

Dear Friends,

Although many of you read my newsletters (thank you!) and hopefully find the information helpful, it occurs to me that there may be some who don't know exactly what a NYS Assemblymember does. Or at least not everything we do. And believe me, you wouldn't be alone.

Therefore, I wanted to use today's newsletter to give you a better sense of what a NYS Assemblymember does, what my office can do to assist you, and the important role you can play in the political process (should you so choose).

However, before we get to that, there have been some important and positive COVID-19 related updates this week.

COVID-19 Updates

Walk-In Vaccination Sites

Beginning yesterday, **all New Yorkers age 16 and up can [get a vaccination without an appointment](http://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov) at any of the state-run sites**, including the Westchester County Center. Second appointments will be scheduled at the first one. To find additional locations, please go to <http://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov>.

Starting April 29,

all New Yorkers age 16 and older can ***get a COVID-19 vaccine without an appointment*** at any state-run mass vaccination site. Second appointments are scheduled at the first one.

Visit covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov
to find a site near you.

Comenzando el 29 de abril

todos los neoyorquinos de 16 años o más pueden ***vacunarse contra el COVID-19 sin una cita*** en cualquier lugar de vacunaciones masivas administrado por el estado. Se programará la segunda cita durante la primera.

Visite el sitio Web:
covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov
para encontrar un lugar cerca de usted.

Financial Aid for Restaurants

The Small Business Administration [this morning](#) opened up registration for the [Restaurant Revitalization Fund](#), which will begin accepting applications on Monday at 12 pm ET, and will continue to accept them so long as funds are available. You can access the [registration portal here](#).



The fund was established under the American Rescue Plan and prioritizes direct relief to women, veterans, and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, and includes a \$9.5 billion set-aside for smaller businesses. **It provides \$28.6 billion in direct relief funds to restaurants and other food establishments that have suffered significant operational losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Eligible establishments can qualify for funding

equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss, up to \$10 million per business (but no more than \$5 million per physical location). These funds must be used by March 11, 2023 on allowable expenses.

Updated Guidelines

As the COVID-19 vaccination numbers in New York continue to rise (to date, [45 percent of New Yorkers](#) have received at least one dose), life is beginning to return to some sense of normalcy. To that end, New York [will be following](#) the CDC guidelines regarding outdoor mask use for fully vaccinated people. These guidelines state that **fully vaccinated people (defined as two or more weeks after receiving the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine) no longer need to wear masks outdoors, except in certain crowded settings and venues.**

The allowable capacity at [several venues](#) is also rising, with social distancing, masks and all other state health/safety protocols remaining in effect:

- **Large-scale outdoor event venues can increase spectator capacity** from 20% to 33% beginning on May 19. This includes professional and collegiate sports and live performing arts and entertainment.
- Beginning May 15:
 - **Casinos and gaming facilities can increase capacity** from 25% to 50%
 - **Offices can increase capacity** from 50% to 75%
 - **Gyms/fitness centers outside of New York City can increase capacity** from 33% to 50%
- **Curfews for dining areas (indoor and outdoor) as well as catered events [will also be lifted](#)** in the coming weeks.



"So an Assemblymember does what exactly...?"

It's actually a question I get quite often, and understandably so. At its core, the Assembly is one half of the legislative branch of the NYS Government, with the NYS Senate being the other half (akin to the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate). Under [The NYS Constitution](#), the legislative branch is a co-equal branch of government, along with the Executive (the Governor) and the Judiciary. But that description just scratches the surface of the function of a member of the Assembly.

Helping Constituents & Working with Municipalities

While you might assume that legislation is the main focus of being an Assemblymember – and indeed it is an incredibly important focus – I consider of equal, if not greater importance my duty to assist constituents who reach out to my office for help. My office get calls every day on a variety of matters: unemployment benefits (and benefits fraud), securing vaccination appointments (happily those have eased up), getting replacement vaccination cards, help with the DMV, and so many others. We also are contacted when conditions on state roads require the attention of the NYS Department of Transportation, such as downed trees or other dangerous situations. Nothing makes us happier than when we can help resolve a matter we have been contacted about, so please don't hesitate to reach out or to point others who live in the district our way. Also, *Hablamos Español*... so if you know of a Spanish-speaking individual who needs our help, please encourage them to give us a call.

I consider communications likewise to be a critical part of my job, which is why we send these newsletters and why we keep my [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages up-to-date with important and helpful information (*weekly plug to follow me on both*).

We also work closely with each mayor and supervisor in the 93rd Assembly district. For instance, sometimes municipalities need the state legislature to pass certain laws so they can achieve a particular end that is important for their residents.

(An example... I am currently working on a bill to enable the Town of Bedford to use its open space funds for the all-cash purchase of open space, rather than only being able to use those funds to service the debt on bonds issued to pay for that open space. It makes little sense that Bedford should be required to borrow money for the purchase if it has the ability to just pay cash. Current state law is ambiguous and needs to be clarified.)

We also work with municipalities to secure grants from the state for specific projects, such as the building of sidewalks, playground improvements, historic site improvements, and funds to help purchase and improve land for park creation. Additionally, we help municipalities through the implementation of detailed and complex state laws that require their participation (such as the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act, which became law last month).

Finally, if you follow me on social media (*yes, another plug*), you will see that I am frequently out in the community at various events throughout the district. I love the opportunity to get out and speak with constituents, especially now that in-person meetings have been curtailed. If there are any events happening in your area that you would like me to be aware of, please forward the information to burdick@nyassembly.gov and I will do my best to attend.



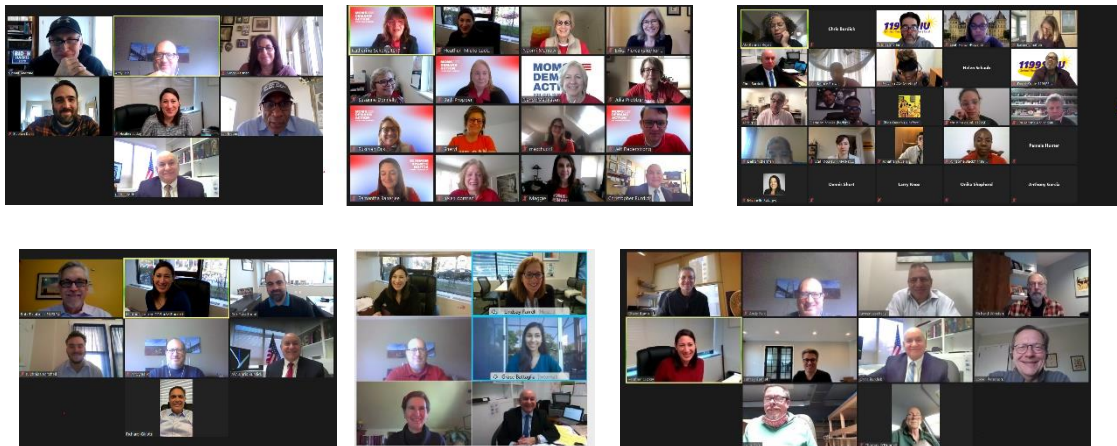
Attending (Left-Right): New Castle's 'Pay It Forward' event, the Bedford Hills Elementary School Pancake Breakfast, the restaurant opening of Fogo de Chão in White Plains, Mount Kisco's Earth Day celebration

Getting Input on Important Issues

At the same time, we also receive emails and calls every day from constituents voicing their opinions on various bills under consideration by the Assembly. Sometimes asking for my support of a particular bill, sometimes asking me to oppose it. Please know that we read, track and consider everything that comes in.

I also meet most every day with various advocacy groups, likewise seeking support for (or opposition to) particular pieces of legislation. During budget season, groups also meet with legislators seeking funding in the state budget. These interests are very wide ranging, and on important issues: the environment, social justice, education, gun violence, veterans, labor, people with disabilities... just to name a few. It really runs the gamut.

With approximately 10,000 bills in front of the Assembly each session, it really does help to hear from advocacy groups like the ones below – who often provide invaluable information on specific matters – but also to hear from my constituents, as it is their needs and values I represent. **So if there is a bill you feel strongly about, I encourage you to reach out to my office to express your opinion.**



*Top Row: Meetings with the Community Service Society of NY, Moms Demand Action, 1199SEIU
Bottom Row: Meetings with, Open Door Family Medical Center, Film Union Coalition*

The Legislative Session

Regarding legislation, the Assembly and Senate's legislative session typically runs from January through June. We start out very focused on the budget, which needs to be passed by March 31. This year the budget did run a few days late, but fortunately the legislature was able to keep everything running with a short-term funding extension.

That process starts in January, when the Governor presents his proposed budget. The Assembly and Senate then take that proposal and make the changes they deem necessary (this year, for instance, we were able to restore many deep cuts no longer needed due to the state's improved economic forecast and funding from the federal government). During that process, both chambers work with each other and the Governor's office to try to build consensus around the final product. Both the Assembly and the Senate come up with their own (usually similar) versions of the budget and then come together in various conference committees to reconcile the differences. That reconciled budget is then presented to the Governor, and both branches work together to come to a final budget all can agree on. An arduous process, but an important one nonetheless, as the budget not only funds the workings of the state government, but also helps fund many worthy organizations that aid New Yorkers across the state.

As for bills, I both sponsor and co-sponsor legislation. Sponsorship means that I introduce the legislation, often with a Senate sponsor already secured (or sometimes I am asked by a Senate colleague to "carry" or introduce their legislation in the Assembly). After legislation is introduced, the sponsor then circulates a letter to their colleagues seeking co-sponsorship, which would indicate strong support for the bill. I have both circulated and signed onto various pieces of legislation. When asked to sign on, my staff and I evaluate the legislation – including what it purports to do, the text, its legislative history, and its pros and the cons – and then weigh all of that in light of the needs and values of those whom I represent. If I am persuaded, I will sign on. *(For a list of bills that I am sponsoring and co-sponsoring, [please click here.](#))*

Once introduced, the legislation will be referred to the [appropriate committee of jurisdiction](#). For instance, I sit on the Corrections, Environmental Conservation, Housing, People with Disabilities and Veterans' Affairs committees. If it passes out of committee, it then goes to the floor for a vote.

If passed, the legislation then goes to the governor, who can sign or veto it. If the governor does neither, it automatically becomes law after 10 days (not including Sundays). If vetoed, it then goes back to the legislature with the reasoning for the veto. If two-thirds of both chambers vote to override the veto, the bill becomes law.

Not infrequently I get asked the question "How has it been up in Albany?" and "Have you moved to Albany?" Since the session began on January 6, due to the pandemic we have been meeting remotely via Zoom, as it is not safe for all 150 members of the Assembly to meet in-person. I have been working out of my district office in Mount Kisco, and it has been working fine, although I do look forward to meeting with my colleagues in Albany, hopefully in the near future.

And while I will be up in Albany on session days, no I will not be moving there.



The Assembly has been meeting remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I look forward to soon being able to meet with my colleagues in-person.

A final note, I don't do this job alone. I am fortunate to have a terrific staff behind me: **Chief of Staff Heather Lackey, Legislative Director Andy Falk, Communications Director Jackie Mishler, Special Assistant Iris Weintraub Lachaud, and Community Liaisons Christina Rae and Amy Rivera.** Please know we are all here to help and represent you.

I hope you found all this information helpful, and that it gave you a better sense of the various facets of my position as your Assemblymember. Most importantly, **I wanted to impress upon you just how much I want to hear from you with your questions, concerns and opinions.** Please join me in being a part of the political process.

And please don't ever hesitate to reach out if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely yours,



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