hazards that have become commonplace in our everyday lives. They can and should be resolved with common-sense solutions.

SAFE BOATING

The Governor recently signed legislation co-sponsored by Assemblyman Abinanti which requires new boaters to obtain a safety certificate by completing a **safe boating course**. The new law recognizes that safe boating requires skills that must be learned and practiced. Safe boating protects everyone on the water.

I-STOP

Recently, the second phase of the Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing (I-STOP) law took effect. Passed by the State Legislature in 2012 to reduce misuse of **highly addictive prescription medications**, it now creates a real-time prescription drug database, the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) Registry, to give doctors and pharmacists information to stop potential drug abuse.

MARIJUANA REFORM

Recognizing that unreasonable penalties for minor infractions turn too many New Yorkers—especially young New Yorkers—into criminals and cost taxpayers millions of dollars, Assemblyman Abinanti joined his Assembly colleagues in passing legislation to lessen penalties for mere possession of small amounts of marijuana so they **match similar offenses**. The bill is stalled in the Senate.

DETECTING TRUCKS AND WRONG WAY DRIVERS

Assemblyman Abinanti is urging a concerted effort by NYS Department of Transportation to deter trucks and wrong-way drivers from Westchester parkways. He's requested an **independent task force** of traffic experts and motorist organizations to evaluate the configurations of and signage at entrances and exits. He's also repeated his call for **better signage and height-restrictor bars** across the entrances most frequented by oversized trucks—a technique endorsed by the American Automobile Association.

Re-register for STAR NOW!

Homeowners must apply before December 31, 2013 to continue their STAR exemption.

Register at www.tax.ny.gov or call 518-457-2036.

HEAP

Heating assistance for income-eligible households is available through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). Call United Way's 2-1-1 or the HEAP unit at 914-995-5619 or go to www.myBenefits.ny.gov. Applications are available at www.westchestergov.com/heap.

NEW LAW TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

To curb the disturbing gun violence that has devastated communities everywhere, the Legislature passed a new comprehensive gun-safety law, the Secure Firearms and Ammunition Enforcement Act (SAFE Act). Assemblyman Abinanti was a strong supporter of the SAFE Act that: (1) **bans new assault weapons** and **requires permits** for those in the state on the effective date; (2) requires **pistol permits to be renewed every five years**; (3) **closes the "gun show loophole"**; (4) requires **background checks** on all gun and ammunition purchases; (5) revokes pistol permits for **domestic violence abusers**; and (5) attempts to ensure that those with **mental illness do not have access to firearms**.

MORE COMMON-SENSE PROPOSALS

Assemblyman Abinanti has also proposed his own package of common-sense measures to curb gun violence and increase gun owner safety and accountability: A.5665 would require gun owners to **safely store their firearms** not in their immediate possession. A.7587 would prohibit the manufacture, possession or sale of firearms and ammunition magazines that are **not detectable by traditional metal detectors**. A.7764 would ban the sale of a weapon on public property and the use of public property for gun shows. A.7769 would require applicants for firearms licenses outside New York City to pass a **firearms safety course** before their license is issued or renewed.



Assemblyman Abinanti and Senator Diane Savino present their legislation to protect whistleblowers in the financial services industry along with attorney Dan Felber whose client was fired for exposing illegal trading.

Preserving our environment

The Assembly passed several bills, co-sponsored by Assemblyman Abinanti, to protect our environment. Unfortunately, they are all stalled in the Senate.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Assembly passed two bills to ensure climate change and extreme weather events are considered in decision-making and require the Department of Environmental Conservation to establish limits on greenhouse gas emissions.

AIR, WATER, LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

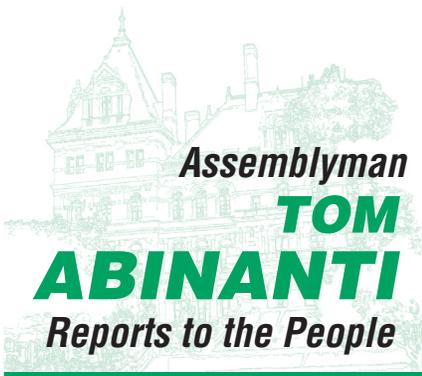
The Assembly passed several measures to: require all heating oil used in buildings in certain counties to contain at least two percent biodiesel; require testing of private wells; encourage proper disposal of pharmaceuticals; decrease use of styrofoam products; increase recycling; and prevent the use of dangerous chemicals in children's products and residential upholstered furniture.

HYDROFRACKING MORATORIUM

To safeguard our drinking water supply and the health of our environment, the Assembly passed a moratorium on the issuance of certain types of natural gas drilling permits until May 15, 2015.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHT TO SUE

With significant budget cutbacks limiting the state's ability to enforce state laws and hold violators accountable for environmental damage, the Assembly passed the Private Environmental Law Enforcement Act to permit private citizens to enforce clear violations of environmental laws that threaten our community's health and safety.



WINTER 2013

Dear Neighbor,

This is my second report to you on our 2013 legislative session and what I have been working on outside of the session.

In my previous newsletter, I discussed some budget issues, some efforts to bring more fairness to our communities, and some issues related to people with special needs.

In this newsletter, I will highlight some efforts to (1) protect our community; (2) reform our political system; (3) preserve our environment; and (4) resolve some local Greenburgh and Mount Pleasant concerns.

If I may be of any assistance to you, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Abinanti".