



Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season and were able to enjoy some downtime before the start of 2024.

December was a busy month, although the holiday spirit certainly found its way into our office.

First of all, a huge thank you to everyone who supported our toy drive for Hour Children, our food drive for the Community Center of Northern Westchester, and to everyone who donated a toy or gift card to Lifting Up Westchester. This was our third year of doing a holiday drive, and we are always so grateful for the wonderful generosity of the community.



My office also had a wonderful time celebrating the holidays with a joint team lunch with the Office of Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg. We had a very productive year partnering with the Assemblywoman and her staff on the [Housing Summit](#) and other initiatives, and we look forward to continuing our work together in 2024.



Now that January is upon us, members of the Legislature head back to Albany beginning this Wednesday. I am looking forward to a productive session, where I will be focusing my legislative efforts on housing, people with disabilities, veterans, and increased equity for the LGBTQ+ community (*see below*).

In the meantime, Governor Hochul is set to deliver her State of the State address next week, followed by the presentation of her proposed 2024-25 budget, which is to be delivered to the Legislature on or before January 16. After that, the legislature will begin its role in the budget process, delving into the proposed budget's details and holding hearings with the Executive and the public. The goal is to pass a budget by the end of March, with the 2025 fiscal year beginning April 1, 2024.

Bills Acted Upon in the Closing Days of 2023

There were 896 bills that the Legislature passed in 2023, each of which requires the review of the Governor's staff. It's a painstaking process and historically Governors in New York take time for their staff to review the legislation before officially requesting it from the Legislature, as action must then be taken within 10 days (not counting Sundays). The result is that many bills are acted upon in the closing days of the year.

I was pleased that the Governor signed an important environmental bill that I cosponsored, The Birds and the Bees Protection Act, to limit the use of the pesticide neonics. The pesticide has played a significant role in large losses of honeybees and wild bees, both critical as pollinators to food production. The pesticide also is linked to adverse health impacts on humans. New York needs to protect its agricultural community and protect human health by restricting these neurotoxins, especially given that safe and effective alternatives are available.

I was disappointed that the Governor signed legislation to move the date of most County and town elections to even-numbered years, effective in 2025.* I did not support the measure out of concern that attention to federal and state elections would overshadow local elections and issues. It now is incumbent on all elected officials to ensure that local issues are not forgotten during the election season.

** Under the new election schedule, which takes effect on January 1, 2025, those who run in 2025 with a two-year term will run again in 2026; those with a four-year term will run in 2028.*

My 2023 Legislation Signed into Law

I am gratified that the Governor signed into law 12 of the 14 bills that I sponsored and were passed by the Legislature in 2023. These include the following:

[A0266A](#) requires state agencies to conform their websites to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium for accessibility.

[A00343](#) requires the Public Service Commission to issue regulations providing that utility companies, such as Con Edison and NYSEG, provide vine trimming for the maintenance of utility poles for the purpose of preventing disruption in service or personal injury.

[A00345C](#) requires greater transparency in long term care insurance by requiring the superintendent of the Department of Financial Services to make public any rate filing or application submitted by long term care insurance carriers and that notices be provided to policyholders on premium rate increases.

[A00398A](#) requires employers who contribute to the state unemployment fund to inform their employees of their right to file for unemployment benefits at the time of being laid off, a reduction in hours, or an interruption in employment resulting in total or partial unemployment.

[A06291A](#) updates the New York State Fire Code by requiring the issuance of regulations to establish that owners of high-rise buildings (buildings over 75' in height) provide an emergency evacuation plan for people with disabilities.

[A06840](#) increases employment opportunities in state agencies for people with disabilities and disabled veterans by providing that the 1,700 civil service positions to be filled by any such individuals may be filled by both full-time or part-time workers.

[A5806](#) expands the permitted use of proceeds from the lease of lands located at SUNY Purchase to support current full-time faculty positions.

[A5814A](#) designates a portion of Route 121 in Cross River as the “John Jay High School Memorial Highway” in remembrance of JJHS alumni who had died during their armed forces service. The memorial was first proposed by Grant Vialardi, then a senior at JJHS, in cooperation with the Lewisboro Veterans Advisory Committee.

There were two of my bills that the Governor did not sign into law. One bill would authorize local governments, which have adopted a freshwater wetlands law pursuant to the NYS Environmental Conservation Law, to adopt a local law prohibiting the application of pesticides in wetlands within their borders. The second bill would have provided for the extension of funding for certain facilities to provide rehabilitative care to medically fragile children after they reach the age of 21.

I have not given up on either and will work with the Executive to find common ground and a path forward.

Looking Ahead... My 2024 Legislation

Turning to the 2024 session, I will be pressing ahead with legislation in several areas. Through my Assembly committee work, and also working in conjunction with my advisory committees, I will be advancing or introducing legislation or policy changes to:

- Provide more flexibility for housing for people with disabilities
- Assist veterans, particularly in dealing with the NYS Department of Veterans' Services
- Provide greater equity to the LGBTQ+ community
- As a member of the Housing Committee – and as I have mentioned in previous newsletters – Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg and I will be introducing legislation to stimulate housing growth, with an emphasis on incentives for localities to assess housing needs, consider

comprehensive plan updates, and adopt housing growth plans. Importantly, the legislation will not circumvent or upend in any way local zoning or environmental review, nor would it set quotas – rather it would provide that localities would need to adopt housing plans as they reasonably determine. None of this will happen without significant state support.

- As a member of the Banks Committee, I am considering legislation to provide greater transparency and accountability in the cryptocurrency market

I also am hopeful that, working with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Executive, we can find common ground to further protect local wetlands from pesticides.

Minimum Wage Raised to \$16/hr in Westchester

Despite inflation easing down from pandemic highs, many New Yorkers continue to struggle to make ends meet for themselves and their families. Many downstate communities, including Westchester, are battling high costs of living. Recognizing this, the 2023-24 budget included a raise in the minimum wage to \$16 in Long Island, New York City, and Westchester, beginning January 1, 2024.



On Jan. 1, 2024 the minimum wage for New York City, Long Island and Westchester County will be **\$16 an hour**.

In 2025 and 2026, the minimum wage will increase by an additional 50 cents each year, after which the state's minimum wage will increase at a rate determined by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for the Northeast Region. **By indexing the minimum wage to inflation, we are ensuring that our workers with lower wages can afford to purchase necessities**, such as food, housing, and healthcare.

This is not just a measure to increase economic equality but will also help address gender and racial inequities as a disproportionate number of women and minorities have minimum-wage jobs.

Assembly Hearing on Housing Needs Across New York State

On December 19, as a member of the NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Housing, I participated in a public hearing in lower Manhattan – held with the NYS Assembly Cities Committee – to consider measures to address the state’s dire need for affordable housing. Witnesses included representatives from the NYC government, community advocates, and affordable housing agencies.



Among the measures proposed were:

- Tax incentives
- Incentives to spur conversion of office space to affordable housing
- State legislation to allow NYC to assist tenants in illegal basement apartments and to facilitate owners trying to legalize basement apartments
- Encouraging the development of middle-income cooperative housing
- Requiring municipalities to take action to encourage housing development - not every community has to do the same thing, but they must do something
- Infrastructure funding, especially for roads and wastewater treatment
- Considering a regional approach, bringing in county government to assist in assessing housing needs for each of its municipalities and helping to develop plans to meet those needs
- Transit-oriented development, accessory dwelling units, and assistance to tenants who wish to purchase the buildings in which they reside

As discussed above, increasing housing stock in New York – particularly affordable housing – is one of my highest priorities. At the Housing Summit that Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg and I held in October, it became more clear than ever to me that the conversation among developers, housing advocates, planners, and elected officials must occur on a statewide basis and that a successful statewide policy will require compromise from all sides (as well as a significant financial commitment from New York State).

I am pleased this hearing took place and will be working hard with Assemblywoman Levenberg and my colleagues to make real progress this session on what I consider to be one of our state's greatest challenges.

Public Hearing on the Healthcare Workforce

On December 19, as a member of the NYS Assembly Standing Committee on People with Disabilities, I participated in a public hearing at Hunter College in Manhattan to examine the status of the healthcare workforce in the state.

It is estimated that employment in the healthcare sector makes up 14% of employment in New York, or about 1.2 million workers in hospitals, ambulatory care settings, nursing homes, and home health care. **While employment in this sector is expected to grow at a faster-than-average pace than other sectors of the economy, there are shortages in key positions including mental health and services for people with disabilities.** These shortages have led to unmet needs, including for those with mental health conditions and those with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities.

Joining the committee on which I serve were members of the Assembly Standing Committees on Health, Mental Health, Higher Education, and Labor, for the purpose of considering possible legislative and regulatory measures that would help reduce the shortages.

Testimony was submitted from a broad range of witnesses, including healthcare associations, hospital administrators, the SUNY and CUNY systems, union leaders, physicians, nurses, and others in the healthcare workforce. Several recommendations are of particular concern to people with disabilities, including:

- Concerns regarding civil service testing, including tests not being available and provisional employees having to take tests that may not be in the area of their employment
 - Increasing wages for Direct Service Providers (DSPs) for people with disabilities, to eliminate the disparity between DSPs under the state and those through nonprofits
 - Encouraging the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities to secure federal authorization to allow community classes to be permitted under self-direction budgets
-

As always, **please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions or if there is any assistance we can provide.** You can always reach me at burdickc@nyassembly.gov or by calling (914) 244-4450. My staff and I are always ready to help. Please also follow me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) for continued up-to-date information.

Miss any of our previous newsletters? You can [find them here](#).

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Burdick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DISTRICT OFFICE

100 South Bedford Road
Suite 150
Mount Kisco, NY 10549
914-244-4450

ALBANY OFFICE

LOB 417
Albany, NY 12248
518-455-5397

Assembly District 93 | burdickc@nyassembly.gov