



Dear Neighbors,

I hope everyone stayed safe during the crushing heat wave that descended on us this past week and you are all finding a moment to enjoy the breezy 77 degree weather! Right on que with predicted climate change we are experiencing erratic weather patterns, early confirmed cases of harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), and an increasing regularity of power outages. Through this summer I will make sure to share any safety tips and recommendations to help us all navigate our changing environment. Please reach out to my office if you have any questions or your own tips and tricks you would like to share with the community!

This week's newsletter is chock full of a lot of information post session as we are combining two weeks into one including welcoming some new staff to the team!

As one final update, we want to make sure that everyone has our current Ithaca office in mind when you come to visit. We have been enjoying a fresh new look at 130 E. State Street on the Commons since last year, a larger newly renovated space to accommodate the whole team

plus the many wonderful interns that we have throughout the year. We now have a large central public space and a separate conference space for community meetings. If you haven't had a chance to visit please do stop by!



Legislative Update

Legislative Session Achievements

This intense session ended with some important victories for legislation that I championed over the finish line in both houses.

Environmental Conservation:

- [A8866](#) (Same as [S08357](#)) amends the environmental conservation law to prohibit the use of CO₂ as part of the high-volume hydraulic fracturing process. Supercritical CO₂, a dangerous semi-gaseous/semi-aqueous high-pressure solution, is highly corrosive when combined with tiny amounts of water and can rupture transportation pipelines with tragic consequences (such as mass CO₂-poisoning as illustrated in Satartia, Mississippi in February 2020 when 45 people were hospitalized from exposure). It can also demineralize and destabilize rockbed,

making it an ineffective solution for methane-extraction via fracking.

- [A9043](#) (Same as [S07849](#)) adds a section to the state Agriculture and Markets law to establish the native plant seed supply program. Native plants play a pivotal role in maintaining biodiversity. This bill will make native seeds more accessible in New York State and create a market demand for their use in land management, landscaping, groundskeeping and other projects determined by the commissioner of Agriculture & Markets.
- [A4871B](#) (Same as [S01535B](#)) requires the installation of EV charging stations in state-owned parking facilities. The number of alternative fuel vehicles on the road in both New York State and across the country has grown significantly so this bill aims to bring the infrastructure up to pace with the demand and promote the use of clean emission vehicles.

Criminal Justice:

- [A5902](#) (Same as [S05214](#)) establishes a uniform electronic medical system for correctional facilities to ensure the files of incarcerated individuals are kept safe from damage and can be readily accessible to medical staff, particularly important in creating consistency to medical care when individuals are transferred from one facility to another.

Health & Human Rights:

- [A9102](#) (Same as [S08486-C](#)) provides Medicaid reimbursement for EMS providers when treatment in place (TIP) is administered or a client is transported to a location other than a hospital like a rehabilitation facility or urgent care. Current law requires EMS agencies responding to a 911 call, to transport Medicaid enrollees to a general hospital to receive Medicaid reimbursement. Not every call requires a visit to a hospital, in fact statewide 40% of calls are treated on site and currently are not reimbursable. This bill honors the expertise of EMTs providing emergency services to our communities and allows a degree of discretion in determining best treatment options.
- [A1273](#) (Same as [S05532](#)) makes permanent the New York State LGBTQ+ Advisory Board. This formalizes the board to ensure that LGBTQ+ New Yorkers continue to have a permanent voice in Albany so the state can remain a leader in inclusion at a time when the clock is being turned back on progress.

Local Home Rule:

- [A4914B](#) (Same as [S04262-B](#)) designates the bridge in Lansing crossing Salmon Creek on highway 34B

as the "Peter Wheeler Memorial Bridge". Peter Wheeler escaped enslavement in Ludlowville in the early 1800's and went on to become a Sailor and pen an [autobiography](#), which is still available in paperback.

- [A9345](#) (Same as [S08642](#)) supports recruitment efforts of the Varna Volunteer Fire Department. This bill exempts Varna from the 45 percent limit on non-resident members because the hamlet catchment area is too small to ensure a sufficient population for effective recruitment and retention.
- [A10014](#) (Same as [S09175](#)) authorizes the City of Cortland to establish hotel and motel taxes of up to 3 percent. Rather than requiring state reauthorization every three years, this bill allows for local renewal every three years, similar to those in effect for other municipalities in the district.
- [A10376](#) (Same as [S09428-A](#)) provides authorization for the restaurant, [The Rook](#), to serve wine, beer, and spirits on site with full support from the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, located within the standard 200 foot limit.
- [A10482](#) (Same as [S09756](#)) extends the existing state provision to hunt big game by rifle (rather than shotguns only, that are already authorized) in Tompkins County until 2026. If someone is going to hunt, a central rule is safety and to minimize suffering of animals. Shotguns are statistically more likely to

wound and not kill and can lead to excessive suffering.

- [A8090](#) (Same as [S07689](#)) expands residency requirements for village justice of Cayuga Heights increasing the likelihood of filling a long-open vacancy.

Prime Bills Passed in Assembly

- [A6541](#) (Same as [S01164-A](#)) waives the state's sovereign immunity bestowed to states at the federal level thus holding the state government accountable and liable for any discrimination against state employees with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other related acts, ensuring accessible and fair treatment to state workers of all abilities. I will continue to champion this legislation until it passes both houses and is signed into law.

Additional Prime Bills used as the foundation for language in the fiscal year 2025

- [A7322](#) (Same as [S06573](#)) directs the State Fire Prevention and Building Code Council to complete a study of municipal code in the state and identify best practices for single stair construction with the goal being to increase the potential for constructing more affordable housing units, while also ensuring safety

and accessibility. Read more on the benefits of single stair construction [here](#).

- [A9928](#) ,the Aim Higher Act, (Same as [S08629](#)) directs the Division of Budget to put out a new formula for the assistance and incentive to municipalities (AIM) program. This will result in an increase in this crucial funding source for municipalities, which has been stagnant for years while costs rise.
- [A9680](#) (Same as [S07865-A](#)) establishes an optional local tax exemption for affordable housing multi-family housing units. The aim is to set standards up front through local laws so housing developers can know what the requirements for affordability are and can plan accordingly-ultimately helping communities achieve their affordable housing goals.

In addition to the bills I sponsored, I was proud to cosponsor important legislation that the Assembly Majority passed to we protect youth on social media, increase fairness in our criminal justice system, and boost local economies and support agriculture by expanding direct shipment of alcohol.

Social Media Protections for Children

Youth growing up in today's world will inevitably interact with the internet and social media. Parents are doing their best to balance the benefits of the internet and social


media, such as learning and staying connected with friends and family, with the adverse mental health effects, such as cyberbullying, disinformation, and exposure to hate-based or violent content. Internet and social media companies, though, often take advantage of youth in order to increase their corporate “clicks” and maximize their profits. I’m proud to have helped pass the **New York Child Data Protection Act** ([A8149](#)) and the **Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids Act** ([A8148](#)) to protect youth as they navigate the digital world as well as the anxieties and complexities of childhood and teenage years. These measures will prohibit internet companies from collecting and sharing children’s data without the consent of a parent and also prohibit social media companies from purposefully keeping children attached to their feeds through addictive algorithms – some of which expose them to deeply harmful and age-inappropriate content.



Jury of Our Peers Act

Serving on a jury is one of the most important civic duties a New Yorker can partake in. Our democracy relies on juries composed of a defendant's fellow citizens to ensure our judicial system provides justice. Unfortunately,

in New York State, those with a previous felony conviction cannot serve as a juror even after serving out their sentence. Current law goes against the principle that once someone has served their time, they should have the opportunity to fully contribute to their community, state and country. Denying any New Yorker the chance to serve as a juror further marginalizes them and perpetuates a system where we indefinitely penalize people for their past mistakes. It's also a form of discrimination that disproportionately affects people of color and low-income individuals. That's why I helped pass the **Jury of Our Peers Act** to remove this lifetime ban ([A.1432-C](#)). Under this legislation, once someone has completed all sentencing requirements, including probation and/or community supervision, they are once again eligible to serve as a juror. This will help promote rehabilitation and integration into society while also providing a broader perspective on the judicial process that can help prevent wrongful convictions. This legislation will help improve the justice dispensed in our court system and strengthen the size and diversity of our jury pool.



*Improving
our criminal
justice system by
strengthening
the jury pool*

Expanding Direct Shipment of Alcohol

New York boasts some of the world's best producers of alcoholic beverages, from beer to cider to wine and spirits. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our state's wine

producers demonstrated that safe and responsible direct-to-consumer delivery is achievable. This bill would allow cider, liquor, mead and braggot manufacturers to adopt similar sales techniques, and I'm proud to have supported the expansion of direct shipment of alcoholic beverages to consumers ([A3132](#)). This measure would not only make customer's lives easier but also increase tax revenue, deliver New York products to new markets and help support our state's agricultural sector. This legislation is specifically designed to support New York-based micro-industry without negatively affecting local bricks-and-mortar liquor stores.



Around the District

Celebrating CAPCO's 50 Year Anniversary

I was honored to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO) and present an official Assembly Citation to mark the occasion! CAPCO has become an essential nonprofit organization in Cortland County, connecting individuals and families to services, strengthening themselves and the community. CAPCO administers critical programs such as Energy Services, Head Start/Early Head Start, WIC, Consumer Directed Care, and Family Development. I want to thank every employee and the CAPCO leadership including the wonderful big-hearted Executive Director Greg Richards for bringing so much compassion and understanding to their work and creating a place that not only provides services but creates an environment where people feel truly cared for. It was such an honor to

be present for the dedication speech to the amazing commitment of the former Executive Director Lindy Glennon. Through all its programs, CAPCO truly embodies her commitment of service to the community! Thank you to all at CAPCO for your dedication and service to Cortland County!



Water Health Legislation Presentation for Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance

I traveled a bit outside the district to Geneva to attend a meeting of the [Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance](#). Senator Rachel May and I presented on a number of water health bills we sponsor, including: the Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring and Prevention Act ([A8867](#)); the Open Water Data Act ([A3299](#)); the PFAS Disclosure Act ([A3296](#)); and a Restriction on Spreading Biosolids ([A8317](#)). Together we outlined how these bills are critical to identify causes of major offenses to the health of our freshwater resources like HABs and their contributing causes and the sources of PFAS forever chemicals. We also discussed the value of consolidating existing municipal water quality data into a statewide database to help the state identify both localized water issues as well as statewide trends. While we know that biosolids from wastewater treatment plants are full of over 80,000 toxins and manmade chemicals like PFAS, dioxins, PCBs, thalate, and heavy metals, 21% of these biosolids are currently spread on our agricultural soils with a target to increase to 56%. It is critical that we ensure toxins in biosolids do not exceed identified safe levels if they are to be used as soil amendments to grow the food we eat.

The event was a great opportunity to connect with county and town leaders, lake stewards, and lake association board members to discuss both the problems we face

protecting our natural water resources and these solutions both the Senator and I have proposed and explore opportunities to advocate together for this legislation moving forward. The freshwater resources we have in our district, and the greater Finger Lakes Region, are precious sources of drinking water and critical for the entire ecosystem. It is imperative that we actively protect and monitor our drinking water.



50th celebration of the Ithaca Farmers Market

This past week we gathered to celebrate the publication of the new Ithaca Farmers Market Cookbook, which was written by local restaurateur and local food activist Michael Turback.

This cookbook is a tribute to cooking through the seasons. Its release now stands as a testament to the resilience and enduring spirit of our community. The Ithaca Farmers Market first opened its doors on Saturdays in 1973. Over the past five decades it has continuously prospered, evolving into a cherished Ithaca tradition that often attracts well over 5,000 people a day. This cookbook showcases the culinary talents of our local community and serves as an inspiration for embracing fresh, locally sourced ingredients in our daily cooking. The Farmer's Market continues to add to local economic growth year after year, while also providing a unique experience as a communal gathering spot. A huge thank you to all the farmers, culinary experts, and community farmer's market organizers and board that make the market the brilliant cultural center it is for our entire community.



Juneteenth events

This year in honor of the national holiday Juneteenth, the day of freedom for once-enslaved African Americans, celebrations and reflections were held throughout the 125th Assembly District. In 2021, after years of advocacy led by champions like [Opal Lee](#), President Biden recognized June 19th as a national holiday. The holiday

acknowledges that although President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 to end slavery, slavery did not truly end for many thousands of people in the last southern holdout in Texas until almost two years later on June 19th, 1865, when a Union Army marched into Galveston, Texas enforcing the proclamation.

I was honored to attend and speak at the event hosted by the Cortland Community of Color (C4), a collaborative initiative between SUNY Cortland and Tompkins Cortland Community College led by the indomitable Katrina Hodges at the Cortland Courthouse Park. The event was held to recognize the hundreds of years of slavery that Black people in our country endured, to recognize the journey that the country has taken and to recognize the journey we still have in front of us to end the persistent structural racism and discrimination that negatively affects every single one of us. It gave us all a chance to celebrate the music and heritage and the spirit that has persisted despite persecution and abuse and to recommit ourselves as allies, regardless of race or nationality, to the fight for true inclusion and equity for all.



The Southside event held many events in one with the theme being “Freedom Then, Freedom Now.” Dr. Ken Clarke, Director of the Tompkins County Office of Human Rights captured the meaning of the day and the event the best: “One of the perennial questions with which African Americans—and the nation itself—have grappled with is what is the meaning of freedom. What did it mean on the first Juneteenth in 1865? What does it mean in 2024, in a political and cultural climate of increasing polarization, misinformation and dissension? Juneteenth can truly provide perspective on the nature of freedom.” A huge thank you to Gladys, all the amazing members of the [Human Rights Commission](#), The [Tompkins County Office of Human Rights](#), and to Southside Community Center for hosting this beautiful community event.



A historic marker - the naming of the Peter Wheeler Bridge

A particularly moving Juneteenth celebration took place in historic Ludlowville Falls, in Lansing, where I attended an event marking the naming of the State Route 34B Bridge after [Peter Wheeler](#), a man who bravely escaped the bonds of slavery in the 1800's and went on to write an [autobiography](#) about his experience under the bonds of slavery, his escape, and his journey, adventures and life into freedom.

Born in New Jersey in 1789, Peter's story serves as a testament to the resilience of African American people who had their liberties stolen from them through slavery. He was born into slavery, taken as a baby from his mother by a white family before ultimately being sold at age 11 to Gideon Morehouse, who moved him to Ludlowville. Peter went on to suffer brutal treatment of physical and emotional abuse, starvation, and neglect at the hands of Morehouse.

With aid from abolitionist neighbors Thomas and Henry Ludlow and the daughter of the man holding him in slavery, Peter escaped and went on to life as a free man, becoming a Sailor and writing a one-of-a-kind for its day autobiography that can still be found in paperback today. A proclamation was made in Peter Wheeler's honor, acknowledging the resilience of African Americans throughout history.

His narrative stands as a stark reminder of the deep-seated, insidious, and brutal history of slavery in our own communities here in Tompkins County, so everyone can remember the inhumane realities endured by thousands who suffered the loss of their liberty and fundamental human rights. His memoir is also evidence that slavery was not only a Southern aberration, but it existed in the North as well.



Firebrand Books recognized for its mark in history

I was delighted to attend a celebration of Firebrand Publishing, a nationally recognized award-winning, feminist and lesbian press that operated on the second floor of 141 The Commons from 1985-2000. The building stands as the first Ithaca landmark associated with women's and LGBTQ+ history-and the first such

landmark in Upstate New York with a primary connection to LGBTQ+ history!

Since its creation, Firebrand Books has embodied the mission of championing underrepresented voices in society. Esteemed authors such as Audre Lorde, Dorothy Allison and Sara Schulman were published by Firebrand Books. The press's contributions to literature include publications that address a wide spectrum of topics such as feminism, lesbian identity, social justice and activism.

On June 15, a permanent historic marker was installed on the Ithaca Commons, in honor of this trailblazing press. This historic marker serves as a way to honor Firebrand's headquarters for its mark on women's and LGBTQ+ history, preserving this brilliant history for all future generations of courageous trailblazers.

Photo Credit: Shira Evergreen, Uplift Ithaca



FIREBRAND BOOKS

Firebrand Books, a nationally recognized, award-winning feminist and lesbian press, founded by Nancy K. Bereano in 1984. Its offices were located on the second floor of 141 The Commons. A leader in the publishing revolution occurring during the Women in Print and LGBTQ movements of the 1970s and '80s, Firebrand published a wide variety of genres by ethnically and racially diverse authors, including Dorothy Allison, Alison Bechdel, Cheryl Clarke, Leslie Feinberg, Jewelle Gomez, Audre Lorde, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, before the changing economics of the book trade forced it to close its doors in 2000. Its many accolades included honors from the American Library Association, Lambda Literary Foundation, and recognition by the *New York Times* for three of the top 25 books influencing queer culture since WWII.

ERECTED BY FRIENDS OF FIREBRAND BOOKS

AIM Higher Funding Presser

On June 18, Senator Lea Webb and I appeared at the Cortland Fire Department to make a joint announcement that the FY 2024-2025 State Budget includes nearly \$6 million in Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) funding for Cortland and Tompkins Counties. This is an increase of more than 7 percent from last year's budget after a decade of stagnant funding. The City of Cortland will get more than \$2.2 million and the city of Ithaca will get nearly \$3 million. The language included in the budget was partly inspired by legislation A9928 that I carried with Senator Rachel May and it ensures that the foundation aid formula used to provide state funding to schools does not diminish the amount of state aid that municipalities currently receive.

New York Municipalities have waited over 15-year to receive an increase to their AIM funding, which plays a crucial role in the provision of everyday public services in our communities.

I am delighted that our communities will be able to fund these critical services and much needed updates to infrastructure.



Community Resources

Microelectronics and Nanomanufacturing Certificate Program for Veterans

Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) is partnering with Cornell University and Penn State's College of Engineering to offer a new certificate program in Microelectronics and Nanomanufacturing that will be offered for **free** for veterans and their dependents. With support of a NSF grant, this program will provide multiple industry-recognized credentials and the opportunity to meet recruiting employers. Instruction will be delivered via in person lectures on TC3's campus, with hands-on labs at Cornell's Nanoscale Facility. The microelectronics and nanomanufacturing sectors are rapidly growing, and this program represents an outstanding opportunity for veterans and their families to develop highly valuable skills aligned with emerging workforce needs. Review the [program flyer](#) for more information or contact Carrie Coates Whitmore, Director of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, at clw@tompkinscortland.edu or 607-844-6586. Application deadline is July 1, 2024.

Microelectronics and Nanomanufacturing Certificate Program

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EDUCATION AND UTILIZATION

Transitions in the Cortland office

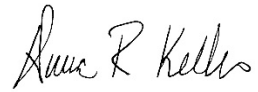
These two weeks are a time of transitioning in the Cortland district office. I want to give a hearty thank you to Carol Costell Corbin for the wonderful job she has done as Deputy Chief of Staff over the past year and a half. We will miss her, her brilliant organizational mind and love of the community. We are all so very grateful for her contributions and hard work on the team!

This Monday we welcomed Catherine Wilde to the team as Operations Manager in the Cortland office. Catherine brings to the role her past experience in the field of journalism as well as the non-profit sector and most recently, working in county government. Catherine has overseen subsidized transportation programs in Cortland so knows first-hand about the struggles many residents face in overcoming transportation barriers. She also has more than a decade of experience reporting for the Cortland Standard and looks forward to once again

serving the community she calls home. Please reach out to the Cortland office to join me in welcoming her to the team and with any concerns or issues that we can help you with!



In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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