



Dear Neighbors,

Winter is upon us and with it an increase in COVID-19 cases here in the district as we spend more time indoors. I know that many of you are worried as the Delta variant continues to circulate and as the Omicron variant emerges as a new threat. We have many tools available to us to keep us safe! Please get vaccinated, get a booster shot if you are fully vaccinated, wear your mask, social distance, and stay home if you are feeling sick.

The Tompkins County Health Department is hosting a COVID-19 Virtual Update today at 4:30 PM on the TCHD YouTube page. These town halls are always chock full of useful news and information and include an opportunity for community members to ask questions.

[TCHD COVID-19 VIRTUAL UPDATE](#)



The New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund (NYS HAF)

The [New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund \(NYS HAF\)](#) is a federally funded program dedicated to assisting homeowners who are at risk of default, foreclosure, or displacement as a result of financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who can apply?

- Homeowners who are behind or in forbearance on their mortgage
- Homeowners who are in default on a reverse mortgage
- Homeowners who are behind on their property taxes, water or sewage bills
- Homeowners who are behind on monthly maintenance charges

Applications will be accepted beginning **January 3**. This fund is expected to receive significantly more applications than can be funded

by the program, so **please gather your materials now and plan to apply early**. For details and application guidelines, please visit this website: <https://www.nyhomeownerfund.org/> or call 1-844-77-NYHAF



Legislative Update

Update on my Crypto mining Moratorium Legislation

My bill [A7389b](#) to establish a moratorium on consolidated operations that use proof-of-work authentication methods to validate blockchain transactions will be one of my legislative priorities when we return to session in January. This energy-intensive and highly polluting emerging industry represents a serious threat to our climate goals and also to the consumer. **A recent study found that "the power demands of crypto mining operations in Upstate New York push up annual electric bills by about \$165 million for small businesses and \$79 million for individuals ([UC Berkeley study](#)).**

My legislation was highlighted in this well-researched piece in the New York Times this week: "A Bitcoin Boom Fueled by Cheap Power, Empty Plants and Few Rules" ([NYT, 12/5/21](#))

A few weeks ago, I joined the Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative (TCCPI) to discuss cryptocurrency mining, the threats it poses, and why I am calling for a moratorium. My thanks to Peter

Bardaglio for inviting me. The [video of our discussion is available online here](#) in case you'd like to watch.

New Laws

Package of Legislation to Crack Down on Robocalls!

I have heard from many of you about how many unwanted robocalls reach your homes each week. Last June, I voted to pass a package of bills designed to end this daily annoyance. I am thrilled to report that Governor Hochul signed both bills into law this week.

[A268a](#) codifies in state law the provisions of a rule released by the FCC in 2017, that went into effect in June of 2021, that allows telecommunications companies to proactively block calls from certain numbers. These would include calls that are most likely to be illegitimate, as they are coming from numbers that do not or cannot make outgoing calls. These types of numbers are indicative of "spoofing" schemes in which the true caller identity is masked behind a fake, invalid number.


[A585a](#) requires voice service providers to implement the STIR/SHAKEN call authentication framework. In March of 2020, the FCC, pursuant to the federal TRACED Act, issued a rule requiring providers to implement STIR/SHAKEN by June of 2021. This bill will provide for enhanced state enforcement for bad actors and will allow the state to ensure the implementation of STIR/SHAKEN as required by the FCC. The STIR/SHAKEN authentication protocol uses cryptography to validate that a call is really from the number it displays, preventing bad actors from illegally "spoofing" phone numbers. STIR/SHAKEN also makes it much easier to trace illegal calls back to their source, since each call will have an identification assigned to it. Once the source is identified, enforcement actions can be taken against the perpetrators.

I am very happy to see this package of consumer protection bills become law!

National Handwashing Awareness Week

DECEMBER 5 - 11

National Handwashing Awareness Week



By washing our hands regularly and following CDC guidelines, we can help protect ourselves and our fellow New Yorkers from COVID-19, the flu and other illnesses.

It's National Handwashing Awareness Week and as good a time as any to remind ourselves of the importance of proper handwashing techniques to help keep us safe from COVID-19, the flu, and all of the regular cold germs we encounter each day. Here are the [CDC's recommendations to keep your hands clean and germ-free this winter](#). Don't forget to wash for a full 20 seconds!

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

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