



October 24, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

The General Election is approaching! Election day is Nov. 7, and early voting options begin Oct. 28. The right to vote is a sacred value of our democracy. In our polarizing society, many can become jaded or feel exhausted or defeated by elections and take the right to vote for granted. However, let us not forget the fight many who came before us endured to earn the right to vote - and the work that continues still today to fight back against threats to voting rights. I encourage you to be civically engaged, learn about the elections and candidates in your area, and get out to vote! I share some important election information below as well as some legislative and community updates.

## Legislative Update

### **Proposals on the November ballot to amend the NYS Constitution**

There are [two Statewide Ballot Proposals on the November 2023 ballot](#) that you should be aware of as you go to the polls this

November - or earlier if you plan to vote through absentee or early voting options. **Remember to turn your ballot over** to see the proposals and to vote. Changes to the New York State Constitution require bills to pass through both the Senate and Assembly twice, by two consecutive legislatures, before going to the voters for final approval.

I support these proposals. When the bills connected with the proposals advanced through the Assembly, I voted in favor of them.

**Proposal 1** (from bill [A1771a/S5025](#)): Removes the constitutional debt limitation currently imposed upon small city school districts. [This article helps explain](#) how increasing the small school debt limit from 5% to 10% to align with all other independent school districts can bring benefits. By increasing debt capacity, small city school districts will be able to advance capital projects that are more comprehensive and address greater infrastructure needs sooner. In doing so, more students will benefit from updated learning environments and residents will benefit from less costly projects since maintenance would not be overly deferred. Voters in small city school districts would continue to have the authority to approve borrowing for capital projects under this measure.

**Proposal 2** (from bill [A3776/S4597](#)): Enables municipalities to finance construction and reconstruction of sewage treatment facilities without reducing their capacity to finance other essential capital requirements. Local government finances continue to be strained by the need to repair or replace aging sewer infrastructure. The urgent need for improvements and upgrades to municipal sewer facilities is well-documented as an ongoing concern for local governments. The proposal allows municipalities to obtain financing for sewer upgrades without jeopardizing other necessary capital improvements.



## **Legislative Women's Caucus Retreat**

I had a wonderful time at the [Legislative Women's Caucus](#) Retreat this week in beautiful Lake George, NY. The bi-partisan retreat is for women in both the Senate and the Assembly, and it is a great opportunity to connect with and learn from colleagues in a more relaxed setting. We had robust discussions on how to ensure equity in higher education in light of the recent Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action as well as had the opportunity to hear from a range of women in agriculture. New York has talented, knowledgeable women in both the Senate and the Assembly, and I look forward to working with them in the 2024 legislative session.



# Around the District

## **Women's Fund Committee Luncheon and Women's Rights Legislation**

I was honored to offer keynote remarks along with Sen. Lea Webb at the Women's Fund Committee of the Community Foundation annual luncheon. The theme was "Women's Empowerment," I was able to share some recent NYS legislation that protects abortion and reproductive rights as well as transgender and nonbinary rights.

I was also excited to share more about the Equal Rights Amendment that will be on the 2024 ballot to enshrine equal protections in our NYS Constitution. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) would prohibit discrimination by the government based on a person's ethnicity,

national origin, age, disability, and sex — including their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes. [Review this document](#) to learn more about the passed legislation and the ERA.



## Congressional Redistricting Public Input

New York Independent Redistricting Commission Chair Jenkins, and Commissioners Collado, Cuevas-Molina, Flateau, and Frazier have invited public input on congressional districting while awaiting a decision from the New York Court of Appeals in a case concerning the Commission's constitutional obligation to complete the congressional

redistricting process. Argument before the Court of Appeals is scheduled for November 15, 2023.

The public is invited to submit input by emailing [submissions@nyirc.gov](mailto:submissions@nyirc.gov) or by sending mail to 250 Broadway, 22nd Floor, New York, NY 10007 Attention: Submissions, Independent Redistricting Commission. All submissions received will be made available to all Commissioners and staff.

If you would like to view the congressional plans the Commission previously submitted to the Legislature, those plans can be found at <https://www.nyirc.gov/plans>.

If you would like to view the congressional plan drawn by the Special Master appointed by the Steuben County Supreme Court and used in the 2022 congressional elections, that plan can be found at [https://www.latfor.state.ny.us/maps/?sec=2022\\_congress](https://www.latfor.state.ny.us/maps/?sec=2022_congress).

# Public Hearing

The NYS Senate and Assembly are hosting a number of public hearings this fall to hear testimony on topics impacting New Yorkers.

You can stay up to date on upcoming hearings through the [Assembly Public Hearing Calendar](#), watch the hearings live from the [Assembly website](#) or view [recordings of past committee hearings](#).

This week's hearings include:

- Tuesday, Oct. 24 at 9:30 a.m. - Packaging Reduction
- Wed. Oct. 25 at 10 a.m. - Examining library construction aid and the long-term capital needs of libraries
- Thurs. Oct. 26 at 10 a.m. - Impact and effectiveness of economic development programs funded in the 2023-2024 State Budget

# Community Resources

## Upcoming Election Information

For the November 7 General Election, you can find what you need to know, including what's on your ballot, how to register, and where to vote, by visiting [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org). Make sure to get the resources you need to make your voice heard!

In this election, the 125th district will be voting on the New York State Supreme Court Justice for the 6th Judicial District and on the Tompkins County Court Judge. Two proposals to amend the New York State Constitution will be on the back of the ballot (see information above).

Depending on your municipality, you may also be voting on local races, including City Mayor, Alderperson, Town Supervisor, Town Clerk, Highway Superintendent, Town Councilpersons, or Town Justice, and various local proposals.

- **Early voting** will be Saturday, October 28 – Sunday, November 5
- **Election Day** is Tuesday, November 7
- **Deadline to register to vote** is Saturday, October 28

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## **Lourdes "Mammo on the Move" Mobile Mammography Van**

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. Mammograms are the #1 way to find breast cancer early while it is most treatable. Those ages 40 and older should plan on receiving a mammogram annually as an effective prevention tool. To make mammograms more accessible, Tompkins County Whole Health is partnering with Lourdes Cancer Services Program to host the Lourdes "Mammo on the Move" Mobile Mammography Van on Thursday, Oct. 26 from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. at Tompkins County Whole Health (55 Brown Rd. Ithaca). You do not have to be a Lourdes patient or have health insurance to attend, and your results can be sent to the provider of your choice. Call 607-798-5723 to schedule your appointment time or [go online](#) to learn more.



*National*  
**BREAST CANCER**  
*Awareness Month*



**Screenings and early detection save lives.  
Take action. Learn the signs and symptoms.**

**Application Assistance for USDA Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP)**

The USDA is providing \$2.2 billion in financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA's farm lending prior to January 1, 2021. Anyone interested in learning more or getting help with an application is invited to a [working lunch session](#) from 12:30 to 2:30 pm, Thursday, October 26 at Cornell

Cooperative Extension Tompkins County, 615 Willow Ave in Ithaca. The program will include an informational overview and Q&A on the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP), followed by opportunities for 1:1 technical assistance with the application. This event is free, and lunch will be provided. [RSVP required](#). Please email Katie Hallas at [kh788@cornell.edu](mailto:kh788@cornell.edu) with any questions about the event or call 607-272-2292. [Read the USDA DFAP program overview](#) or the [story published in the Cornell Sun](#) for more information.

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We're promoting community reuse this holiday season! Like me, I'm sure that many of you have rolls of half-used wrapping paper, excess ribbon, and gift bags. If you have wrapping supplies (paper, ribbons, bags, shirt boxes, tissue paper, gift tags or tape) that you are willing to donate, we are now collecting at the Ithaca district office Monday - Friday, 9 am - 5 pm.

Starting in December, all constituents are welcome to come to the office conference room with your holiday gifts and wrap them for free with our collected supplies! Don't purchase more when we can reuse what is already in our community!

Save the date for our holiday celebration on **December 20** when all are welcome to visit the Ithaca District office for holiday cheer - and my staff and I will wrap your presents for you!

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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