



Dear Friends,



The days are growing shorter, and winter is on its way. So is the increased cost of staying warm. For those who struggle to pay heating bills and fall within certain income guidelines, the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) can help. Whether you own or rent your home, you can apply for direct benefits. To learn more click [here](#).

In this season of giving and light, I urge you to remember those in our communities who are less fortunate.

Happy Hanukkah!

~Ellen~

### HALT Solitary Confinement

I stood with advocates at St. Thomas Aquinas College to urge passage of the (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act ([A 4401](#)) that I co-sponsored. In New York’s prisons and jails, thousands are held in cells the size of an elevator for 22 to 24 hours a day, the majority for non-violent rule violations. People of color are sent to solitary in disproportionate numbers. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has condemned long term isolated confinement as torture. The [HALT Act](#) would end solitary confinement in NYS and create more humane and effective alternatives.



### St. Dominic’s Home



I enjoyed my visit to [Saint Dominic’s Home](#) in Blauvelt, which is dedicated to meeting the educational, physical, social, emotional, medical, and vocational needs of individuals and families who are developmentally disabled, socially disadvantaged, or vocationally challenged. St. Dominic’s offers comprehensive programs and services to help those with special needs achieve their full potential.

### Meeting With Haitian Leaders, Interim Healthcare

I was pleased to [bring together](#) leaders of the Haitian community and the owner and president of Interim Healthcare Nanuet, in the first of a series of meetings, to initiate a dialogue about the [offensive ad](#) that ran in the October 15<sup>th</sup> Pennysaver, and implementing policies, including sensitivity training for employees, to ensure such discriminatory practices don't happen again.

### **Ode to Earth Art Exhibition**

It was a pleasure to speak at the artist's reception, to view such extraordinary art, and to celebrate the talents of so many gifted artists of all ages whose work inspires us to slow down and see the wonder of the natural world we so often overlook. Award-winning South Orangetown Middle School student, [Justin D. Lee's photography](#), is included in the show.



### **South Nyack Shared Use Path Plan**

The Village of South Nyack Tappan Zee Bridge Task Force (TZBTF) [presented four plans at a special meeting](#) of the Village Board on December 1<sup>st</sup> that I attended. Since an agreement was made last May between the Governor's Office, the NYS Thruway Authority, and the Village of South Nyack to move the terminus of the Shared Use Path (SUP) from a residential area to Exit 10, engineers have designed four different configurations about where to locate the entrance to the new bike and walk way across the Hudson. To learn more about the four plans click [here](#).

### **Annual Superintendents' Luncheon**

Since the beginning of the school year I have been meeting with Superintendents in my district to discuss issues for the upcoming legislative session. A few weeks ago I attended the annual Rockland County School Superintendents' Luncheon where we discussed a variety of concerns and was so impressed with the delicious food prepared and served by students in the [Rockland BOCES Culinary Arts Program](#).



Working with culinary experts and through hands-on experience, these chefs-in-training learn a variety of essential skills and increase their knowledge of food science, diet, and nutrition to earn their ProStart certification.

Like me on  and Follow me on 