

Dear Friends,

Before I dive into this week's update, I'd be remiss in not discussing the recent mass shootings in Boulder and Atlanta. Two different mass shootings in the span of one week. Eighteen people gunned down with no rhyme or reason. Families and communities grieving. This is horrific. And yet it is horribly familiar.

In New York, we have done our best to make gun safety a priority, but there is more work to be done and we will get it done. This is not the case across the nation, and if we are to be one united country, we must do better to ensure the safety of all. We need to do this together.

Here in New York, we need to prioritize gun safety regulations as well as mental health. We need to ban ghost guns, we need to promote community violence intervention programs and more. If we want to get out of this familiar place, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle must put in the work. We need to have the difficult conversations.

Let's find solutions. Let's stop these mass shootings. Let's do more to ensure that mental health issues are addressed and not stigmatized. **I am optimistic that we can take positive action and I will be pressing to do just that.**

I also have some additional thoughts regarding the unacceptable rise in violence against our Asian Community, which I will discuss below.

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## [COVID-19 Updates](#)

### ***Eligibility***

The Governor announced on Monday that [all New Yorkers 50 years and older](#) are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

**COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Update:**

All New Yorkers who are 50+ are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information, visit: [am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov](https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov)

The graphic features a teal and red color scheme. It includes an illustration of a COVID-19 vaccine vial and a syringe, surrounded by red virus particles. The text is in white and red.

**Actualización sobre la Elegibilidad para la Vacuna del COVID-19:**

Todos los neoyorquinos de 50+ son elegibles para recibir la vacuna del COVID-19.

Para más información, visite el sitio Web: [am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov](https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov)

The graphic features a teal and red color scheme. It includes an illustration of a COVID-19 vaccine vial and a syringe, surrounded by red virus particles. The text is in white and red.

[Click here](#) for the full list of all those who are eligible.

Vaccine distribution eligibility also has been expanded. In addition to those who are 50+ and teachers, [pharmacies can now vaccinate those who qualify due to a comorbidity](#) (announcement made prior to the drop in the eligibility age). With the exception of pharmacies, all providers now are permitted to vaccinate any eligible New Yorker.

**Think you can't take the time off work to get the vaccine?** As discussed in [last week's newsletter](#), employees by law are granted up to four hours of excused leave, per injection, which will not be charged against any leave that the employee has earned or accrued.

To schedule your appointment via the state website go to [am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov](#) or call 1-833-NYS-4-VAX (1-833-697-4829). [Click here](#) for the most updated list of non-State providers in the area. **If you are still having difficulty making an appointment**, please contact my office at (914) 244-4450 or e-mail me at [burdickc@nyassembly.gov](#) and we will do what we can to help.

### Attention Veterans of All Ages - NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED

BEGINNING TUESDAY MARCH 16TH VA HUDSON VALLEY'S WALK-IN COVID-19 VACCINE CLINICS ARE NOW OPEN TO ALL VETERANS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE CARE AT VA, REGARDLESS OF AGE.



The sign features the VA Hudson Valley logo and the text 'WALK-IN COVID-19 VACCINE CLINICS'. It states that clinics begin on Tuesday, March 16th, and are open from Monday 8:30 AM through Friday 2:30 PM. A blue 'OPEN' sign graphic is included. Below, it says 'NOW OPEN TO ALL VETERANS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE CARE AT VA, REGARDLESS OF AGE.' with an 'UPDATED AGE REQUIREMENT' graphic. Two locations are listed: Castle Point Campus (41 Castle Point Road, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590, Multipurpose Room) and FDR Montrose Campus (2094 Albany Post Road, Montrose, NY 10548, Building 15, Room 16). A note at the bottom asks to call 845-831-2000 ext. 215100 or 203309 if applying for VA health care.

### Health Insurance Open Enrollment Further Extended; Increased Tax Credits & Eligibility

New York's health insurance Open Enrollment Period [will be further extended](#) through the end of the year.

Enrollment can be made through [NY State of Health](#), New York's health plan marketplace, or directly through insurers.

For those who purchase their insurance through NY State of Health, [additional tax credits will be made available](#) as a result of the implementation of the American Rescue Plan.

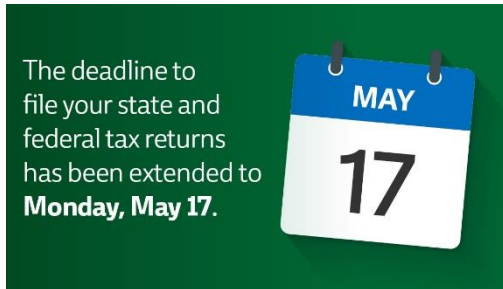
Higher tax credits for low and medium income earners (income up to \$51,040 for individuals and \$104,800 for a



family of four) will be available in early April. Additionally, by June, higher income earners (income above \$51,040 for individuals and \$104,800 for a family of four) will be eligible for federal tax credits for the first time.

### **2020 Tax Return Deadline Extended & Tracking Stimulus Payments Online**

As we mentioned [last week](#), the IRS and NYS Department of Taxation have extended the deadline for filing 2020 Tax Returns to **May 17, 2021**.



Individuals who need additional time to file beyond the May 17 deadline can request a filing extension until October 15. For those who estimate their taxes, please note the first **estimated 2021 tax year payments are still due on April 15.**

The IRS is also processing the American Rescue Plan's stimulus payments (up to \$1,400 per person). If you qualify, you can [track the status of your payment here](#).

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### **Investing in Our Environment & Creating Jobs**

It is critically important that as we emerge from the pandemic-induced recession, we build a stronger and greener New York. The great news is that investments in the green economy make terrific



financial sense because it is one of the most dynamic areas of the economy. **An investment in the environment helps to save our planet while energizing our economy with good paying jobs.** Every dollar invested reaps multifold returns.

With this foremost in mind, **I am cosponsoring the [Clean Air and Clean Water Environmental Bond Act of 2021](#)**, which would place a \$3 billion bond on the November ballot.

As explained in the presentation of the bill, "New York State faces a difficult road to recovery and future given the unique challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic and omnipresent threat of climate change." The Environmental Bond Act serves as the best option to spur economic recovery and job creation, while furthering the state's goal to reduce emissions as outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, [signed into law](#) in 2019.

**Should the bond be approved, \$3 billion will be invested in our future and will serve as one of the most ambitious measures in the state's history to ensure New Yorkers have equitable access to clean air and water.** Meanwhile, investments into open space, flood risk reduction, and

climate change mitigation will ensure New York is well-prepared for the clear and present dangers of climate change.

Finally, the goal of the Act is to ensure no less than **35% of all funds benefit environmental justice communities** (those most impacted by environmental harms), to help address the public health and equity issues in our most vulnerable neighborhoods.



This bill provides funds for enhancing the state's natural resources through a variety of capital project investments, including:

- **Restoration and flood risk reduction (\$1 billion)**
- **Open space, working lands conservation, and recreation (\$550 million)**
- **Climate change mitigation and environmental justice (\$700 million)**
- **Water quality improvements and resilient infrastructure (\$550 million)**

The bill has been referred to the Assembly's [Environmental Conservation Committee](#), of which I am a member. **Thank you to all those who have and continue to contact my office expressing their support for this bond.** I will keep the community apprised on how it progresses.

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### [Subcommittee Update](#)



As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, I was honored to have been named Chair of the **Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities**. As the frenetic budget season draws to a close on March 31, I will be convening the first meeting of the subcommittee to discuss our work.

I am joined on the subcommittee by two fellow members of the People with Disabilities Committee (under which my subcommittee falls), Harvey Epstein and Melissa Miller. Both are passionate about advancing the needs of people with disabilities and I look forward to rolling up our sleeves.

Increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities is so important, and at the same time an incredible challenge. Consider, for instance, that [according to Autism Speaks](#) nearly half of 25-year-olds with autism have never held a paying job, and global estimates range as high as 85% un- or underemployment. We need to do something about that. I appreciate the Speaker's establishment of this subcommittee and for appointing me its Chair. I anticipate that we will be meeting with advocacy groups, agency representatives, employers (both present and potential) and others who can help us move toward the realization of our goals.

I wish to thank the advocates who already have reached out, both with their excellent ideas and their encouragement of our work.

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## Hate Has No Home Here

I began this newsletter discussing the mass shootings in Boulder and Atlanta, and would like to end it by discussing the importance of standing with our Asian Community.

There has been a lot of debate on whether or not the killing spree in Atlanta was racially motivated. The truth is, we might never know the shooter's real reason, regardless of what he says. But the facts are that of the 8 people killed, 6 of them were Asian women.

Hate crimes against Asians have not just been on the rise, they have exploded. **We cannot stay silent.** The Asian community is grieving. They are scared. It is simply unacceptable in this day and age for any group in this country to feel that their lives are in danger simply for being who they are.

Unfortunately, this type of prejudice has been normalized as of late, and we can and must do better. We have turned a blind eye to harmful stereotypes and racist actions for far too long. On my lawn I have two signs: *Black Lives Matter* and *Hate Has No Home Here*. **We must all work together to fight systemic racism, to eradicate prejudice when we see it, and to make sure that hate really does have no home in our country.**



I was honored and humbled to speak at Wednesday night's **Rally Against Asian American and Pacific Islander Hate Crimes**. Thank you to the Horace Greeley High School group ENOUGH (Educate Now On Understanding Genocide and Hate), the Town of New Castle Holocaust and Human Rights Committee, and the New Castle Council on Race and Equity for putting the event together. The violence and discrimination against the AAPI community is horrifying and infuriating, but having over 175 people show up to this virtual rally shows us that there is hope.

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As always, if there are any issues that you would like to see covered in a future newsletter, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [burdickc@nyassembly.gov](mailto:burdickc@nyassembly.gov) (or simply reply to this email). **Please also follow me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for the most up-to-date information.**

Miss any of our previous newsletters? You can [find them here](#).

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Burdick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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