



Assemblywoman
Dana Levenberg

Assembly District 95



February 2023 In Review



Left to right: meeting with advocates for Fair Pay for Home Care; speaking in the Assembly chamber; meeting with advocates for the Tuition Assistance Program.

Roads Update

In February, I met with representatives from NYSDOT Region 8 to discuss the state of the roads in my district. I brought videos detailing the current state of the roads, the list of complaints and issues that my office has received from constituents and municipalities, and a list of questions. Here is an update on our conversation, which is ongoing.

The most frequently mentioned road in all of the comments my office receives is Route 9A, in particular the stretch that runs through Ossining and Briarcliff Manor. This stretch is also the subject of a study funded by the Legislature last year. This study, once complete, should hopefully provide a roadmap (no pun intended) for next steps toward addressing the longstanding issues with this road. I am told that the DOT has just finished the process of engaging a consultant to conduct the study. They plan to have a kickoff meeting in late March with the study team and officials from the various levels of government representing the affected area.



At Governor Kathy Hochul's New Legislator's Breakfast; with colleagues and students at the College of Westchester.

Public engagement will begin after the kickoff meeting, and will include opportunities to share your thoughts in writing and in public meetings as well as a dedicated project website with meeting materials, a schedule, and a final study report at the end of the study period. My office will send out communications via our email list and social media when these resources and comment opportunities become available. The goal is to complete the study within 10-12 months of its initiation.

With regard to potholes in general, 1-800-POTHOLE continues to be the best way to report. The location from which the call originates determines how it gets routed, so be sure to call from our area to ensure you get the right division. Logging these reports provides DOT with insight into which roads need more care, and your calls are a means of providing advance notice to the DOT that a pothole exists, which is useful in the event that a claim needs to be filed for damages. Additionally, I have signed on as a co-sponsor for a bill that would establish a pothole reporting website. If passed, this bill would make it easier to report potholes and receive alerts when they are repaired.

My office is continuing to flesh out ideas for legislation that would enable municipalities to address the conditions of state roads within their boundaries if the roads are not improved within a reasonable timeframe. I am also talking to my legislative colleagues representing areas that fall under NYSDOT Region 8, to compare notes on our experiences and see how we can work together to improve road conditions in this region. Lastly, I am planning to meet with County representatives to make sure the federal funding that gets routed through the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council makes it to our region.



Left to right: meeting with representatives from the Westchester County Youth Bureau; with representatives from Agudath Israel; meeting with CHHOP Executive Director Cynthia Knox.

As my staff and I drive around the district, we are happy to see that some of the acute issues we've raised to NYSDOT are starting to be repaired and addressed, but there is more work needed. Please rest assured that this issue is among those at the top of my list of priorities. Unfortunately this does not necessarily mean it will be "fixed" quickly, but I will remain laser focused on working towards much better roadways.

Budget Season

In other news, the busiest time of the legislative calendar began with the arrival of the Governor's budget on February 1. For those who are unaware, once the Governor issues her Executive Budget proposal, each house of the State Legislature puts together its own budget proposal and negotiates with the Governor over what to include in the final state budget. The resulting budget will fund state operations for the fiscal year starting on April 1.

I have spent the past month listening to various constituencies in the district to get their input on what they are looking for from the state budget. All told, my small staff and I have had more than 150 meetings with stakeholders this month, and have learned a lot that I am bringing with me into budget negotiations. One highlight of my listening tour was my meeting with Peekskill Superintendent Dr. David Mauricio and Peekskill CSD Board President Branwen MacDonald at Peekskill High School, which also included conversations with teachers, staff and students and a tour of PHS's STEAM Innovation Center. I loved hearing about the students' Science Research projects and watching a demonstration of the Robotics' team's latest work!





With environmental advocate Suzie Ross in Albany; learning about raptors at Teatown's EagleFest.

In addition to these meetings, I opened a survey last month to capture more input from constituents regarding the state budget. My office has also been combing through our email which contains thousands of comments on the budget and other pending legislation.

We aim to keep good track of who reaches out to us and what matters to you. In that spirit, here are some tips for sharing your views with my office:

- Always include your address in your communications to us so that we can confirm whether or not you are a constituent. We prioritize input from constituents over input from those outside of the district.
- If you are calling or writing about specific legislation, please include the current session Assembly bill number, if at all possible. If one is not yet available, include the current session Senate bill number, or the most recent session number.
- Please be concise, specific and polite - we are a small team serving thousands of people.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to inform me and my office of your opinions, and a special shoutout to my staff and interns (of which we now have four - three high school students in the district office, and our college intern in Albany) for diligently logging the contacts we receive. We are recruiting interns on a rolling basis; please share [this link](#) with anyone who is interested in applying. The link can also be found on [my web page](#) under "Important Links" and in my linktree on Instagram.



Left to right: with Kecia Palmer-Cousins of the Peekskill NAACP; with colleagues welcoming Westchester County Executive George Latimer & Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins to the Assembly chamber; with Joe Mayhew of CWA Local 1103 in Albany.

Update on Indian Point Decommissioning and New Legislation

A major issue in the district, one on which I receive lots of comments, is ensuring the safe decommissioning of Indian Point. By now it is no secret that I have concerns about Holtec's plan to discharge treated water into the Hudson, and I have introduced legislation with State Senator Pete Harckham to ban the release of radionuclides into waterways in New York State (A5338/S5181). I am also in contact with our federal representatives and discussing our options for ensuring that this issue is safely addressed.

For context, at last month's Indian Point Decommissioning Oversight Board meeting, we heard from a number of experts who raised important questions about the soundness of Holtec's plan. We also discussed options for dealing with the waste remaining at Indian Point, and learned that if we just wait and allow the compounds to break down, tritium will eventually (over the course of a few decades) become harmless. When asked about the possibility of simply waiting until the materials become 100% safe to dispose of, the Holtec representative responded, "[That's not our business model.](#)"

I cannot blindly assume that what is right for Holtec's business model is right for us. The recent train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio is just the latest reminder of why governments at all levels must take regulation and oversight of businesses that deal with hazardous materials seriously. [Holtec has its own history of seeking safety exemptions](#), not unlike Norfolk Southern. However, under current state law, there is not much the state can do to stop them when it comes to radiological materials like tritium. My bill with Senator Harckham aims to give the state power to protect our waterways by banning radiological discharges outright; click [here](#) to read more about it. Major thanks to [Riverkeeper](#) for their assistance and input in crafting the bill.



Left to right: with Jeremy Cherson of Riverkeeper and Jessica Ottney of the Nature Conservancy; a virtual meeting with school superintendents; meeting with the Putnam County Youth Bureau.

The ongoing effort to clean up the Hudson River is a major factor in this region's economic recovery. Our beautiful river is a major draw for new residents and tourists alike. Current residents and visitors spend millions of dollars annually on pursuits related to the Hudson - dining at waterfront restaurants, sailing, water sports, and more. To keep moving in the right direction economically, we need to stop corporations from dumping their waste in our waterways.

First Bill

On a much happier note, my first bill passed the Assembly this month! Though it was a chapter amendment, its passage marks the culmination of a 16-year journey to allow New Yorkers to be legally married by a one-day marriage officiant of their choosing, an increasingly popular practice.

The inspiration for the original bill came about when my predecessor, Sandy Galef, attended a wedding in California in 2005. The officiant was the bride's sister. Because of the officiant's closeness to the couple, she created a personable, memorable, heartwarming ceremony. It inspired in Sandy a wish to enable New Yorkers to be able to choose this sort of experience for their special day, and have their marriages be recognized legally. By creating a one-day designation, a concise legal alternative is available for couples who do not want (or cannot have) their marriage solemnized by a member of the clergy or public official.

This chapter amendment grants town and city clerks the authority to designate an individual as a one-day marriage officiant instead of the Secretary of State. The nominal fee associated with issuing the license will remain with the locality. And, as my colleague Assemblymember MaryJane Shimsky pointed out in her comments in support of the bill, so will the revenue derived from holding that ceremony in New York as opposed to another state that would honor the couple's wishes in this way.



Ossining historian Joyce Sharrock Cole brought a slice of history to life this February with "Black History in Westchester: Fulfilling the Vision" at Bethany Arts Center.

I am so proud to be able to bring this legislation to pass, and thank my colleagues in the chamber for their support. The new law will take effect later this month, on March 28. We hope to celebrate with one of the first couples to avail themselves of this new law. Please contact my office if you know of any lovebirds willing to share a toast on their special day!

Black History Month

Since 1976, the month of February has been designated as a time to celebrate the contributions of Black Americans and the African diaspora. We take special care in February to honor those who have stood up against racial discrimination and helped shape our shared history. The 95th Assembly District is rich with diverse cultural institutions, a fact that is especially apparent during Black History Month. Many thanks to our local libraries, school districts and other institutions that organized a plethora of events recognizing various facets of Black history and culture.

Of special note this year was Bethany Arts Community's stellar exhibition, "Black History and Culture in Westchester: Fulfilling the Vision," curated by award-winning Ossining historian Joyce Sharrock Cole. I was pleased to be in attendance at the opening, and made my way back a couple of times to catch more details! The exhibition literally brought a slice of Westchester's Black history to life, complete with re-enactors. We are so blessed to have such a talented historian in our midst.

Attorney General Spotlight

We have begun partnering with Attorney General Letitia James to share a monthly item from her office in our newsletter. The graphic below discusses recent actions by the Attorney General's office to protect New Yorkers from stalkerware, and resources you can use if you have been impacted by this software.

News from New York State Attorney General Letitia James

Protecting online privacy

Attorney General James recently took steps to protect New Yorkers' privacy by stopping several stalkerware apps that allowed individuals to spy on others without their consent. The apps allowed users to secretly monitor activity on another device, including: call logs, text messages, photos, videos, location, Gmail, WhatsApp and Skype messages, social media, and browsing history. Attorney General James secured hundreds of thousands of dollars from the owner of multiple companies that sold these stalkerware products, and the apps will now be modified.



Customers were led to believe that these stalkerware products are legal, but they are in violation of numerous state and federal laws. An investigation by Attorney General James' office also found that the owner and his companies misrepresented their refund and data security policies, failed to disclose the potential harm to a device caused by the installation of their products, and created sham review sites to lure customers into purchasing and using the stalkerware products.

The companies must now modify their apps and software so that the owner of the device being monitored is notified and informed of the type of information being collected and made available for viewing.

If you believe you are a victim of stalkerware and are not receiving proper notifications:

Call the Attorney General's hotline:

(800) 771-7755

File a complaint:

ag.ny.gov/complaint

That's all for my monthly wrap-up. For more frequent updates, be sure to follow me on social media - I am @AMDanaLevenberg on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). Until next time, be safe and healthy!