

[View this email in your browser](#)



91st Assembly District  
Larchmont - Mamaroneck - New Rochelle - Port Chester - Rye Brook and Rye

February 13, 2021

Dear Friends,

Last Saturday the Westchester Assembly delegation held a budget forum to gather input from leaders in education, local governments and not-for-profits on how the Covid-19 pandemic and the Governor's proposed Executive Budget affects them. This annual forum helps us to better advocate for the specific needs of these groups. The hearing is viewable on my [Assembly website](#) or my Facebook page [HERE](#).

Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie has appointed me to an Assembly Working Group on Transitioning N.Y. Economy Toward COVID-19 Recovery. In this effort, my colleagues and I are striving to advance policies to help businesses and our state emerge from the pandemic. I have reached out to local Chambers of Commerce for the latest information on challenges facing local businesses.

More than 2 million vaccine doses have been administered in New York State. The national challenge to produce the supply of vaccines necessary to get the demand continues to frustrate us all. Beginning February 15, New Yorkers with certain [comorbidities and underlying conditions](#) will be eligible to receive the vaccine. The White House announced a 5 percent increase in vaccine allocations to the states for the next three weeks on top of allocation increases previously announced. Vaccines are becoming available at more pharmacies, hospitals and through county health departments statewide. Next week's pharmacy and non-governmental local vaccine locations in Westchester are available [HERE](#).

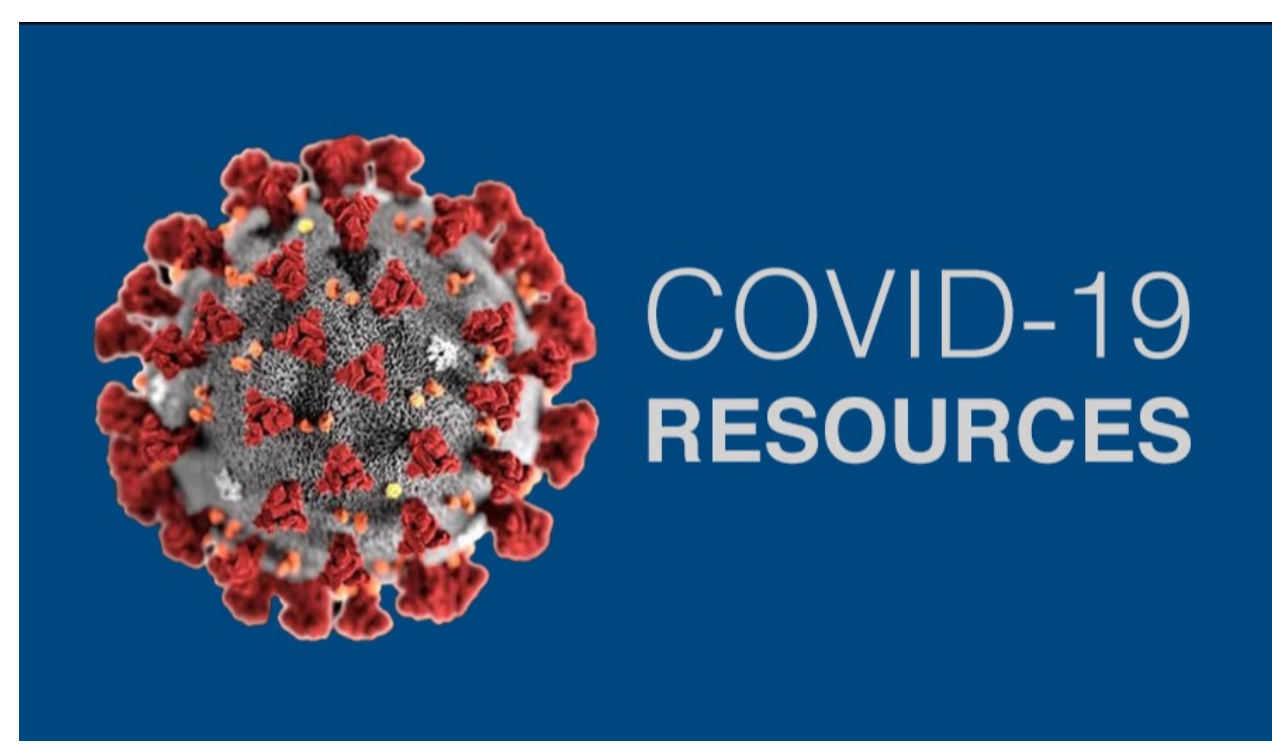
The best strategy is to try the state website and also check with your own health care provider or pharmacy to see if an available slot opens up. To determine eligibility and schedule a first-dose appointment, use the [Am I Eligible app](#). Remember: Both vaccines require two doses for effectiveness. Your second-dose appointment will be scheduled automatically at the time you receive your first vaccine dose.

Below you will find:

- Covid-19 Westchester County Resources
- Link to Assembly Westchester Delegation NYS Budget Hearing
- Updated High Risk Sports Guidance
- Unemployment Insurance Update
- Legislative Updates
  - Clean Air and Water Act
  - Small Business Grant legislation Introduced
- Dr. Betty Rosa confirmed as Education Commissioner

As always, if I can be of any assistance as we navigate changing developments related to Covid-19, please do not hesitate to contact me at 914-939-7028.

Warm regards,



**Westchester County Resources**  
 NY State Vaccine Eligibility & Appointments [HERE](#)  
 Westchester Vaccine Allocation Week 9 [HERE](#)

Statewide guidelines for businesses and gatherings [HERE](#)

**Testing:**

To find a testing site and make an appointment, visit: [NYS Health Department](#) or call the **NYS Covid-19 Hotline at 1-888-364-3065**. For help with quarantine and isolation: 866-588-0195

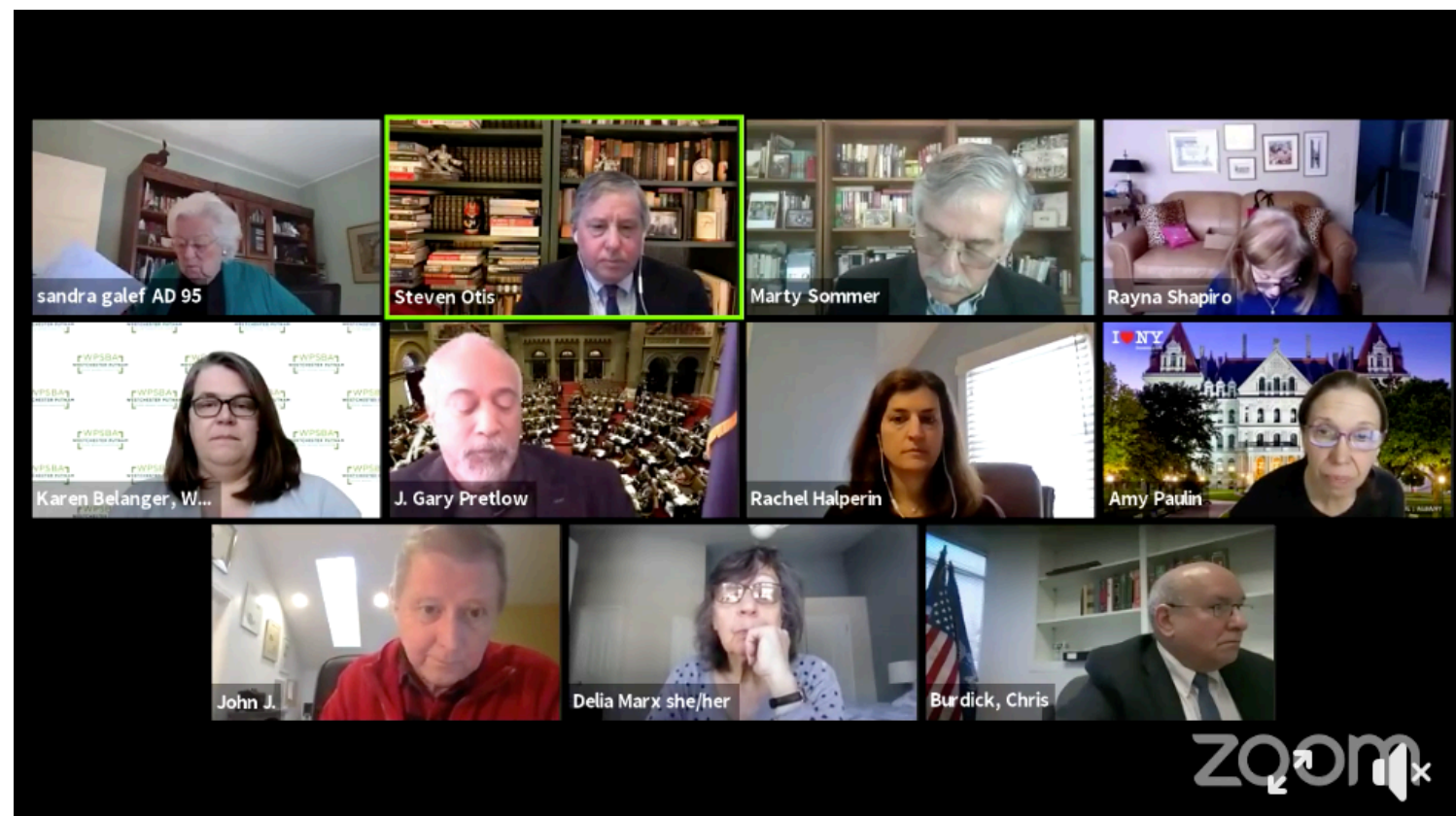
[Find a Test Site Near You](#)

(Testing is free at all NY run test sites)

**Local Covid-19 Statistics:**

NYS Covid Vaccine Tracker dashboard [HERE](#)  
 Westchester Covid-19 Stats by Municipality [HERE](#)  
 School and University Covid-19 Statewide Tracker [HERE](#)

**NYS Assembly Westchester Delegation Budget Hearing, Feb. 6th Viewable [HERE](#)**



Proposed Executive Budget briefing book is available [here](#).

**Updated High Risk Sports Guidance**

Throughout the pandemic I have worked with sports groups to advocate for safe ways sports can proceed. New York State now has authorized county departments of health to oversee local sports decisions. In turn, the Westchester County Department of Health has left individual decisions up to school districts and sports organizations under safety guidelines.

The Westchester County Department of Health has approved the resumption of higher risk recreational and club sports activities following the NYS Department of Health, "Master Guidance for Sports and Recreation". The updated guidelines aim to avoid the risks and potential dangers for players, families, coaches and program staff, while acknowledging that these activities come with safety concerns and potential risks.

The guidance and the released Code of Conduct set the minimum standards that are required for Higher Risk Recreational and Club Sports to hold games and tournaments. Outlined are the requirement that parents/guardians, athletes, coaches and staff must be especially diligent of their awareness of social distancing requirements. They must also sign the Westchester County COVID-19 "Recreational Athlete Code of Conduct," which acknowledges that they will properly social distance as practicable, wear masks as appropriate and required and will comply with social gathering requirements, not just while participating in athletics, but in their everyday activities as well. You may view the full guidance [HERE](#).



**Unemployment Insurance Updates**

Job loss and the need for unemployment benefits continue to be a problem for many. Some of the rules have changed due to federal decisions. New Yorkers who are enrolled in the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program do not need to reapply for benefits if they continue to be unemployed when they reach the end of their initial benefit year. Instead, PUA claimants should continue to certify weekly while unemployed in order to continue receiving the benefits for which they are eligible. Claimants who are receiving traditional Unemployment Insurance (UI), should reapply if they continue to be unemployed when their benefit year has ended. For more information about extended benefits, visit [on.ny.gov/cauwa](http://on.ny.gov/cauwa).

Partial Unemployment Update: As of January 18, 2021, New York State has modified the rules for partial unemployment eligibility so that New Yorkers can take on part-time work without losing disproportionate unemployment and pandemic benefits. For information on how this impacts weekly certifications and guidance for claiming partial benefits, refer to the [Partial Unemployment Eligibility](#) web page, social media platforms, as well as emails and text messages sent directly to claimants.

The federal government has extended the federal unemployment benefit programs available through the CARES Act for an additional 11 weeks. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) will be available through March 14, 2021 with qualified claimants' benefits fully phasing out by April 11, 2021. Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) benefits will resume with \$300 weekly payments until March 14, 2021. For more information, see the [Continued Assistance Act FAQs](#). Since last March, my staff and I have helped many unemployment benefit applicants facing complications in the process. Please contact my office at 914-939-7028 if we can be of assistance.



**Legislative Updates**

**Assembly Passes Legislation to Amend N.Y. Constitution's Bill of Rights to Include a Right to Clean Air and Water**

This past week the Assembly passed legislation that I co-sponsored that would allow New Yorkers to vote during the next general election to amend the New York State Constitution's Bill of Rights to include a right to clean air and water and a healthful environment ([A.1368](#)).

Recent water contamination incidents and ongoing concerns about air quality have highlighted the importance of clean drinking water and air, as well as the need for additional protections. Several other states have constitutional protections in place to ensure access to clean air and water, including Pennsylvania, Hawaii, Massachusetts and Montana.

In order to amend the New York State Constitution, the proposal must be reviewed by the attorney general and passed by both houses of the Legislature in two different two-year legislative sessions. The amendment was first passed by the Legislature in 2019 and will now be on the ballot for voter consideration in November.

**Emergency Small Business Grant Program Legislation Introduced**

This week, Senator Pete Harcham and I introduced legislation that will earmark up to \$100 million of federal disaster relief funds sent to the state for an emergency small business grant program. The new bill would utilize part of the next coronavirus pandemic disaster relief funds that Congress and the Biden/Harris administration are expected to soon disburse to the states; Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has requested that New York receive \$15 billion.

Once the federal government sends the funding to New York, the new bill would then authorize a state agency to set up the parameters for the emergency small business grant program, focusing on those businesses that had been asked by the state to remain closed during the pandemic.

This new legislation is part of a package that includes earlier introduced bills that will offer small businesses and not-for-profit organizations additional financial resources to help keep them afloat while they grapple with the financial devastation caused by the coronavirus pandemic. This legislative package will help ensure employment for countless New Yorkers. As the pandemic spread through New York last spring, it was mandated that residents stay at home unless their occupations were deemed essential and businesses across the state were temporarily closed. This has had a devastating effect on the state's economy, impacting small business owners and their employees, as well as their vendors and other associated small businesses.

As we decide where to target pandemic business relief, we must prioritize small businesses that can survive but need a boost to keep the doors open until our economy recovers. At stake are local jobs and the small businesses that are vital to every community.

**Dr. Betty Rosa Appointed NYS Commissioner of Education**

Congratulations are in order to Dr. Betty Rosa on her formal appointment as Commissioner of the New York State Education Department and President of the University of the State of New York by the Board of Regents.

Betty Rosa has previously served as an exceptional Chancellor of the Board of Regents where she brought an educator's perspective to the board. Commissioner Rosa had a distinguished career as an educator in the NYC schools where her areas of concentration included bilingual education, special education and community schools. Serving on the Board of Regents since 2008 and Chancellor from 2016 until last August when she was appointed Interim Commissioner, Betty Rosa led the growing group of educators on the Board to transform education policy in our state. She has been a frequent presence in Westchester schools and will do a great job as Commissioner.



Copyright © 2021 Assemblyman Steve Otis. All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
 You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

