



March 18, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

This past week in Albany we were focused again on the NYS Budget with the release of the Assembly and Senate one-house proposals on Monday. Over the next two weeks, the Legislature will negotiate with the Governor to reach a final budget. Our last scheduled day of legislative session prior to the April 1 budget deadline is March 28, which is the soonest I suspect that we could be voting on a final agreement.

Read on for more budget and legislative highlights from the week as well as our 2024 Women of Distinction award recipients!

State Budget

The budget proposal the Assembly put forth prioritizes making New York a stronger, safer, and more equitable state economy. The proposal includes robust funding for our schools and childcare, outlined smart public safety initiatives, provides financial relief for families, provides relief for our most vulnerable New Yorkers, and outlines strong investments in transportation infrastructure.

Throughout the process to the final enacted budget, I will continue to fight for the bills and issues I detailed in my [February 26 newsletter](#) and priorities of the district, including: support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, COLA increases for human service agency staff, funding for home care and home care aides' wages, funding for our schools and colleges, and environmental protections.

If you would like to review, the [2024-2025 Assembly Budget Proposal](#) is available online.

The goal should always
be to make New York an even
stronger, safer, more dynamic state.



The Assembly Majority has
a **blueprint to get us there.**

Legislative Update

Bill to Ban Carbon Dioxide Fracking Passed the Assembly

I am thrilled that the bill I championed to ban carbon dioxide fracking ([A8866](#)) passed the Assembly this week! New York State wisely prohibited high-volume hydraulic fracturing in 2020, and once again the Assembly upheld science and fact and passed this legislation to ban the use of pressurized carbon dioxide for gas and oil extraction. No matter what substance is used to frack for gas and oil, it is still fracking for gas and oil. It will still have severe negative health and environmental consequences, only exacerbated by the use of a highly corrosive substance that is known to cause pipeline ruptures and destabilization through acidification and demineralization of the very ground under our feet. This bill is closing a loophole in our state's fracking ban to protect our people, our environment and our economy. I look forward to the Senate's bill ([S8357](#)) passing swiftly and the Governor signing this ban into law! You can view a [video of my comments during the debate](#) and read more in this [recent Spectrum News article](#).



Eliminating Insulin Co-pays Rally

Diabetes is a growing epidemic that we cannot ignore, but it is also a manageable disease with access to healthcare and medication. According to the American Diabetes Association, 38.4 million Americans, or 11.6% of the population, have diabetes, of which 2 million Americans have type 1 diabetes and are dependent on insulin. Monthly insulin costs have fluctuated wildly over the years, but over the last 10 years, spending on insulin in the U.S. has tripled from \$8 billion in 2012 to \$22.3 billion in 2022. While New York currently caps insulin prescription costs at \$100 per 30-day supply, individuals typically need more than one type of insulin, exacerbating their out-of-pocket costs. Cost should never be a barrier for individuals who are dependent on insulin for survival. I joined Assembly and Senate colleagues and the American Diabetes Association at a rally this week to advocate for funding in the NYS Budget to eliminate co-pays for insulin. [Watch a brief video of my comments.](#)



NY HEAT Act Rally

I am continuing to advocate for the inclusion of the [NY HEAT Act](#) in the budget and was proud to join a rally this week in Albany. New Yorkers are struggling with the cost of their energy bills, and the NY HEAT Act offers affordability for low- and middle-income New Yorkers, capping utility bills at 6% of income. The bill also discontinues antiquated subsidies to the oil and gas industry that currently stunt investment in renewable energy infrastructure. Given the dire state of climate change, we must actively stabilize our energy grid, which will stabilize energy costs for all NYers and increase statewide energy autonomy and resiliency for the foreseeable future. We need the NY HEAT Act passed this year. Watch a [video of my comments from the rally](#).



Around the District

2024 Women of Distinction

In honor of Women's History Month, I asked for nominations of outstanding women who deserved recognition for their contributions to our community, either through their community leadership, civic participation, service, or volunteerism. I'm proud to highlight the 2024 Women of Distinction Award recipients below! I was grateful for the opportunity to honor many of them in-person at a reception at my Ithaca district office this week. I will also highlight the recipients on my Instagram and Facebook pages throughout the rest of March for Women's History Month.

- **Amanda David**, of Rootwork Herbals, for her efforts to develop a free community garden for BIPOC folks to connect with the land and to facilitate mutually beneficial healing relationships between people and plants.
- **Ana Ortiz**, of No Mas Lagrimas, for her efforts in creating an all-volunteer organization that helps to bridge the gap by fostering

partnerships with local farmers and organizations to serve Ithaca's most disenfranchised residents with food insecurities.

- **Apryl Beatty**, of Cortland Community Matters, for her efforts to create an engaged Cortland community by hosting events and giveaways with local donations or through her own efforts.
- **Brigid Hubberman**, of Children's Reading Connections and Community Quilting Center, for her efforts to emphasize children's literacy most recently with the Children's Reading Connections and helping to create the Community Quilting Center at Finger Lakes ReUse to provides access, resources and space for aspiring quilt makers.
- **Cate Thompson**, of Cornell University's Pre-Collegiate Summer Scholars Program, for her vision, commitment, mentorship, and project planning at Cornell and in the greater Ithaca area.
- **Christine Gregory**, of Cortland Enlarged City School District, for her efforts to serve the Cortland community by mentoring student teachers, tutoring at SUNY Cortland, serving as the Board of Education President, and providing a scholarship for a graduating high school senior.
- **Cindy Wilcox**, of Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County, for her efforts in fostering a work environment that helps to address the

needs of staff, community partners and the greater Ithaca community, exemplifying what true leadership is.

- **Dalya Tamir** for her efforts to provide the community with a space for meditation and contemplation to experience and share their feelings especially in this time of war and conflict.
- **Davi Mozie**, of The Learning Farm, for her efforts to connect children and families with their cultural roots, work with formerly incarcerated individuals, and be an advocate for the voiceless.
- **Diana Riseman**, for her efforts to create connections and community by revitalizing Stewart Park and developing a museum inside the Wharton Studio building to celebrate and highlight Ithaca's history.
- **Dianea Kohl**, of Make True Love and Healthy Relationships, for her efforts to provide mental health counseling to the Ithaca area.
- **Dr. Melissa Dhundale** for her extraordinary service to students and families during COVID and continual community work related to behavioral, mental and physical health priorities.

- **Elline Weiner**, of Nates Floral Estates, for her efforts to promote a positive, safe, and comfortable environment for tenants.
- **Irene Weiser**, of Fossil Free Tompkins, for her efforts to research, analyze, and address New York State's progress with the climate crisis, and to encourage the public to become informed citizens.
- **Jane George**, of Trumansburg Central School District and Trumansburg Stay Wild, for her efforts to engage young minds by providing them with opportunities to grow and for establishing an animal rescue.
- **Jen Graney**, of Cortland Free Library, for her efforts in creating thoughtful, positive programs and services with compassion for all.
- **Kate Downes**, of Seven Valley Health Coalition, for her efforts to develop the Cortland County Local Food Map, a BuyLocal database, and the Cortland Harvest and connect the community with locally grown and produced food.
- **Linda Schutt** for her efforts to combat the shortage of certified midwives in New York State by coming out of retirement and providing many mothers with the care they needed.

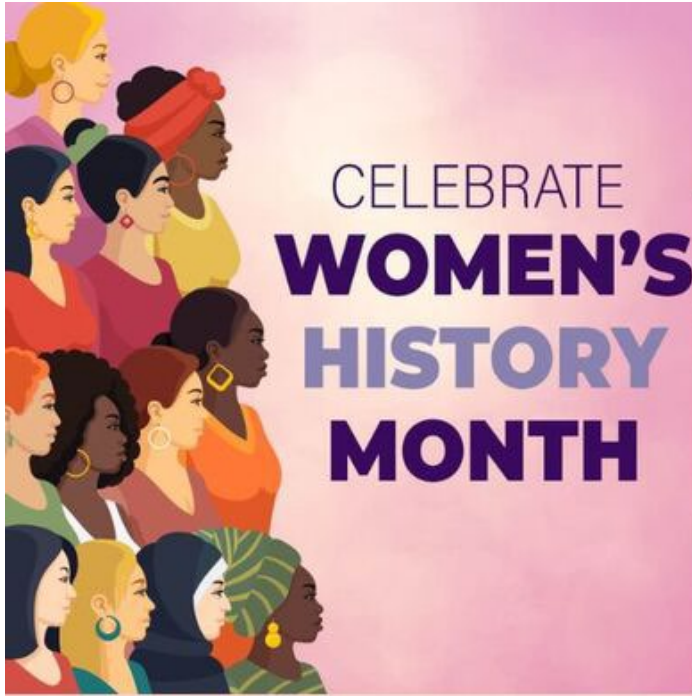
- **Liz Walker** for co-founding Ithaca's Eco Village and helping facilitate the international spread of co-housing as a way for people to live more sustainably, in close-knit, supportive communities.
- **Margo Polikoff** for her diligence and dedication working as a nurse for the Tompkins County Health Department for over 20 years, and for the countless patients and co-workers she has touched with her compassion, spirit, and kindness.
- **Mary Chapman** for her decades of serving and preparing food at Loaves and Fishes, for her participation in and advocacy for the Ithaca Community Gardens, and for her ongoing contributions at the McGraw house to organize events and build community for those around her.
- **Nancy K. Bereano** for her long-time activism and instrumental participation in securing the passage of LGBTQ anti-discrimination legislation for Tompkins County, as well as the founding of Firebrand Books to publish works of marginalized authors, particularly providing the space for the voices of queer women and women of color.
- **Sandy True** for her passion in helping others and the energy and hard work she puts into organizations focused on family and health in the Ithaca area, including Cayuga at Twilight and Loaves and Fishes.
- **Sarah Brainard** for her long-time dedication to education through the Trumansburg Community Nursery School and Trumansburg Education

Foundation, as well as her participation in various nonprofit entities and charitable organizations in the Trumansburg area.

- **Susan Cosentini** for designing and building 30 modular-constructed sustainable homes in Ithaca and fostering supportive and caring interactions between residents to create an environmentally friendly and socially beneficial neighborhood in Ithaca.
- **Tammy Sickmon** for her extraordinary service and dedication to children and families in her role as youth librarian, engaging children in creative, interactive, and educational story times and programming, creating happy, welcoming environments.
- **Tess MacQueen** for her commitment and tenacity to independently run the only primary care office in the Lansing/Groton/Moravia area, and her initiative in starting a Girl Scout Troop to create a community for young girls in the area.
- **Tina Nilson-Hodges** for her integral role in the establishment, growth, and development of New Roots Charter School and its unique curriculum that integrates sustainability and social justice.



In addition, the Legislative Women’s Caucus asked Assemblymembers to nominate one woman from their district for recognition in Albany during Women’s History Month. I have the honor of recognizing **Sue Perlgut**. Sue has been a dedicated artist, educator and mentor, making significant contributions to women and the community for 40 years. As a filmmaker, she has used her talents to produce “Connie Cook: A Documentary,” chronicling Ithaca Assemblywoman Connie Cook’s fight for safe reproductive rights and “The Women’s Wisdom Project,” an interactive video presentation sharing more than 40 women’s insights on life. Sue has been actively involved in the End Abortion Stigma organization locally, advocating for women’s reproductive rights. Congratulations, Sue, and thank you for your decades of work advocating for women!

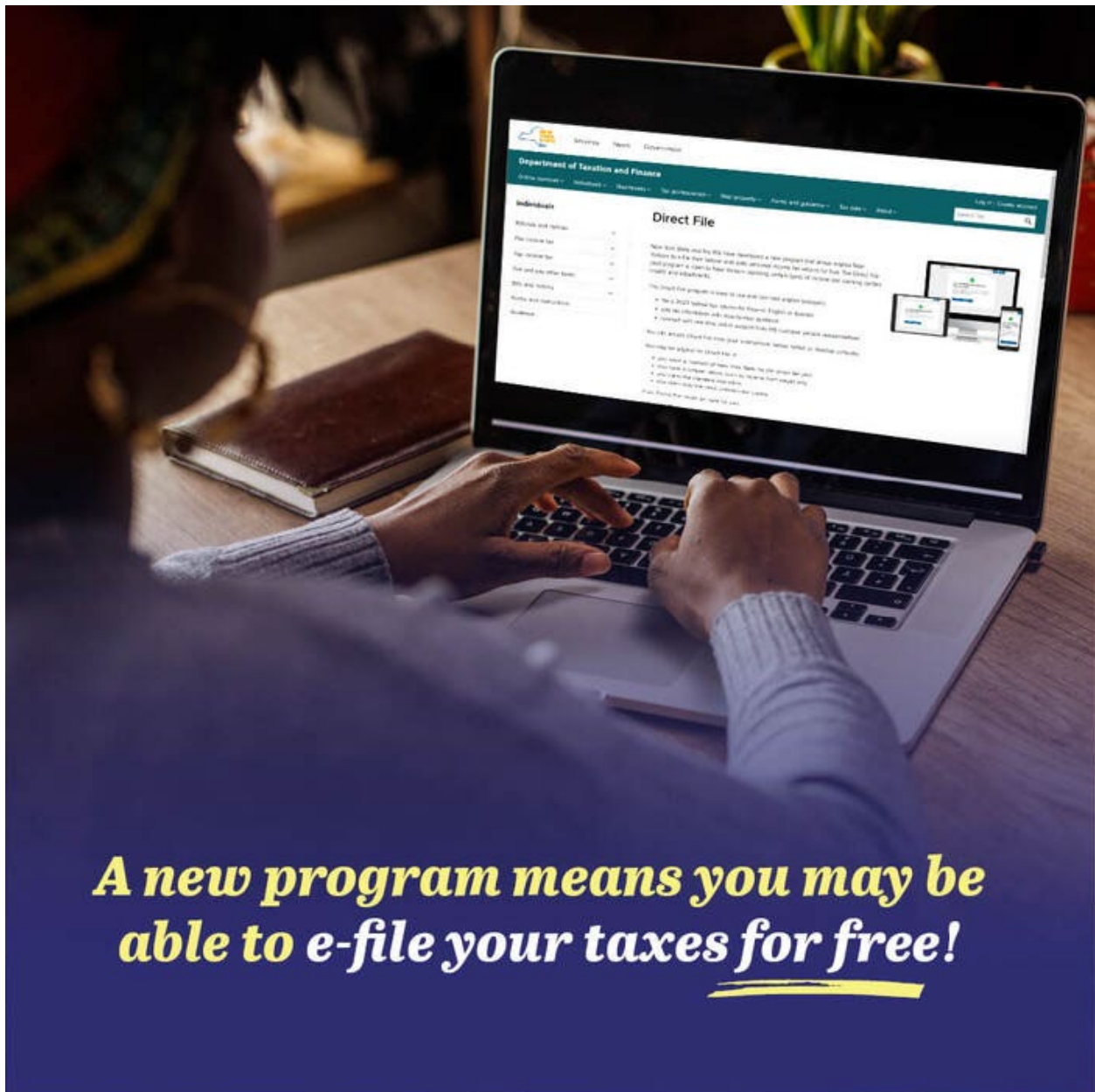


Sue Perlgut

Community Resources

New IRS Direct File for Taxpayers

The IRS launched a new tool called “Direct File” that allows eligible taxpayers to securely file their taxes online with the IRS *for free*. This is a pilot year, with Direct File only available in 12 states, including New York. Direct File will support most simple tax returns, and you can check if Direct File is right for you on the [online eligibility checker](#). Review [more information](#) and access Direct File at directfile.irs.gov.



A new program means you may be able to e-file your taxes for free!

Cortland County Strategic Development Plan

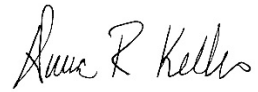
Cortland County is creating a Strategic Development Plan to outline the vision and goals for the future of the county, and they are seeking resident input in the plan! Several public meetings are scheduled throughout Cortland County in March and April for residents to attend to voice their ideas and concerns. More information can be found on the [Elevate Cortland website](#), along with the [Public Meeting schedule](#).



March Coalition for Families: Supporting Positive Youth Mental Health & Preventing Risky Behaviors

The [Family Resource Connection Tompkins](#) (through [Cornell Cooperative Extension \(CCE\) Tompkins Family](#)) will be hosting their monthly meeting of [Coalition for Families](#) this Wednesday, March 20 from 12 - 1 p.m both in person (at the offices of CCE Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave. Ithaca) and online via Zoom (link sent upon registration confirmation). Representatives from [TST BOCES](#) will share the most recent results from the Tompkins County Community-Level Youth Development Evaluation (CLYDE) Survey and discuss the important role that families and caretakers play in supporting positive youth mental health and preventing risky behaviors. This event is free and open to all but [registration is required](#). Lunch is provided for in-person attendees.

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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