



Assemblyman

Steve Otis



Legislative Update

September 2018

Dear Friends,

It is a privilege to serve as your representative in the New York State Assembly. I am writing to share legislative highlights with you from the past year. Each year, I look for issues I can focus on to make a difference for our schools, local governments, not-for-profits, consumers, and taxpayers in Westchester and throughout the state. I am pleased to report that 2018 has been another productive year.

One highlight was passage of legislation I sponsored to provide parents and families more accurate information about in-home child care providers. The bill arose out of the trial in Manhattan this spring of a nanny who murdered two young children under her care. The case revealed a serious gap in state law.

In April, the Governor signed into law a bill I sponsored to assist in the solving of missing persons cases. I hope you will read the article about the bill in this newsletter.

I also have remained focused on the Clean Water Grant Program I helped create in 2015. The program has funded projects in more than 300 communities statewide totaling over \$500 million in grants with a new round of grants available again this year.

Increased funding for school districts achieved this year is another way state assistance can lessen the burden of property taxes. As a former Mayor, I work regularly with school district officials and local governments on a variety of issues where I can provide support.

Ideas for new laws often come from the experiences we all have as consumers and residents. An issue you are facing may become the impetus for changes in the law and I would be glad to hear from you. Please call my District Office at 914-939-7028 if I may be of any assistance.

Warm regards,

Steven Otis
State Assemblyman

Success of Clean Water Grant Program Continues Into Fourth Year

Local governments will have another historic opportunity to fund safe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects in 2018. This year \$275 million will be available under the water grant program, which I helped create with the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015. The program was greatly expanded and extended under the Governor's unprecedented \$2.5 billion multi-year Clean Water program that was passed in 2017.

In 2017, we added an intermunicipal grant component to encourage local governments to work together on joint projects that benefit their respective communities. Last year, New Rochelle, Larchmont, the Town of Mamaroneck, and Pelham were awarded \$5.7 million for their joint proposal.

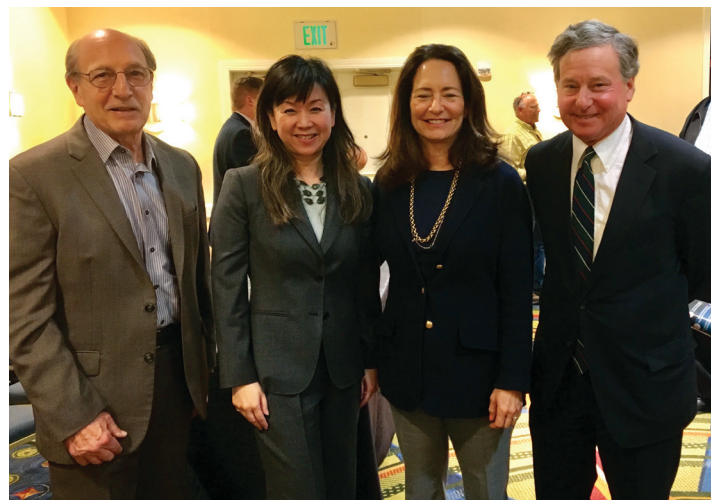
This water grant program has helped spur thousands of construction jobs throughout New York State, while ensuring that New York's water is preserved and protected and our environmental standards are met for future generations. The New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), which administers the program, has awarded grants to more than 300 communities statewide totaling over \$500 million to improve water quality.

I work closely with our partners at NYS EFC, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Governor's office in encouraging local governments to apply and accelerate their clean water projects. Towards that end, I have sponsored annual workshops to help Westchester communities apply for these funds.

This year the workshop was attended by more than 75 local officials and was co-sponsored with the Westchester Hudson Construction Industry Council (CIC). CIC has been a key advocate for the program from the beginning. The meeting featured presentations from EFC President and CEO Sabrina Ty and her senior staff and

provided an opportunity for local governments to receive pertinent information and ask questions on the grant application process, which is in its fourth year.

Through the Governor's support for the program, stable funding is assured through 2022 with grants to local governments totaling \$1.8 billion by that year. Every dollar going to a local government through these grants is funding that would have been borne by local property taxpayers.



Speakers at the annual Clean Water Grant workshop for local governments in April included Ross Pepe, President of the Construction Industry Council (CIC), Sabrina Ty, President and CEO of the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation, Nancy Seligson, Town Supervisor, Town of Mamaroneck and Assemblyman Otis.

Otis Legislation to Protect Children from Fraudulent Child Care Credentials Signed Into Law

Lulu and Leo's Law criminalizes the misrepresentation of a caregiver's experiences and qualifications

One of my priorities for the 2018 Legislative Session was to win passage of legislation to better protect children and provide greater assurance to parents seeking at-home child care. The bill, known as Lulu and Leo's Law, establishes the crime of misrepresentation by or on behalf of a caregiver. The legislation, (A.11125-A/S.9070-A), was signed into law by the Governor in August.

Without this change, there was no legal duty for people to be accurate when presenting credentials or references to be hired as an at-home caregiver. This was a serious gap in the law, given the fact that New York law already prohibited making misrepresentations of an applicant's credentials as an employee or volunteer at a child-care facility a crime, but not for in-home care.

The legislation was named for Lulu and Leo Krim who were murdered in 2012 at the hands of their caregiver who had no previous experience caring for children. The case highlighted the need for greater assurance of accuracy regarding persons applying for caregiver positions in the home. Lulu and Leo's caregiver was hired following a fabricated reference claiming previous work as a nanny when she had never held such a position. Although the individual providing the reference did not have children at the time, she claimed that she did. At the trial this spring, the caregiver was convicted and sentenced to life without parole.

This law defines a "caregiver" as someone hired to provide at least fifteen hours of in-home care per week, with the exception

of those entities licensed under the social services law. Misrepresentations would constitute a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to six months imprisonment.

I worked closely with Kevin Krim, the father of Lulu and Leo, in the writing and strategy for passing this legislation. Mr. Krim and his wife, Marina, have selflessly sought this change in law to protect other families from the horrible tragedy they experienced.

This legislation would help give parents and guardians a greater level of comfort when using personal references and testaments of experience in the hiring of caregivers and prevent future tragedies. I also worked with Senator Andrew Lanza of Staten Island who sponsored the proposal in the State Senate.

Twenty years ago, when I served as Counsel and Chief of Staff to State Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, I worked on a law adopted that year that gave parents the ability to obtain criminal background checks of prospective caregivers for children in the home. That law followed another tragedy, the murder of an infant in Rye.

Not every crime highlights ways state law can be changed to make children safer. However when changes are needed, the real heroes are the family members who have suffered great loss but remain determined to help others through their advocacy.



Assemblyman Otis joined elected officials and LMCTV supporters to celebrate the ribbon-cutting at LMCTV's new studio production and editing space at the Mamaroneck Town Center. LMCTV's strong board of directors and staff produce extensive community programming for the Town and Village of Mamaroneck and the Village of Larchmont. LMCTV was founded in 1983 and is a good example of a successful shared service being provided on the Sound Shore.

Increased State Aid to School Districts and Library Funding

As a member of both the Assembly Committees on Education and Libraries, I help these institutions receive additional state assistance to address long-term issues they face in providing services to our communities.

The 2018-19 State Budget included over \$26 billion in state funding to school districts, an almost one billion dollar increase. Foundation Aid, a key component of the education aid formula, went up \$619 million. Every school district on the Sound Shore received an increase in the budget enacted by the Legislature and the Governor, almost double what was proposed in January.

In my annual discussions with local school officials, teachers and parents, I learn about their particular needs and concerns in the state budget and make recommendations to address those issues. This year was no different. Through my efforts, and with your input, Westchester schools received \$41.6 million in additional state aid. I will continue to work to reduce the overreliance on state tests, which reduce classroom time and are seen as less valu-

able than local measures by teachers, parents and administrators.

Public libraries play a vital role in each of our communities. This year we had a significant \$10 million increase in the library construction grant program bringing the statewide total to \$34 million. This is a key program utilized by many Westchester libraries to help fund construction or renovation projects.

I am happy to report that the New Rochelle Public Library will be receiving \$276,363 from the 2017 round of construction grants. The grant will be used to expand the library's entryway to include an ADA compliant circulation desk, self-checkout kiosks, and an updated security system to make the library more accessible and welcoming.

We also increased library operating aid by \$1 million. These increases followed hearings held by the Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology, which I have served on since joining the Assembly.

Better Tools to Solve Missing Persons Cases

This session I sponsored another new law to expand our tools for solving missing persons cases. The bills I have passed on this issue have all increased the utilization of the National Missing and Unidentified Remains System (NamUs), a federal Department of Justice database, to assist families and law enforcement in finding missing persons.

The 2018 legislation improves coordination between NamUs and state and local agencies for receiving information on missing person cases. By expanding the reporting requirements to cover all missing persons cases, we will help families and law enforcement officials in their search for missing relatives. Unlike other federal databases, the information stored in NamUs can be accessed directly by family members and the public, not just law enforcement agencies.

The original legislation I sponsored and that was signed into law in 2016 required reports of unidentified remains to be reported to NamUs. One month after that bill was signed into law, the remains of a missing person in Erie County were identified, bringing closure to his family. This year's legislation was signed into law by the Governor in April.

The importance of NamUs and the potential to help with missing persons issues were brought to my attention by Jan Burke, the critically acclaimed mystery author and founder of the not-for-profit Crime Lab Project, who has become an advocate for missing persons and police forensic issues after researching these subjects for her books.



Assemblyman Otis organized a workshop for the 2018 SOMOS Conference of the legislature's Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force. The panel focused on the unique issues and challenges facing the Hispanic community in upstate, suburban and rural areas.

Pictured are (front, L-R) Assemblyman Phil Ramos (Suffolk County), Assemblyman Otis, Jirandy Martinez, Executive Director of the Community Resource Center, Rossana Rosado, NYS Secretary of State, Esmeralda Hoscoy, Regional Supervisor for Catholic Charities Community Services, (back, L-R) Eugenio Russi, Executive Director of Hispanic United of Buffalo, Sarah Rogerson, Associate Professor, Albany Law School, Dan Irizarry, Chair, Capital District Latinos.

Rockefeller Award for Work on Clean Water

Earlier this year, I was honored to be recognized by the New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) with their Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for my work on clean water infrastructure issues. NYWEA is the organization of water quality management professionals who operate water agencies across the state. They are key partners in advocating for clean water policies. I appreciate the important role they play, and the recognition they have given to my work.



Assemblyman Steven Otis with Patricia Cerro-Reehil, Executive Director of the New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA).

College Internships Available

Legislative internships are available to college students in my District and Albany offices. These part-time internships focus on legislative research, analysis of state issues, correspondence and assisting constituents with problems they may be having with governmental agencies.

If you are interested in applying for the fall academic term or for spring or summer 2019, please send a cover letter and resume to me at otiss@nyassembly.gov. For more information, contact my District Office at (914) 939-7028.

In addition to these opportunities, the Assembly offers a full semester internship program in Albany for the spring term (January through June). This internship includes full-time assignment to an Assembly office, classes on site and a full semester's credit for undergraduates. More information on this full-time program, including the upcoming application deadlines, can be found at www.nyassembly.gov/internship.

NYS Thruway Authority Last Mile Information

The Thruway Authority is about to undertake the large and necessary "Last Mile" project to address safety issues at the I-95/I-287 merge to the Connecticut border. The Thruway Authority is making available multiple ways residents can get updated information, travel advisories and navigation assistance. To address any questions or concerns you may have, please visit the New York State Thruway's Last Mile website at www.thruway.ny.gov/oursystem/last-mile or call their Public Information Office at (518) 471-5300 or email I95Lastmileproject@thruway.ny.gov. As always, my office is also available to help with any concerns.

Working with Local Governments

Every year a major part of my work is to assist local governments with issues they are tackling, support local officials in grant opportunities, win passage of needed legislation, and serve as both a resource and source of information.

This year I sponsored legislation requested by 14 Westchester communities seeking authority to fund part of their water infrastructure projects based on water usage. This legislation simplifies the process by which local governments can access water usage data through private water companies and will make this process less expensive for customers and taxpayers. It will also make it easier for municipalities to make decisions about clean water infrastructure projects. This bill was signed into law by the Governor in August. The communities include the cities of New Rochelle and Rye and the villages of Port Chester and Rye Brook.

The Governor signed home rule requests I sponsored from New Rochelle and Rye to renew their existing authority to use a hotel occupancy tax to raise revenues. This is another way many local governments are seeking to diversify revenue sources.

The Village of Mamaroneck required special legislation to allow a new sewer line underneath parkland.

I also assisted the Village of Rye Brook by helping to arrange temporary use of Thruway Authority property while the village constructs a new facility for their Department of Public Works. With the help of state officials, the village will avoid renting temporary private space at significant expense.

As a former Mayor, I work closely with the state associations representing local governments, the New York Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) and the Association of Towns on issues affecting local governments each year.



NAACP branch President Doris Reavis, was honored for her many years of service to the community at the annual Port Chester NAACP Effie Gordon Tea held at the Carver Center. Assemblyman Otis joined numerous Port Chester municipal officials and NAACP leadership gathered in this photo around Mrs. Reavis (center) to mark the event.

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



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