



Westchester County Legislator COLIN D. SMITH *Proudly Serving the 1st District*



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HONORING AYANNA DAVIS

During Autism Awareness Month in April, I had the distinct honor of presenting a proclamation to Ayanna Davis in recognition for her extraordinary dedication and service to our community. Ayanna's story is both powerful and uplifting. Despite facing several serious health challenges, she continues to radiate positivity and strength — a testament to her resilience. Ayanna has made a meaningful impact by using her voice and platforms to raise awareness about autism, sharing her personal experiences and educating others through the children's books she has authored. She also designs clothing for children, combining creativity with advocacy. In addition, Ayanna is a passionate supporter of the LGBTQ+ community and has been a steadfast advocate for inclusion and equity



for many years. Thank you, Ayanna Davis, for your tireless efforts and for being a shining light in our community. Your work inspires us all.

HONORING JUSTIN WINGENROTH



During June's LGBTQ+ Pride Month observance, I presented Justin Wingenroth with a proclamation celebrating his dedication to advancing equality and inclusion. As founder and director of the Dance Conservatory, he has shown unwavering commitment to our community, teaching students of all ages in Peekskill, Yorktown, and into Croton and beyond. He plays a vital role in the arts and education landscape and uplifts others through creative expression. His contributions have already earned him well-deserved recognition, and this is just the beginning. It is an honor to highlight leaders like Justin, whose passion makes our district stronger and more inclusive.

HONORING SCARLETT ANTONIA

Antonia Arts proudly celebrated 25 years of enriching the Peekskill community and surrounding areas through the arts. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Scarlett Antonia for her unwavering dedication and service mentoring countless students and encouraging them to pursue their dreams in the arts. A highlight of her work is the annual Oz Wiz Kid Fair, a beloved tradition filled with joy, games, and performances for children, along with local vendors and activities for adults. Scarlett has also played a vital role in developing drama programs at Peekskill High School and other schools, helping young people find their voice and express themselves creatively. Thank you, Scarlett, for your passion and commitment to nurturing the next generation of artists and dreamers.



Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2025 Newsletter



Colin D. Smith

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



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

As we transition from summer and approach the new school year, I am pleased to share recent developments from the Westchester County Board of Legislators. Our dedication to enhancing safety and affordability throughout the County remains unwavering. As Chair of the Legislation Committee, I am proud to highlight several key accomplishments from 2025, notably the bipartisan Consumer Protection Bill and the successful implementation of the Blue Envelope Program.

In April, in partnership with County Executive Ken Jenkins, the Board launched the Blue Envelope Program to promote safer interactions between law enforcement and drivers with autism and other disabilities during traffic stops. Participants receive a distinctive blue envelope containing their driver's license, registration, and insurance information. This envelope serves as a discreet signal to officers that communication accommodations may be necessary and includes guidance for both drivers and officers to facilitate respectful, calm interactions. Protecting our most vulnerable residents remains a priority, and this initiative represents an important step forward for community safety.

As co-sponsor of the Consumer Protection Bill, I'm proud to announce that this important legislation has been signed into law. The bill strengthens protections for Westchester residents and small businesses against evolving scams and unfair practices, including AI-driven fraud and deceptive subscription models. This new local law delivers updated consumer rights to prevent exploitation.

Looking ahead to the colder months, a top priority is ensuring that Con Edison does not impose excessive rate increases on Westchester's homeowners and renters. In March, the Board of Legislators, alongside County Executive Jenkins, took a firm stance against Con Edison's proposed double-digit rate hikes that would increase residential bills an average of 11.4% for electricity and 13.3% for gas by 2026. This would place undue financial strain on working families, seniors, and small businesses. By becoming a party in the rate case before the New York State Public Service Commission, the County is demanding greater transparency and accountability. We continue advocating vigorously at hearings and have hosted Public Input Sessions across the County throughout the summer.

District 1 continues to thrive and diversify, welcoming new businesses that reflect the vibrancy of our community. This year, I allocated over \$1 million in funding to support local community organizations, recognizing their vital role in strengthening neighborhood connections. I encourage you to share your thoughts, suggestions, or concerns as we work together to maintain and improve the quality of life in our communities.

Sincerely,

Colin D. Smith

2025 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

PROTECTING OUR SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

COMBATING AI-GENERATED DEEPFAKES

February 2025. Imagine an elderly neighbor answers a frantic call from their “grandchild” begging for emergency money. They send the funds immediately, only to discover later they’d been targeted by scammers using AI to perfectly mimic their grandchild’s voice.

To better protect residents against this and other increasingly common fraud tactics, the Board passed an innovative local law prohibiting the distribution of digitally deceptive material with the intent to harm.

The measure strengthens the County’s ability to keep residents free from harassment, extortion, identity theft and sexual exploitation using content created with AI. Specifically, the use of images, audio and videos created with AI and without consent, including those mimicking a person’s voice, are now considered a crime.

ENHANCING OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

The Board has taken practical steps to improve residents’ daily lives during difficult times. From easing public transit commutes to strengthening essential infrastructure, we are working to make life healthier and more manageable for people across Westchester.

MAKING PUBLIC TRANSIT EASIER AND MORE CONVENIENT

May 2025. The Board took action to upgrade Westchester County’s Bee-Line buses with both contactless payment technology and cash fareboxes. This dual system preserves free transfers between Bee-Line and MTA subways and busses, benefiting approximately 6 million annual passengers. The modernization demonstrates the Board’s commitment to enhancing public transportation for Westchester residents. With this approval, the Board consolidated old and new funding into a single \$16.25 million bond, representing an increase of \$12.75 million.



PROTECTING AND SUPPORTING FIRST RESPONDERS

The Board passed strategic legislation addressing complex hazards emergency responders face from evolving technology and extreme weather events. These initiatives strengthen our volunteer service networks—the backbone of Westchester’s emergency response infrastructure. We honor service in all forms, recognizing that whether in uniform yesterday or today, those who stand ready to protect our community deserve our unwavering commitment and support.

EXPANDING TAX RELIEF FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND AMBULANCE CORPS MEMBERS

April 2025. To better support our local heroes, the Board expanded property tax benefits for volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel. Now, all volunteers, regardless of where they serve in Westchester,

receive a 10% County property tax break. Previously, only volunteers serving in their home communities benefited from this exemption. The Board’s legislation recognizes the substantial taxpayer savings provided by volunteer emergency responders while strengthening essential public safety functions throughout the county.

HONORING VETERANS WITH FREE COUNTY PARK PASSES

January 2025. To honor the service and sacrifice of U.S. military veterans, the Board of Legislators approved an Act providing free County park passes to all veterans living in Westchester. This Board-led initiative extends previous benefits that covered only active duty and disabled veterans, now reaching approximately 100,000 local veterans. The Act specifically aims to help senior veterans overcome financial barriers to enjoying natural spaces while promoting health, wellness, and community engagement.

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DISTRICT 1 HIGHLIGHTS



PEEKSKILL LAUNCHES 24/7 FOOD SCRAP RECYCLING PROGRAM: The City of Peekskill, in collaboration with Westchester County, launched its first-ever 24/7 food scrap composting site, located on South Street in April. This marks a significant step in the city’s commitment to sustainability, aligning with broader efforts across Westchester County to promote environmentally friendly practices.

WESTCHESTER COUNTY AIRPORT TOUR: In May, I had the privilege of touring the Westchester County Airport. It was a fascinating experience to see the control towers up close and witness firsthand how the dedicated professionals behind the scenes manage air traffic and airport operations. We also had the opportunity to visit the communications room, where we learned that the team is currently understaffed and actively seeking qualified individuals to join their efforts. I’m incredibly grateful to all the staff who work tirelessly every day to ensure the airport remains a safe and efficient travel hub for our community.

AWARDS CEREMONY AND MEMORIAL SERVICE: Earlier this year, I had the honor of attending the Awards Ceremony and Memorial Service recognizing police officers from across the County, including several outstanding officers from District 1. Listening to their Chiefs share the challenges these officers face on the job was both eye-opening and deeply moving. The awards were truly well-deserved, highlighting the bravery, dedication, and selflessness these individuals show every



day in service to our communities. Congratulations to all the honorees—and to those we’ve lost, we will never forget your sacrifice. Thank you all for your unwavering commitment to protecting others.

BOCES ART SHOW: I had the privilege of attending the BOCES Art Show Tour, which made an

memorable return as a three-day event showcasing over 500 pieces of student artwork—all beautifully displayed in the gymnasium. The artwork represented students ranging in age from 5 to 21, each piece telling a unique story. It was touching to witness the incredible creativity and resilience of these young artists—some of whom face significant physical challenges, including those who are unable to use their hands or are undergoing



physical and occupational therapy. Through art, they find a powerful way to connect, express themselves, and inspire others.

2025 NYS ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP COMPETITION: In the middle of spring, attending the 2025 NYS Annual Apprenticeship Competition for Local 21 Plumbers and Steamfitters proved truly impressive.

I witnessed the focus, skill, and dedication of these apprentices working on projects ranging from welding to constructing boilers for both commercial and residential applications. Apprenticeship programs like this one highlight the incredible opportunities available through the trades and unions—for those who are

eager to learn, work, and build a fulfilling career. If you’re interested in exploring these paths, don’t hesitate to reach out to your local officials. We’re here to help connect you!

