



Dear Friends,

Well, that's a wrap! In the wee hours of last Friday morning, the Assembly adjourned for the 2021 legislative session (technically we are in a recess because the Speaker may call us back at any time). It was a very busy last few weeks, but a whirlwind final few days. A great deal of legislation passed during that time and I wanted to dedicate this week's newsletter to running through some of the highlights.

But before getting to that, **tomorrow is Juneteenth, a holiday that has been celebrated by African Americans in this country since the late 1800s to celebrate the end of slavery.** Yesterday, President Biden signed a bill making Juneteenth Independence Day the first new federal holiday created since 1983.

To understand why this is such an important and historic day, I find [these observations](#) by Mary Elliott, Curator of American Slavery at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, particularly poignant:

"Juneteenth is important, because it reminds us of what we came through and what we can achieve... July 4th is about liberty, but it was an imperfect liberty because slavery still legally existed in the nation. I personally recognize both holidays because these are important moments in our shared history... We should regularly consider the evolution of the meaning of freedom as we look at certain moments in the nation's past and present... Why Juneteenth is important in relation to the events that happened [last] summer with the death of George Floyd. Why Juneteenth is important when we think about enforcing our rights to vote and how we define citizenship in this nation... Juneteenth should really be a rallying call for all of us to think about the meaning of freedom, particularly regarding African Americans, as well as to the nation and the rest of the world."

The day also serves another purpose. As Jamelle Bouie stated [last year in the New York Times](#):

"Juneteenth may mark just one moment in the struggle for emancipation, but the holiday gives us an occasion to reflect on the profound contributions of enslaved black Americans to the cause of human freedom."

I hope we can all take some time tomorrow to do just that. And for those of you who might be interested in attending a Juneteenth celebration, [events are being held throughout the county](#), including in Bedford, Lewisboro and (virtually) in White Plains.



The Gender Recognition Act

We passed a lot of important legislation towards the end of session, but I am beginning with one of the bills of which I am most proud - the [Gender Recognition Act](#). This bill, which I cosponsored, **would ensure that government documents reflect transgender, nonbinary and intersex individuals' identities**. The provisions of this bill will make it easier and safer for individuals to petition for a change in name or sex designation.



As I have discussed in a previous [newsletter](#) and on [social media](#), **earlier this session I sponsored legislation to provide transgender New Yorkers born out of state a means for obtaining a corrected birth certificate**. This legislation was needed as certain states will not correct the gender or name on a birth certificate without a difficult, invasive process. However, under the Full Faith & Credit Clause of the U.S. Constitution, these states are obligated to recognize a New York court order correcting gender and name.

As happens in the legislative process, smaller bills are sometimes folded into larger pieces of legislation. In this case, the mechanism in the bill I was sponsoring was folded into the Gender Recognition Act. **I couldn't be more pleased that this will shortly become law in New York.**

My thanks to the sponsors of the Gender Recognition Act, Assemblymember Danny O'Donnell and Senator Brad Hoylman. And many thanks to attorney & Co-Chair of the National Trans Bar Association, Kristen Browde, who was the driving force behind my original legislation. **A terrific way to honor Pride month!**

Legislative Package to Address Discriminatory Real Estate Practices

Although the 1968 federal Fair Housing Act protects people from discrimination when buying or renting a home, getting a mortgage, seeking housing assistance, or engaging in other real estate transactions, more subtle and covert forms of discrimination persist. To help combat this, **the legislature passed a package of legislation that targets training and accountability in New York's real estate industry**. Included in the package:

- A measure that would [require real estate brokers](#) to **establish standardized operating procedures and practices designed to ensure that all prospective buyers are treated equitably**.
- Legislation that would [require associate real estate brokers serving as office managers](#) to be active as licensed brokers for at least two of the four years leading up to their appointment as manager. **This requirement assures that those responsible for supervising other brokers are equipped with the training and experience necessary to comply with fair housing regulations.**

- A bill that would [require state and local housing agencies](#) that receive state funds **to identify and overcome patterns of segregation, eradicate racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty, reduce disparities in access to opportunity, eliminate disproportionate housing needs, provide the public with reasonable and regular opportunities to comment, and encourage and maintain compliance with New York’s fair housing law.**
- Legislation that would [require that real estate brokers and salespeople receive implicit bias training as a part of the licensure or re-licensure process](#), and [an additional measure](#) that would require that an individual pursuing licensure or re-licensure as a real estate broker **receive at least two hours of cultural competency training.**
- A bill that would [require the Secretary of State to create a curriculum of instruction](#) for real estate brokers and salespeople in the area of fair housing laws and discrimination in the sale of real property.

[Gun Safety Legislation](#)

Both the NYS Assembly and Senate passed comprehensive packages of gun safety legislation to help keep our families and loved ones safe. Legislation that passed both chambers includes:

- **Legislation that would allow gun manufacturers who knowingly sell firearms to dealers who act in bad faith [to be held civilly liable](#).** Currently, the gun industry is the only industry in this country that enjoys blanket civil immunity for product liability negligence - this legislation will help ensure that those manufacturers who knowingly deal with bad actors can be held civilly liable if their actions lead to harm or death as a result of their firearms ending up in the wrong hands.
- **The [Jose Webster Untraceable Firearms Act](#) prohibits the possession of "ghost guns" made from unserialized gun components, as they are often untraceable and can be bought without a background check.** The legislation requires licensed gunsmiths to serialize and register with the New York State Police any unserialized firearm, rifle, shotgun, finished frame or receiver, or unfinished frame or receiver in their possession.
- **The [Scott J. Beigel Unfinished Receiver Act](#) would prohibit the possession by non-gunsmiths of unfinished firearm frames and receivers, as well as prohibit their sale.** Although licensed retailers are required to do a background check before selling a gun, people have been able to get around this by buying unfinished gun components that are not required to be serialized and turning them into illegal semi-automatic weapons that cannot be traced by law enforcement. This law would prohibit such possession, as well as the sale of these components.
- **Legislation that [would amend the definition](#) of a “disguised gun” to include any rifle, shotgun or machine gun that resembles a toy gun.** This would prohibit the possession, manufacture and design of such disguised guns.

- Legislation [requiring mental health facilities](#) to provide patients and their authorized representative with information on how to seek an extreme risk protection order prior to a patient's discharge or conditional release. This builds on the 2019 red flag law, which allows law enforcement to confiscate firearms and prohibit an individual from purchasing a firearm if they are deemed to be a threat, and if an extreme risk protection court order is issued.

[Voting Legislation](#)

The legislature also passed legislation to help facilitate the process of voting. The [Make Voting Easy Act](#) significantly expands early voting sites throughout the state and increases the hours polling sites must be open. The Act requires the New York State Board of Elections to ensure that any county with at least 500,000 registered voters have at least one early voting poll site for every 40,000 registered voters. Counties with fewer than 500,000 registered voters will be required to have at least one site for every 30,000 registered voters, but are not required to have more than 10 sites within the county. This legislation also increases the number of hours early voting polling places must be open on weekends and legal holidays from five hours to eight hours.

Also passed is [legislation that streamlines](#) the process for canvassing absentee, military, special and affidavit ballots, and speeds up the time it takes to count those ballots. The bill would also help ensure that every valid ballot is counted by defining what makes a ballot valid, defective but curable, or invalid. It would eliminate the current process that allows a challenge to valid ballots. After the election, candidates will still be allowed to challenge the board of election's determination that the ballot is invalid and seek a court order to count more ballots.



[Legislation to Support People with Disabilities](#)

We also passed a number of pieces of legislation to support our disability community.

The first bill passed encourages [improving outreach to individuals and veterans with disabilities](#) regarding employment opportunities in state government. The Civil Service Commission has identified up to 1,200 positions in state government that can be performed by individuals with physical or developmental disabilities. Under this legislation, the Commission would do a study to determine how many of these positions are currently available, whether the list of positions is being kept up-to-date, and whether the number of identified positions needs to be expanded. After completing the study, the commission will then provide recommendations on how the state can better conduct outreach to individuals with disabilities, including disabled veterans, regarding suitable employment opportunities.

As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities, and as a member of the Veterans Committee, I am pleased that this action has been taken.

I also am pleased that the Assembly passed [a bill to require the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council to produce a report](#) evaluating the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as it relates to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. **This legislation will help to ensure the safety and well-being of these New Yorkers, should another pandemic or disaster of this magnitude occur again.** It is important that we be ready.

Finally, the Assembly passed [important legislation that will ensure](#) that **those students with disabilities who "aged out" of their specialized educational programs during the COVID-19 pandemic will be able to receive the instruction and services necessary to compensate for the negative impacts the school closings and remote instruction had on their programs.** The pandemic should not be a reason that these kids don't get the support they need. These students, who previously aged out at age 21, will now be able to continue to receive these services until they complete their individualized education plans or they turn 23, whichever is sooner.

[Other Legislation of Note & "Learning the Ropes"](#)

For the sake of the length of this already-lengthy newsletter, I'd like to take the opportunity to just point out *briefly* some of the other legislation of note. If you need any information about these bills, please don't hesitate to reach out.

- Legislation titled by supporters as "Less is More," which **would [help facilitate the positive reintegration into society](#) of people who are subject to community supervision** (parole, presumptive release, conditional release and post-release supervision) and help reduce unnecessary incarceration.
- **[The Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act](#)**, which will allow the state to finance the purchase and conversion of distressed hotels and vacant commercial office space into permanent affordable housing by nonprofit organizations to ensure every New Yorker has access to a safe and affordable place to live.

- Legislation to [create the Opioid Settlement Fund](#), which will ensure that funding obtained from settlements involving opioid manufacturers, distributors and other entities involved in perpetuating the opioid crisis are used to combat substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders and mitigate other effects of the opioid epidemic.
- Legislation [updating New York's forgery law](#) to ensure that the forging of immunization documents – or possession of such documents – is considered a felony.

Finally, as a new member of the Assembly, I will admit that it was somewhat daunting "learning the ropes" especially with our legislative sessions held remotely. Nonetheless, I was pleased that with the help of my experienced colleagues, my seasoned Legislative Director Andy Falk – and a bit of luck – **I was able to secure passage of several bills.** Included in that list are:

- Concerned about the shortage of qualified home care service workers, State Senator Pete Harckham and I sponsored [a bill requiring the NYS Department of Health to maintain a schedule of when they will offer competency exams to qualified home care service workers residing outside New York.](#)
- Senator Harckham and I also sponsored [a bill authorizing the Town of New Castle to exchange a small parcel of town parkland with a like-sized parcel privately owned, to provide the “missing link” in the Chap Line,](#) which will be a multiuse trail that will provide a safe alternative pathway from the vicinity of the High School and Chappaqua Crossing to the Chappaqua Hamlet, following the general route of the Westchester County Sewer Trunk Line.
- Along with Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, I sponsored [legislation to authorize the City of White Plains to extend a hotel room occupancy tax for a further three-year period, expiring December 31, 2024.](#) The tax is important to the City's finances.
- As the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal has determined that there is a shortage of adequate funds to assist in the new construction of modular and manufactured housing, and with an eye toward expanding the supply of affordable housing, Senator Rachel May and I sponsored [a bill to grant the State of New York Mortgage Agency \("SONYMA"\) the authority to purchase mortgage loans for single-family manufactured and modular homes](#) and modify existing SONYMA-held mortgages to assist financially distressed homeowners.
- Senator Sean Ryan and I sponsored [a bill that extends authority to the Department of Environmental Conservation to hold sweepstakes to help finance its magazine “The Conservationist”,](#) a principal means the department uses to communicate its work.

Again, if you have any questions about anything discussed above, please reach out to me at burdickc@nyassembly.gov or call my office at (914) 244-4450.

Emergency Rental Relief Program Forum

In case you missed the email Wednesday, I will be co-hosting a forum on the **Emergency Rental Relief Program with Senators Harckham and Mayer, this coming Tuesday, June 22nd**. If you have any questions about the program, please tune in. And if you know of anyone else who might be interested, please spread the word! Zoom in at <http://tinyurl.com/June22ERAP> or watch on Facebook Live at <http://FB.com/ChrisBurdickADurdickAD93>.

Los Invitamos a un Foro Virtual sobre Programa de Emergencia de Ayuda con el pago de Alquileres

martes, 22 de junio de 6:30 p.m. a 8 p.m.
Participe por Zoom: tinyurl.com/June22ERAP

Funcionarios de Legal Services of Hudson Valley detallarán el programa y el proceso de documentación.

 Senadora Shelley B. Mayer
Senador Pete Harckham
Asambleísta Chris Burdick

 

Habrá traducción al español.

Join us for a forum on **Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

Tuesday, June 22nd, 6:30-8PM
Join the Zoom: tinyurl.com/June22ERAP

Speakers from Legal Services of the Hudson Valley will explain the program, application process, and answer questions.

 Senator Shelley B. Mayer,
Senator Pete Harckham &
Assemblymember Chris Burdick

 

Spanish interpretation will be provided.

Thank You To Our Interns!

We have had a terrific group of interns working in our office, to whom we are incredibly grateful. **A special shout out and thank you to Miranda, Will, Scott and Ben -- Seniors at Horace Greeley and Byram Hills -- who chose to do their Senior internships with our office.** Your hard work has been greatly appreciated and we can't wait to hear about all the wonderful things you will do in college and beyond!



A final note, **this coming Tuesday, June 22nd, is Primary Day in New York!** If you are eligible to vote in a Primary, I encourage you to come out and exercise your right! Please note that **the early voting period is underway** through Sunday, if that option works better for you. [Please click here to learn more about the early voting locations and times.](#)

As always, if there are any issues that you would like to see covered in a future newsletter, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at burdickc@nyassembly.gov (or simply reply to this email). **Please also follow me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for the most up-to-date information.**

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

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Burdick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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