



October 15, 2021

Dear Friends,

Last week I participated in two Westchester events promoting digital equity and literacy programs to celebrate [National Digital Inclusion Week](#). I joined a graduating class of a digital literacy program in Yonkers and was a panelist in a webinar in Mamaroneck discussing the benefits of local digital inclusion programs as part of The STEM Alliance's *Digital Equity Now* initiative.

Digital inclusion programs are the model used in communities nationwide to address existing disparities in digital access because of cost, race, location and age. My program to establish a new \$15M statewide digital inclusion grant program was included in the 2021-2022 state budget. A recording of the webinar is linked below.

On Wednesday, October 20th I will be hosting a Clean Water Grant Workshop to assist Westchester communities in applying for over \$400 million in state grants to help fund local clean water projects. More information regarding this annual event is found below.

This newsletter includes new information on state assistance for landlords concerning back rent unpaid because of the pandemic, home heating assistance for qualifying families and new vaccination locations.

Below you will find:

- Environmental Group Albany Press Conference on Issue of cryptocurrency “mining” and Climate Change
- STEM Alliance Digital Equity webinar
- Clean Water Grant Workshop
- State Assistance Unpaid Rent to Landlords
- Home heating assistance for eligible New Yorkers
- New Covid-19 booster shot locations

Please contact my office at 914-939-7028 for help on any issue. My staff and I

continue to help on flood, Covid-19 and the wide variety of issues that face every community.

Warm regards,



Cryptocurrency “mining” and Climate Change

This week I joined statewide environmental groups at an Albany press conference on the environmental issues linked to one form of cryptocurrency authentication called “proof-of-work” mining. The high energy use and emissions of this one method of authentication has raised concerns nationally and internationally regarding the ability to meet climate change greenhouse gas reduction goals.

There will be more to follow on this issue in future updates. On October 27th I will be participating in [an Albany hearing on the issue](#) that will be conducted by the Assembly Committee on Science and Technology, which I chair, and the Environmental Conservation and Energy Committees.





Last week I participated in a webinar hosted by Meg Kaufer at the STEM Alliance to discuss digital equity in Westchester. You can view a recording of the webinar [HERE](#).

Assemblyman Otis Celebrates National Digital Inclusion Week with Two Westchester Events

Westchester, N.Y. – Assemblyman Steve Otis (AD 91-Rye), participated in two Westchester events promoting digital equity and literacy programs to celebrate [National Digital Inclusion Week](#).

Digital inclusion programs are the model used in communities nationwide to address existing disparities in digital access because of cost, race, location and age.

In Yonkers, the Assemblyman joined the inaugural graduating class of the Digital Literacy Program for [914United](#)'s Westchester Incarcerated & Justice Involved clients. In his remarks to the participants, Otis commented on the importance of these programs in providing meaningful access to the internet and its importance to education, health care and employment opportunities.

914United's program was possible through a partnership with AT&T and The STEM Alliance to support this innovative technology and digital literacy education program. The program is part of The STEM Alliance's *Digital Equity Now* initiative and AT&T's commitment to working with organizations across the country to address the digital divide impacting underserved communities that have faced long-standing social inequities and higher unemployment.

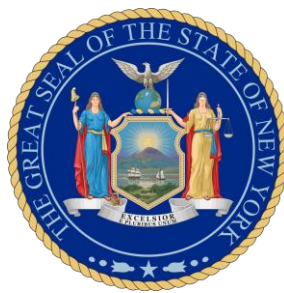
Assemblyman Otis was joined by **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-**

Cousins, Amy Kramer, President, AT&T New York; Margaret Käufer, President, The STEM Alliance; and Jonathan Alvarez, Co-Founder and Executive Director, 914United.

In a separate event, the Assemblyman was a panelist on a free webinar hosted by The STEM Alliance on the importance of local digital equity programs moderated by Meg Käufer. The other panelists were **Jordan Cormier from Youth Shelter of Westchester, Grace Battaglia of Open Door Family Medical Center and Dr. Fenix Arias of Yonkers Public Schools.**

The panel stressed the various ways disadvantaged communities are affected by a lack of connectivity in a digital dependent world and the impact that having access to a suitable device and broadband improves outcomes for themselves and their families. Providing digital literacy along with devices and connectivity is vital as tech access and digital knowledge impact every aspect of daily life in today's world, from education to healthcare to job seeking and workforce skills. The webinar appeared live on LMC Media and on The STEM Alliance Facebook page.

Assemblyman Otis's proposal to create a new \$15M statewide digital inclusion grant program was included in the 2021-2022 state budget. The program will support local libraries, non-profits and other institutions to close the digital divide. The Assemblyman is working with national advocates and with providers of these programs at the local level in New York State.



New York State
Assemblyman Steve Otis
invites you to a

**NYS CLEAN WATER & DRINKING WATER
INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT WORKSHOP**

NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation

**A Special Workshop on EFC's Water Infrastructure Grant Programs and
Other Clean Water Financing Opportunities.**

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Jay Heritage Center – Carriage House
210 Boston Post Road, Rye, NY 10580

Admission is free, but registration is required.

[Register: NYS Clean Water Grant Workshop](#)

***Covid-19 protocols to be observed: Proof of vaccination and masking
required for this event.***

EFC's Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA) Grants: EFC is providing \$400 million in competitive grants for projects that fund water quality infrastructure for wastewater and drinking water projects that protect or improve water quality and public health. Municipalities may submit applications for multiple projects, including wastewater, sewer and drinking water projects.

Intermunicipal Water Grant (IMG) Program: EFC provides grants to assist municipalities that are working together on water quality infrastructure projects. Grants are available for both drinking water and sewage treatment works, also referred to as clean water projects that serve multiple municipalities, such as a shared water quality infrastructure project or the interconnection of multiple municipal water systems.

***Networking opportunities with informational tables available to learn about
local sustainable initiatives throughout the Lower Hudson Valley.***



**Environmental
Facilities Corporation**



Save the Sound®
Action for our region's environment.



[Register](#)

Assemblyman Otis Announces Clean Water Infrastructure Grant Workshop

Rye, N.Y. – Assemblyman Steve Otis (AD-91) and the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation are hosting a Clean Water Infrastructure Grant Workshop to provide Westchester local governments, environmental groups and engineering firms with information on the 2021 state water grant applications now open for submissions.

The Clean Water Infrastructure Grant Workshop will be held on **Wednesday October 20th from 1:00-3:00pm at the Jay Heritage Center Carriage House in Rye, NY**. To register click [HERE](#).

The Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) is the state agency responsible for NYS's clean water infrastructure grants for local municipalities. Senior staff from the EFC will present and answer questions regarding this year's application process. Assemblyman Otis has hosted annual water grant workshops in Westchester every year since the enactment of the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015 to assist Westchester communities in securing grant funding from state clean water programs.

The workshops have been very helpful in encouraging successful applications from across Westchester and for applicants to learn more about the process, application information specific to the current year funding round and background on other EFC programs. The application round is now open. Grant applications must be submitted to NYSWaterGrants@efc.ny.gov no later than 5:00 pm on **Monday, November 22, 2021**. For additional information and to register for an upcoming webinar on Tuesday, November 2nd at 2:00 pm, please visit the EFC website at www.efc.ny.gov.

Assemblyman Otis, who helped initiate the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015, **said**, "Westchester local governments have been awarded \$45.5 million in state grants since this program was initiated in 2015. The workshops, and outreach by our co-host organizations, have helped generate quality applications from Westchester and brought more state dollars to help fund our local clean water projects."

Workshop co-hosts this year are: the Federated Conservationists of Westchester (FCWC), Jay Heritage Center, Save the Sound, the Westchester Municipal Officials Associations (WMOA) and the Westchester Putnam Construction Industry Council (CIC).

The 2021 grant round of funding was announced by Governor Hochul in September. The biggest portion of the funding is \$400 million in grants through the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act program (WIIA) and the Intermunicipal Grant (IMG) program, which have received tremendous response by local governments, environmental and construction groups in helping upgrade our clean water infrastructure.

To date, WIIA and IMG have provided \$1.2 billion in grants to local governments, including the \$4.5 million to Westchester municipalities for important clean water projects. The WIIA and IMG grants will again be administered by the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), which has done a great job of working with local governments during the application process, expediting post approval contracting and getting funds to municipal awardees.

Governor Hochul also announced an additional \$200 million being added to the Water Quality Improvement Project Program (WQIP) as part of the 2021 CFA funding round, which has already occurred. Those applications are now being evaluated. In addition, the governor announced that the Publicly Owned Treatment Works Asset Management Program will make \$10 million available to establish asset management programs that will help municipalities monitor, protect, and responsibly plan upgrades for wastewater infrastructure systems, at no cost. An additional \$5 million in Green Innovation Grant (GIG) Program funding will be available to communities that utilize unique stormwater infrastructure design and create cutting-edge green technologies to mitigate the impact of climate change. Information about these funding sources will be included in the workshop.

Assemblyman Otis's office is available to help applicants in this important funding opportunity and to support applications throughout the process. Applicants can contact the district office at 914-939-7028 for more information.

NY Landlord Rent Relief: Landlords Can Now Apply for Funding Using State's Rental Assistance Portal

State Funding to Assist Landlords Whose Tenants Declined to Participate in New

*York's Emergency Rental Assistance Program or Have Vacated with Arrears;
Landlords Can Now Apply Using State's Rental Assistance Portal*

Governor Hochul has announced that \$125 million in state funding is now available to help landlords that couldn't participate in the New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program due to a federal requirement for tenants to participate in the application process. The program was included in the state budget we adopted earlier this year in anticipation of situations where the federal assistance for tenants and landlords may not apply. Our goal has been to help get back rent paid that was not paid because of the pandemic.

The program is administered by the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. The application period opened on Thursday, Oct. 7. The Landlord Rental Assistance Program provides up to 12 months of past-due rent to landlords who are ineligible for the federally funded program because their tenants either declined to complete an application or vacated the residence with arrears. Priority will be given to those landlords owning small-to-medium-sized properties.

Eligible landlords must own units leased for at or below 150 percent of fair market rent for their location and must have documented the rental arrears accumulated after March 1, 2020 that are owed by a tenant who either vacated the unit or is declining to participate in the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Priority is given to those landlords owning a building with 20 or fewer units and who apply within the first 45 days of the program's opening date on Thursday, October 7.

Landlords that have applied to the state's rental assistance program can complete an application for state funding through their existing account in the online portal or create a new account if they haven't done so already. The assistance is first come, first serve, and specifically designated for arrears accumulated after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. More information can be found at otda.ny.gov/lrap.

Home Heating Assistance Funds Now Available for Cold Winter Months

Governor Hochul has announced that more than \$373 million in home heating aid is now available for low- and middle-income New Yorkers who need assistance keeping their homes warm during the upcoming winter season.

Applications opened on Friday, October 1 for the Home Energy

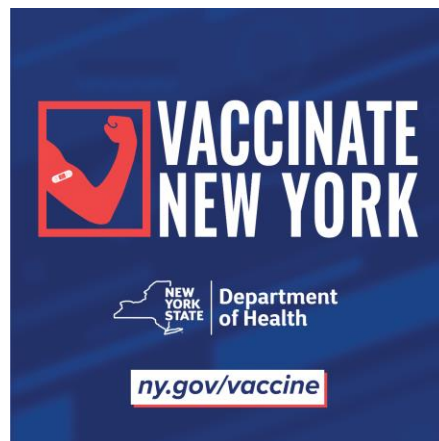
Assistance Program, also known as HEAP, which is overseen by the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and provides federal funding to assist homeowners and renters with their heating costs during the cold weather months.

Eligible homeowners and renters may receive up to \$751 in heating assistance, depending on their income, household size and how they heat their home. A family of four may have a maximum gross monthly income of \$5,249 or an annual gross income of \$62,983 and still qualify for benefits—a modest increase from the previous year's threshold.

Applications for assistance are accepted at local departments of social services in person or by telephone, with funding provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Westchester Department of Social Services is located at 112 East Post Road on the 5th floor, White Plains. Residents can call County DSS at (914) 995-3333.

Residents who are already working with DSS may also utilize the 'mybenefits' portal to apply for HEAP: <https://mybenefits.ny.gov/mybenefits/begin> Residents outside of New York City may also [apply online](#) for regular heating assistance benefits.



Area Pop Up Vaccine Clinics:

- October 20, 2021 from 2:30 pm - 5:30 pm
 - **White Plains High School**, Library, 550 North Street, **White Plains**, NY 10605
- October 22, 2021 from 2:30 pm - 5:30 pm
 - **Highlands School**, Middle School Gym, 128 Grandview Avenue, **White Plains**, NY 10605
- October 27, 2021 from 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm

- **Columbus Elementary School**, Gym, 275 Washington Ave, **New Rochelle**, NY 10801
- November 13, 2021 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
 - **Rye High/Middle School**, Middle School Gym, 3 Parsons St. **Rye**, NY 10580
- **Ongoing Vaccine Clinics:**
 - **White Plains Vaccination Clinic**
134 Court St., White Plains
Fridays from 10-1pm
Walk-ins accepted; offers Pfizer

Westchester County Department of Health will be holding **Pfizer vaccine booster clinics**, by appointment only, every Wednesday and Thursday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, at 134 Court Street in White Plains. To be eligible to **receive a Pfizer booster dose**, you must have completed your original Pfizer vaccine series **at least six months ago and you must fall into one of the following categories:**

- 18+ who lives or works in a [high-risk setting](#)
- 18+ with [underlying medical conditions](#)
- 65 years and older

