

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

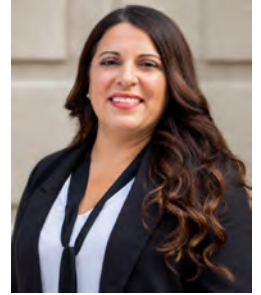
Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

2026 Midyear Update



Jenn Puja

District 5 ~ *White Plains, Scarsdale, West Harrison*
Chair, Committee on Labor



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It is an incredible honor to serve as your representative for District 5 on the Westchester County Board of Legislators. As your County Legislator, I believe public service begins with listening, collaboration, and delivering results. Since taking office, I have worked to advocate for the priorities that matter most to District 5: supporting families, strengthening neighborhoods, protecting vulnerable residents, and ensuring county government remains responsive and accountable.

I am proud to serve as Chair of the Committee on Labor, where I work to support workers, strengthen workforce opportunities, and advocate for policies that promote fairness, dignity, and economic opportunity for working families. I also serve on the Committees on Legislation; Social Services, Disabilities, and Human Rights; Seniors and Youth; and Appointments, giving me the opportunity to advocate for residents at every stage of life and across a wide range of county issues.

One of my top priorities is supporting the creation of good-paying jobs and standing up for working people in Westchester County. I was proud to help advance new apprenticeship legislation that expands pathways into skilled-trade careers by requiring apprenticeship opportunities on major county construction projects, which helps residents gain access to hands-on training and family-sustaining careers while strengthening our workforce for the future.

I was also proud to support the *Westchester County Lessor Prevailing Wage Act*, legislation that ensures workers on county-leased construction sites receive fair prevailing wages comparable to those earned on county-owned public projects—closing a longstanding gap and reinforcing Westchester's commitment to fair pay and quality work.

While I am proud of the progress we have made together, there is more work ahead. My commitment remains simple: to be accessible, responsive, and focused on improving quality of life for every resident of District 5.

This newsletter is just one way we stay connected. I regularly send out e-news which includes important information about issues affecting residents, as well as notices about events that you may want to attend. To be added to the distribution list, scan the QR code on the back of this newsletter.

If my office can ever assist you, or if you have ideas, concerns, or questions, I hope you will reach out. Your voice matters. I look forward to working together to move District 5 forward.

In Unity,

Westchester County Legislator, District 5



Women's History Month honoree Caitlin Kirklín

FIGHTING FOR AN AFFORDABLE WESTCHESTER

INVESTING IN CHILD CARE, HEALTH, AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES

The County's \$2.6 billion budget for 2026 provides critical support for Westchester residents through a broad range of social services, including childcare assistance, enhanced health programs, support for domestic violence survivors, and resources to address food insecurity. Affordable child care remains a central priority. As of May, the Child Care Scholarship Program has assisted 232 families and 301 children this year, helping parents work and pursue their education with greater stability and peace of mind.

EXPANDING HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

This year, the Board has advanced multiple affordable housing and homeownership projects across the County. Efforts include restoring 25 long-vacant units in Ossining, converting a White Plains office building into six affordable rental units, approving 100 new units for first-time homebuyers in Croton-on-Hudson, as well as nine new single-family homes in Greenburgh. These investments broaden access to affordable housing for working families and strengthen housing security through protections that will last 50 years or more.

STABILIZING HOUSING FOR RESIDENTS AND PREVENTING EVICTIONS

The Westchester County Office of Housing Counsel has become a critical lifeline for residents facing housing instability since it opened in July 2025. Since then, the program has helped prevent 282 evictions and kept 369 households out of the shelter system. The office connects income-qualifying residents facing eviction to legal rep-

resentation, trusted housing providers, and services, strengthening pathways to stable housing across the County. It was made possible by the Board's 2023 passage of the landmark *Access to Counsel Law*.

COMBATING RISING COSTS WITH PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

In May, the Board launched the Affordability and Economic Development Task Force to address financial pressures facing Westchester residents and businesses through concrete policy recommendations. The task force brings together community, business, and nonprofit experts to identify cost-of-living drivers and strategies to strengthen small businesses and expand job creation in Westchester. Growing economic uncertainty at the federal level underscored the need for local action.

STANDING AGAINST UNAFFORDABLE UTILITY RATE HIKES

Westchester County continued to press the New York State Public Service Commission to reject proposed rate increases from Con Edison and New York State Electric and Gas. In partnership with the County Executive and state and local officials, the Board advocated for residents, citing widespread alarm about soaring utility bills. The proposed increases exceed inflation and would add further financial pressure to households. This follows sustained advocacy in 2025, which included public input sessions across the County and legal participation in major New York State rate cases.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

STRENGTHENING FIREARM RISK WARNINGS

The Board passed the *Visual Gun Warning Law*, requiring firearms retailers in

Westchester County to display images depicting the risks of gun ownership alongside the written notices already mandated under a 2022 law. The labels must also be provided to anyone applying for a gun license in the County. Warnings highlight the increased risk of suicide, homicide, accidental death, and fatalities during domestic disputes that come with having a firearm in the home. They also include contact information for the County's Crisis Prevention and Response Team and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Visual images make the dangers of gun ownership harder to ignore and more likely to prompt safer decisions.

SUPPORTING SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Board funded the replacement of paratransit vehicles to ensure safe, reliable, and accessible transportation for seniors and residents with disabilities. Additional state funding expands senior nutrition programs countywide. Together, these investments strengthen essential services that support health, mobility, and independence for older adults and residents with disabilities. ■

KEEPING WESTCHESTER'S FINANCES STRONG

Westchester County again earned the highest-possible AAA bond ratings from S&P Global and Fitch Ratings. The continued confidence of these independent agencies, particularly in a challenging economic climate, reflects the Board's sound budgeting, healthy reserves, and effective long-term planning. This distinction keeps borrowing costs low and places Westchester among the highest-rated counties in the nation. ■

AROUND THE DISTRICT



1. West Harrison Fire Department Installation
2. St. Anthony's Blue Mass, West Harrison
3. Arbor Day in White Plains
4. Ice Cream Social's 5th Anniversary, White Plains
5. Backpack Drive at Salvation Army White Plains Community Center
6. Generations of Greatness Event at Scarsdale Public Library
7. White Plains Juneteenth Parade and Festival
8. Scarsdale's STS Regeneron Finalists
9. Scarsdale Forum Winterfest 2026
10. Ribbon-Cutting for Destination Scarsdale and Farmers Market



Westchester County Legislator

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PUTTING WORKERS FIRST

OPENING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND STRENGTHENING OUR WORKFORCE

Legislators unanimously passed a law in April creating a direct pathway for Westchester residents to enter skilled trade careers that offer higher wages, healthcare, and pensions. The *Mandating Apprenticeships in County Projects Law* requires contractors bidding on large County construction projects to offer New York State-registered apprenticeship programs in the building trades. Labor leaders praised the measure as a meaningful investment in workforce development. They called apprenticeships a proven route to the middle class that does not require a college degree.

As Chair of the Board's Labor Committee, I believe Westchester puts workers first. This apprenticeship bill reflects years of advocacy and partnership. I've seen firsthand how apprenticeships open doors to good-paying union jobs and



Announcing passage of the
Mandating Apprenticeships in County Projects Law

strengthen our workforce. Apprenticeships open doors by combining hands-on experience with lifelong learning and no college debt!

ENSURING FAIR WAGES FOR ALL COUNTY CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

In May, the Board unanimously passed a measure guaranteeing that all workers on County construction projects receive standard union wages. The new law covers job sites on property Westchester County leases but does not own. Previously, a gap in state law left workers on

those sites without fair wage protections, even when the work directly supported County operations. The *Westchester County Lessor Prevailing Wage Act* applies to long-term lease agreements and larger construction projects, requiring contractors and subcontractors to pay prevailing wages. The Board and labor leaders called it a win for working families, making clear that County dollars should always uphold values of dignity and fair pay.

As Labor Committee Chair, union member and County Legislator I know how critical prevailing wages are to protecting workers and ensuring safe, high-quality construction. This legislation closes a longstanding gap by requiring fair wages on significant County-leased projects. When economic development truly benefits workers, their families, and the communities they call home, what results is a stronger workforce and a stronger Westchester. ■