

Didi Barrett

Assemblymember

From

Happy Holidays!



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Hudson, NY 12534

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Dear Neighbor,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. As 2021 comes to an end, I want to update you on the work my team and I have been doing to support and advocate for our beautiful district. While the region recovers from the pandemic, we continue to help constituents access unemployment benefits and assist small businesses in applying for recovery grants and loans. In addition, **we joined with community partners to host outreach events in Dutchess and Columbia counties to help tenants and landlords apply for assistance through the state's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP).**

To support the incredible local libraries in the Mid-Hudson Library System, we secured \$85,000 to fund technology upgrades, new equipment, summer reading, camp programs and more. Further, we secured multiple grants in both Dutchess and Columbia counties to help local programs improve child care services, including early childhood and afterschool programs. In October, **my bill to establish a cyberbullying task force to address this critical issue impacting young people was signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul.**

On the Lyme and tick-borne diseases front, **our #GetTickedOff campaign began partnering with the Central New York Lyme Alliance and the great new lab at Upstate Medical Center.** And my legislation to educate farmers and farm workers about Lyme and other tick-borne diseases passed in both houses and currently awaits the governor's signature.

I have been honored to speak at several panels and conferences throughout the region about our **cutting-edge Hudson Valley Carbon Farming pilot project, which is now entering its second year.** This program has already greatly expanded our understanding of the importance of soil health and working lands for us to achieve our climate goals.

As chair of the Assembly Veterans' Affairs Committee, I shepherded a new bill to **expand the MERIT scholarship to give more veterans and their dependents an opportunity to follow their educational dreams.** The governor signed my bill on Veterans Day, along with legislation to change the start date of the Vietnam War from Feb. 28, 1961, to November 1, 1955, to match federal law and enable more veterans to access benefits. The governor also signed legislation I sponsored to provide information about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) on the DVS website and expand the Restoration of Honor Law to allow veterans with an "other than honorable" discharge to receive mental health diagnoses from outside the VA.

I proudly secured record-high funding for veterans' programs in the state budget, including **\$5 million for the Joseph P. Dwyer Vet-2-Vet Program** and a special grant for the local pioneering VetZero Heroes-Driving-Heroes Ride Program. To ensure the best possible access to programs that support and address the needs of our veteran population, I held a hearing this fall **and introduced legislation that would elevate the NYSDVS to an executive-level state agency headed by a commissioner.**

Whatever the season, I always love traveling through our beautiful district, visiting local farms and new businesses and attending community events. **This summer, we were able to relaunch our much-loved Diner Stop Tour, allowing Team Didi to catch up with constituents over a cup of coffee at a great local Hudson Valley diner.** I remain committed to helping our region grow and thrive, not just for us, but for our children and grandchildren.

I wish you and your loved ones a safe, healthy and happy holiday season!

Sincerely,



Didi Barrett
Member of Assembly, 106th District



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