

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

2026 Midyear Update



Colin Smith

District 1 ~ *Cortlandt, Peekskill, Yorktown*
Chair, Committee on Legislation



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As we come to the end of the summer, I am proud to reflect upon the progress we have made this year and share with you some of the work accomplished by the Westchester County Board of Legislators. Our commitment has remained steadfast: work to make Westchester safer, stronger, and more affordable for every resident. That work has required us to confront the immediate pressures facing our neighbors while also preparing for the challenges that will shape the County we leave to the next generation.

During the past year, the Board adopted a County budget that protects essential services while continuing critical investments in public safety, roads and infrastructure, affordable housing, parks, youth programs, and services for seniors and families. We also advanced measures designed to strengthen our workforce and expand access to good-paying careers. I was especially proud to sponsor Westchester County's apprenticeship law, which connects major County construction contracts with state-registered apprenticeship programs and creates new opportunities for workers to learn skilled trades while earning a living. We also passed legislation requiring visual gun safety warnings at firearm retailers and for license applicants. These measures reflect a simple principle: county government should respond to the conditions people actually face and use every lawful tool available to protect lives, expand opportunity, and strengthen our communities.

But progress cannot be measured only by the programs we fund or the laws we pass. It must also be measured by whether people can afford to remain in the communities they have helped build. The rising cost of housing, food, utilities, transportation, childcare, healthcare, and nearly every other necessity continues to place enormous pressure upon working families, seniors, young people, businesses, and nonprofit organizations throughout Westchester. This is why I am honored that Chairman Vedat Gashi appointed me to serve as chair of the Affordability and Economic Development Task Force. (Read more about the task force on page 2.)

In the coming year, I look forward to seeing many of you at community events, neighborhood meetings, and local gatherings in District 1. Meeting directly with residents—and hearing your concerns, ideas, and experiences—remains one of the most rewarding parts of serving as your County Legislator. I want to hear from you. Government works best when elected officials remain close to the people they serve and when residents know their concerns will receive more than a polite acknowledgment.

My commitment is to remain accessible, responsive, and present. We may not agree upon every issue, but you will always know where I stand, and the door to my office will always remain open. Together, we can continue making District 1 a place where families can remain, young people can build a future, seniors can live with security and dignity, businesses can succeed, and every resident has a meaningful opportunity to build a better life.

Sincerely,

Colin J. Smith



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.



Speaking at the signing of the *Mandating Apprenticeships in County Project Law*

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. ■

In the District and at the Board



Speaking at a community event in White Plains and connecting with local residents and leaders



Marking the 200th anniversary of the Columbian Engine Company with a special proclamation



Celebrating Alicia Attanasio's retirement from the Westchester County Probation Department



Recognizing Lieutenant Khalia M. Carter with a proclamation for her service and commitment



Joining fellow members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators to present the apprenticeship bill and support new opportunities for the workforce



Taking part in the Ward House Lenape event

Thriving District 1 Communities

Here in District 1, our communities continue to grow, evolve, and welcome new businesses that reflect their culture, entrepreneurial spirit, and diversity. Locally owned restaurants, specialty shops, fitness studios, and neighborhood services are creating jobs, expanding consumer choice, and strengthening our local economy. Peekskill remains one of Westchester County's great success stories. Its historic neighborhoods, thriving downtown, beautiful waterfront, and growing arts community continue to attract families, entrepreneurs, and visitors from across the region. The Towns of Cortlandt and Yorktown likewise remain strong and desirable communities, sustained by active residents, dedicated local organizations, and businesses that invest in the people they serve. As your County Legislator, I will continue advocating for



Peekskill St. Patrick's Day Parade

responsible economic development and ensuring that every part of District 1 has a strong voice in County government.

Launching the Affordability and Economic Development Task Force

Affordability is not one problem with one solution. It determines whether families can remain in Westchester, whether workers can build stable and rewarding lives here, whether small businesses can grow and create jobs, and whether the organizations serving our communities can continue their vital work. Our approach will be straightforward: listen to those confronting these pressures; assess



Affordability and Economic Development Task Force meeting

the principal cost drivers, existing resources, and opportunities for collaboration; and act by developing practical legislative and policy recommendations. We will build upon the considerable work already completed by the County, our municipalities, and community partners rather than beginning again from scratch.

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 representation, 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*.

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.



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RESULTS DELIVERED FOR WESTCHESTER IN 2025

COMBATING AI-GENERATED DEEPFAKES: Passed a law prohibiting digitally deceptive AI-generated material used to harm, defraud, or exploit residents.

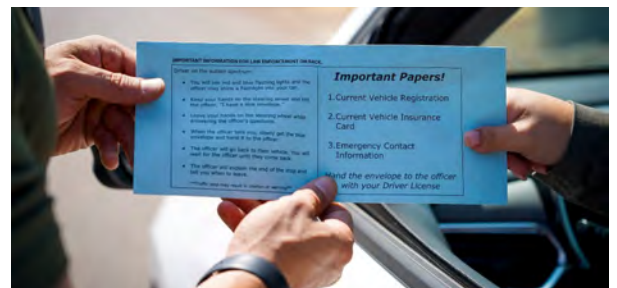
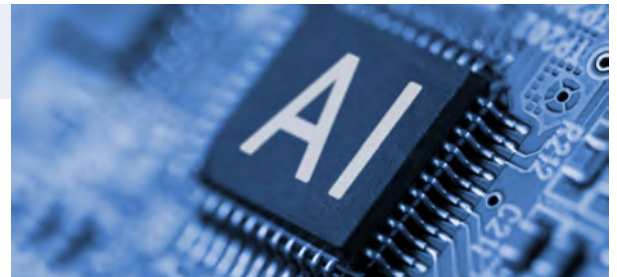
IMPROVING TRAFFIC STOP SAFETY: Launched the Blue Envelope Program countywide to improve interactions between law enforcement and drivers with autism and other disabilities during traffic stops.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM SCAMS AND PREDATORS: Strengthened protections against deed theft, AI fraud, subscription traps, hidden fees, and data breaches through updated enforcement tools.

PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATHS: Established a countywide Domestic Violence High Risk Team to identify victims in extreme danger and coordinate life-saving interventions.

ENSURING EQUAL CHANGING ACCESS FOR ALL FAMILIES (DIAPRS Act): Required diaper-changing stations in County parks and buildings to ensure equitable access for caregivers.

SAFEGUARDING FAMILIES THROUGH FASTER ALLERGY RESPONSE (GIOVANNI CIPRIANO Act): Equipped County police with EpiPens and training to respond to severe allergic reactions and save lives.



**THE WORK CONTINUES! SEE HOW YOUR BOARD OF LEGISLATORS IS FIGHTING FOR
AFFORDABLE LIVING, WORKING FAMILIES, AND SAFER COMMUNITIES.**