



December 18, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

As 2023 draws to a close, I wanted to take a moment and reflect on all that we've accomplished this year. Every day my team and I are working with organizations, constituents, and fellow legislators to improve the lives and wellbeing of all in our district - and for residents across New York State. I am deeply grateful for the honor to represent you in the Assembly, and it is a responsibility that gives me a sense of purpose and one I don't take lightly.

Understanding the needs and challenges of the district, and then advocating for effective solutions to address those needs and challenges, is a continual and nuanced process. Truly serving the district requires not only legislation but bringing people together, locally and across NY State, to learn about issues, to listen, and collectively develop solutions. To engage in those critical conversations this year: I've presented at conferences and formal events (traveling as far as Denmark!); advocated for issues at press conferences in district, Albany, and NYC; attended countless community events; and held over 1,000 meetings. I love celebrating our wins together at community events, and I appreciate the opportunities I've had to spend time with you at dinners, picnics, rallies, press conferences, community events, tours, and retirement parties. Here's to many more!

People ask me all the time, "So what exactly does a day or a year in the life of Assemblymember Kelles look like?" There certainly isn't a roadmap for this job, and every elected official does things a bit differently, depending on their own specializations and the needs of their district. For this final newsletter of 2023, I wanted to provide highlights of what I do throughout the year, both during session as well as the months out of session when I am prepping legislation and being in the community. Where we've been able, we've tried to quantify the work to show you the breadth and depth of what we do both in Albany and in Tompkins and Cortland Counties.

Legislative Update

During the 2023 Legislative Session:

I had **1** of my prime bills included in the FY2024 State Budget:

- [A4507](#) - State matching program to the federal Small Business Innovation Research Grants/Technology Transfer Program Funding providing wrap around support and in state residency requirements

All **10** of the my sponsored bills that passed both the House and Assembly this year were signed into law by Gov. Hochul:

- [A4903](#) - Substance Use Treatment respective personal gender and sexual orientation preferences
- [A1142](#) - Gender-Neutral Terms in Law
- [A4911](#) - Agrivoltaics Research Program and information dissemination
- [A5718](#) - Transportation Nonprofit Insurance Access via Risk Retention Groups
- [A2873-B](#) - Annual financial Digital Currency Disclosure for Public Officers
- [A1260](#) - Community Broadband Infrastructure Funding through Municipal Bonds
- [A1261](#) - Cortland Real Estate Transfer Tax Authorization
- [A6588](#) - Cortland County Sales Tax Authorization Extension
- [A6590](#) - Cortland County Mortgage Tax Authorization Extension
- [A6591](#) - Tompkins County Sales Tax Authorization Extension

I served on **6** Legislative Committees:

- Environmental Conservation Committee
- Health Committee
- Mental Health Committee
- Housing Committee
- Agriculture Committee
- Corrections Committee

In addition to the bills that I sponsor, I [co-sponsored hundreds of other bills](#) but also lent my voice and actively championed other bills

and budget requests through rallies, public hearings and briefings, as well as meetings with other members, state agencies, and the governor. During this year's budget and legislative session, I attended and spoke at nearly **40** press conferences and rallies in Albany, advocating for Climate Justice, the NY Heat Act, Medical Aid in Dying, Clean Slate (a law that will help formerly incarcerated individuals access work), Fair Wages for Home Care Workers, adequate cost of living adjustments for healthcare workers and healthcare systems, fair housing, reproductive rights, capital funding for firefighters and many more. This is the first job where I've discovered that double and triple booking isn't a mistake, but rather a strategy, during session days. If you run fast enough through the Capitol you can *almost* be in two places at once, but only with a solid staff team at your back, which I absolutely have!

Thank you to my Legislative Director Everett Hart, Deputy Legislative Director Margaret Johnson, and Albany intern Kyrs Thomas for your amazing work throughout the year on our policy work! One of the biggest day-to-day tasks I do is crafting legislation with my team, building coalitions for each bill, getting colleague cosponsorship of each bill, writing op-eds, holding legislative briefings, participating in state and federal hearings advocating for my legislation, speaking to unions, universities, and advocacy groups about my legislation and doing talks at conferences. My staff are brilliant at getting me to all these meetings and events on time, researching important topics, drafting and redrafting legislation, and sifting through the thousands of pieces of legislation from my colleagues in addition to many thousands of pages of the State Budget each year. For all this, I'm eternally grateful.



Around the District

I may not be officially teaching in a classroom anymore, but you can't take the teacher out of me! Communicating what we are doing is critical to empowering everyone in the district, and I want you all to feel engaged, informed, and represented! Here is a year at a glance of my communications:

- **52** Electronic Newsletters/E-blasts sent to a distribution list of **5,845** people (If you are so inspired, please [share this link](#) to family and friends you think might want to sign up to receive this weekly newsletter as well.)
- **3** publications mailed to every district constituent providing a deep dive overview of this year's legislative season, updates on bill signings, and even information on our holiday wrapping paper recycling program.
 - For this Wednesday, Dec. 20 from 4-7 pm in the Ithaca District Office (130 W. MLK St. - on the commons next to Mia Restaurant), don't forget that you are invited to bring gifts to our office to wrap – or come and get wrapping supplies others have dropped off. Let's reuse wrapping again next year so we can build a true circular economy and prevent 2.3 million pounds of paper going to our landfills!
- **206** Facebook posts
- **170** Instagram posts
- **111** news articles and interviews in various news publications discussing my work

Recognizing outstanding citizens and organizations and welcoming constituents to Albany are some of my favorite parts of the job!

- **46** Assembly Citations awarded
- **10** amazing women recognized in district for Women's History Month, which were highlighted in our [March 17th newsletter](#)
- Hosted **2** students from Cortland High School through the Students Inside Albany program
- Welcomed and toured with over **20** TST BOCES New Visions students during their visit in Albany

I want to take a moment to give a special shout out and thank you to my Chief of Staff Niamh Moore and Deputy Chief of Staff Carol Costell Corbin for without whom I would simply not be able to do my job. Niamh, who recently graduated from the Masters in Public Administration at Cornell's Brooks School of Public Policy, is one of the most stunningly organized, disciplined, kind, and visionary people I know. She is the conductor that makes the whole team work as a smooth-sailing ship. And to Carol, my communications guru with decades of experience at SUNY Cortland and a Masters in English, she helps craft all my messaging through the newsletters, mailers, and social media while simultaneously being the mastermind behind the thousands of requests for meetings, creating genius back-end administrative systems so nothing falls through the cracks.



Community Resources

Our district is actively engaged, and my office welcomes hearing from constituents on what is important to you as well as how we can assist you with individual issues. Here is a snapshot of a day in the life of our constituent team:

- **667** in depth constituent cases opened
- **2,663** messages from constituents on bill positions (support/oppose)
- **5,509** messages from constituents, including issues they support/oppose or funding they support in the NYS Budget
- **189** meeting requests fielded through our [new online form](#) but participated in **many hundreds more!**
- **12** wonderful interns in our district offices from GIAC, Ithaca College, Syracuse University, Cornell, and residents of areas in the district who assisted answering constituent calls and categorizing constituent outreach as well as helping design conference presentations and helping to draft legislative memos. The only hard thing about having interns is that I can't keep them on the team forever! We are so lucky to have had even just a semester or two with each of them!

Thank you to Cathy Emilian, my Ithaca District Office Director, who serves constituents with compassion, patience and an unfaltering commitment on a multitude of issues throughout the year from housing, to healthcare, education, support for incarcerated family members, child custody issues, food access, help navigating legislation, unemployment insurance issues, electric bill complaints and the list goes on. In addition, Cathy was the mastermind behind the design, construction (in partnership with Urban Core LLC), and physical move and re-opening of the Ithaca District Office. This was a huge project with endless details, and I am so grateful for her leadership!

Looking Ahead

I currently sponsor [76 active bills](#) addressing different areas and needs including legislation to: increase housing access, ensure affordability of medications, improve conditions and access to workforce development in the prison system, protect the environment, preserve the health of our freshwater bodies and ocean waterfront, ensure a just transition of existing retired power plants to renewable

energy infrastructure, establish a true circular economy to divert materials from our overflowing state landfills, and many many more.

I will always highlight legislation that addresses district-specific issues with my team as well as issues I know are priorities for the district and key areas for which you elected me. Throughout my tenure so far, my team and I have deepened our expertise in a few areas where we plan to focus our statewide legislative priorities as we move forward: Environmental Conservation; Corrections; Housing; Deconstruction and the Circular Economy; and Child Care. I am looking forward to the 2024 legislative session and sharing more about the bills as they progress through the Assembly!

I wish you peace and joy this holiday season! I hope you have opportunities to find quiet moments with loved ones in our beautiful district.

My team and I will be taking some rest over the holidays. The Albany, Ithaca and Cortland offices will be closed from Dec 21 - Jan 1, with only limited response via email. If you are experiencing an emergency, however, please call 911 for emergency personnel or 211 to connect with area resources. We look forward to reconnecting in the New Year!



Pictured above from left: Assemblymember Kelles, Carol Costell Corbin, Margaret Johnson, Niamh Moore, Everett Hart, and Cathy Emilian

In good health,

Handwritten signature of Anna R. Kelles

Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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