



October 10, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

I've had a productive week of meetings, learning from experts and community leaders on a variety of topics including water health, legal assistance for evictions, addiction services, and childcare. I've had the pleasure of touring areas in our district and celebrating with you at events. I hope you'll read more highlights below of our work together.

Legislative Update

NYSEG Rate Increases

The Public Service Commission [will be meeting](#) this Thursday, Oct. 12 to discuss the proposed rate increases of New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG). As I have reported to you in the past, I have been a vocal opponent of the exorbitant rate hikes. In April, Sen. Lea Webb and I [sent a letter](#), endorsed by 30 of our legislative colleagues, urging Gov. Hochul and PSC Chair Rory Christian to deny the rate hikes and calling for a full investigation. In June, I organized a [press conference](#), again rejecting the hikes. NYSEG customers have experienced outrageous billing problems, poor customer service, and a high level of outages. We cannot reward a poor-performing company with 17% rate hikes over the next three years, with a compounding effect of a 62% overall increase. I have heard from many constituents who have experienced issues. If you still have unresolved billing or service issues, you may contact my office for assistance.

Emergency Response Services

I had the opportunity this week to tour the Tompkins County 911 center and meet with the Department of Emergency Response staff to discuss their processes, funding, and needs. EMS provides critical health services to residents in time of need. However, having adequate coverage and response times in rural communities is a major concern. I'm proud to sponsor bill [A1091](#), which would establish a sustainable state financing mechanism for emergency medical services. EMS is healthcare and is subject to the same escalating costs as the rest of the healthcare industry. Municipalities that operate EMS Departments feel the ongoing financial strain of these costs which continue to outpace inflation. For the existing network of EMS agencies to survive, State aid is needed. An investment in our frontline responders is an investment in the health and safety of all New Yorkers.



Around the District

Ithaca District Office Open House

Thank you to everyone who celebrated the official opening of my newly relocated Ithaca District Office on the Commons, 130 East State Street. I am grateful for the beautiful space to welcome constituents and to host meetings with community leaders and stakeholders. As a lover of local art, I have been able to highlight several pieces I have collected over the years in the new space as well as collaborate with the History Center in Tompkins County to hang pieces in our conference room that are on loan. We were also able to display a number of quilts made by local quilters, which were part of the "40 Quilts for 40 Beds" project (see below for more information). A special thank

you to District Office Director Cathy Emilian who has been invaluable in the design of the space as well as in the coordination of countless details of the move and office set-up. Thank you to John Guttridge and his staff throughout the design and remodeling process with such attention to detail.



Parade of Quilts

I was so grateful to be able to celebrate the creative efforts of local quilt makers at the [“40 Quilts for 40 Beds” event](#), organized by Brigid Hubberman, at Kendal at Ithaca. The quilts were made with love and care for the Alcohol and Drug Council’s new Open Access Detox and Stabilization Center and will be placed on beds for residents undergoing treatment. While the initial goal was to make 40, the quilters ended up making 65. The quilts are a vivid display of the warmth and compassion of this community and the collective support for people struggling with addiction.



Tour of Bell Station

In 2022, [Finger Lakes Land Trust \(FLLT\)](#) completed the purchase of Bell Station in Lansing from NYSEG, conserving over 3,400 feet of pristine shoreline of Cayuga Lake. I was able to tour the property recently and experience the beautiful trails, fields, streams and wooded hillsides. This was an incredible collaboration between FLLT, the Governor’s office, and Department of Environmental Conservation, and I am proud to have been part of the coalition of support to make the agreement happen. Protecting our freshwater resources is critical, and this was an important step to safeguard the lake’s water quality as well as enhance public access to Cayuga Lake.



CACTC becomes the Rural Public Health Institute

I was so happy to celebrate [the formal announcement](#) that Cortland Area Communities That Care (CACTC) has transitioned to a public health institute model and has adopted a new name to reflect their current work: The Rural Health Institute of New York (RHI). I have been continuously impressed by their work in our region and their ability to articulate the interconnectedness of health behaviors and outcomes and provide valuable data. Being able to identify causal factors to issues and effectively implement solutions is so important as we look to spend limited governmental funds. Much health data is focused on urban centers, so to have a resource like RHI focused on rural health data is a true value. I congratulate them and look forward to their

continued work across rural communities in New York State! You can view the [virtual press conference](#) online.

New Laws

When we support people in times of need, we also support their families and local economy. I helped pass new laws that provide employees with notice of eligibility for unemployment benefits and ensure unemployment insurance applicants receive information on SNAP and WIC eligibility (Chs. 366 and 369 of 2023).



Helping Workers in Need

**New laws uplift our
workforce by increasing
access to benefits**

Community Resources

New York State Council on the Arts Grants

Governor Hochul recently announced that up to \$37 million is available to support capital projects for arts and cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts' FY2024 Capital Projects Fund. These grants are recommended for nonprofit organizations that are in the advanced planning stages of capital projects such as the construction of new facilities, the renovation or restoration of existing buildings, and the permanent installation of new, complete equipment systems. [This link](#) contains details about the opportunity. With these capital grants, our arts and cultural organizations are creating jobs, boosting tourism, strengthening local economies and creating vibrant communities!



Free Eye Care Clinics

The Ithaca Free Clinic has partnered with the Ithaca Lions Club to provide FREE Optometry and Optician services to all Tompkins County residents and children over age 5. Eye exams, glaucoma screenings, and prescription eyeglasses are available at no cost. Schedule an appointment by calling 607-330-1254 or emailing clinic@ithacahealth.org. Upcoming dates for the clinic are on Fridays: October 13, October 27, and November 3.

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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