



May 28, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

I hope you all had a wonderful Memorial Day weekend and found an opportunity to commemorate those who lost their lives in service to our country.

Memorial Day also marks the unofficial start of summer, and I hope you had a chance to get outside, enjoy the beautiful lakes and trails in our district, and connect with friends and family. To honor the beauty of the Finger Lakes, as well as to raise awareness of these critical sources of freshwater, I sponsored a resolution that recently passed the Assembly to commemorate the Finger Lakes' community's celebration of [Lake Friendly Living](#). As harmful algal blooms continue to threaten the health of freshwater resources, we must protect the ecosystems of our lakes and ensure we have safe, clean drinking water.

Part of protecting our lakes is spending time appreciating them, learning about them and their vital and vibrant ecosystems, sharing information with others, and advocating for their protection. Unlike a majority of the world, we have and will continue to have lush lands and relatively moderate temperatures. This is a great gift, but we also cannot take it for granted because if we assume it will always be there, we tend not to protect it until it's too late. I am advocating and championing legislation, [the Open Water Data Act](#), to ensure statewide data on water quality so we can take decisive and effective actions as protectors and stewards of nature. A huge thank you to you all for being my allies, my inspiration, and my hope.

I am working to make every day in the legislative session count as we only have 7 legislative days remaining to pass many critical bills. Read on for the week's highlights!

# Legislative Update

## Disabilities Awareness Day Legislation

May 22 was Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day, and the Assembly passed [a package of legislation](#) which reinforces that all New Yorkers deserve to live in communities where they feel respected and supported, with access to resources they need to thrive. I am proud that my bill [A6541](#) was included in this package of bills and passed the Assembly this week. This legislation waives the state's sovereign immunity to liability under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Family and Medical Leave Act. Sovereign immunity prevents state employees from suing the state government for failing to comply with federal law, so removing this immunity ensures accessible and fair treatment to state workers of all abilities. As we continue working to lower barriers and provide equal access to all members of our community, we need to ensure our state is a model for others to follow, and I look forward to the bill passing in the Senate. Watch a [video of my comments](#) on the bill.



## **Just Energy Transition Act (JETA)**

The JETA bill ([A4866](#)) is a significant milestone in our roadmap to create a renewable and reliable power grid and to ensure the transition to renewable energy centers in equity. In 2019, we passed comprehensive climate laws that outline clear climate goals. We then spent years creating a [roadmap](#) of how to realistically reach those goals. In this roadmap, there are recommendations of how to thoughtfully transition existing fossil-fuel based energy generation to renewable energy and ensure transmission line modernization sufficient to incorporate this transition. JETA is this recommendation realized in legislation.

JETA would allow procurement of new clean energy resources that specifically targets the replacement of fossil fuel power plants, while simultaneously ensuring reliability, protecting consumers, supporting union jobs, and spurring economic development. This legislation has overwhelming support from legislative members, environmental scientists and advocates, human rights advocates, unions and industry. I'm happy to share that the bill passed the Assembly Energy Committee, but we do not have time to waste.

With this collective support, we must pass the bill in these remaining days of session and direct state agencies to develop strategies to facilitate the replacement and redevelopment of New York's fossil fuel facilities and their sites by 2030, in an equitable way. Watch a [video of my comments](#) from a recent press conference.





## Rally for NY HEAT Act

We missed the opportunity in this year's budget to take significant steps toward moving New York off of fossil fuels, but we have another opportunity to pass this critically important legislation in the final weeks of session, a cornerstone to reaching our climate goals set out in the environmental laws of 2019. NY HEAT ([A4592](#)) eliminates outdated subsidies to the oil and gas industry, paving the way for increased investments in renewable energy infrastructure, all while lowering utility bills. By capping utility bills at 6% of income for low- and middle-income New Yorkers, the NY HEAT Act promotes affordability and equity while facilitating a managed transition away from continued investments in fossil fuel infrastructure. Given the crisis state of climate change, we cannot afford inaction or delays. The passage of the NY HEAT Act this year is essential to ensuring a sustainable future for New Yorkers. Watch [a video of my comments](#) from the rally.



## Advocating for the No Cap Act

New York's court system is impossibly backlogged, and the State Supreme Court judges have insurmountably long dockets. Since 1846 (and as last amended in 1961), the State Constitution has arbitrarily capped the number of legislatively authorized Supreme Court seats at one justice per 50,000 people in each district. This cap on the number of judges prevents the Legislature from adding additional judges to meet the growing need of certain districts and bringing our judicial system into the 21st century. It is an injustice to be accused of a crime or be a victim of a crime and have to wait months or years to have your case adjudicated, leaving your entire life in limbo. I joined a press conference this week to advocate for bill [A5366](#) (Bores) that would remove the current constitutional limit on the number of State Supreme Court justices. As with any changes to the State Constitution, the bill would need to pass in two consecutive legislative sessions and then go to the ballot for approval by the voters. Watch [a video of my comments](#).



# Around the District

## Students Inside Albany

Four students from our district participated in the League of Women Voters “Students Inside Albany” program this week, and my team and I were happy to welcome **Greta Garrison** (Charles O. Dickerson High School), **John McGovern** (Cortland High School), **Mallory May** (Cortland High School), and **Natalie Robinson** (Lansing High School) in Albany. The program is designed to increase students’ awareness of their responsibility in representative government and help provide high school students with the tools to meet this responsibility. Government can sometimes seem like a big black box and can contribute to disengagement and indifference. It was an absolute pleasure to sit in the Chamber while the Assembly was in session and explain the legislative process and discuss in real time how a bill gets through the endless hurdles to become a law. Thank you to the League of Women Voters for organizing this impactful conference and opportunity for our youth!





# Community Resources

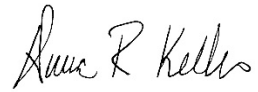
## **Mental Health First Aid**

The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County is offering mental health first aid training for the community. The training is designed for the average person to gain skills in supporting someone developing a mental health or substance use challenge or experiencing a crisis and is open to all caring individuals who want to learn these skills for their personal or professional roles. Training will take place Thursday June 13 and Friday June 14 from 9 am - 1:30 pm (both sessions required) at the MHA Community Education and Training Center, 171 E. State St, Ithaca (in Center Ithaca). Cost is \$80 per person but need-based scholarships are available for persons experiencing financial hardship. [Register online](#) or contact Melanie at 607-273-9250 or [mlittle@mhaedu.org](mailto:mlittle@mhaedu.org) for more information.

---



In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

**ALBANY  
OFFICE**  
LOB 833  
Albany,  
NY 12248  
518-455-  
5444

**CORTLAND  
OFFICE**  
83 Main St.  
Cortland, NY  
13045  
607-208-2024

**ITHACA  
OFFICE**  
130 East  
State St.  
Ithaca,  
NY  
14850  
607-277-  
8030

Assembly District 125 | [kellesa@nyassembly.gov](mailto:kellesa@nyassembly.gov)