



March 4, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

This past week in Albany, the State Legislature debated and approved a new congressional district map, continued progress on the NYS Budget, and moved new legislation forward. Read on for highlights from the week and in the district!

Legislative Update

Congressional Redistricting

The charge of the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) is to draw congressional maps for New York's legislative state and federal districts, ensuring that communities of interest are not divided into parts nor that they are put into districts that silence their voice. Likewise, the NYS Legislature is tasked with ensuring fair and sensible congressional lines that adhere to the principles laid out in the constitution to the best of our ability. This past Monday, the IRC's second Congressional map failed to pass in the Legislature. A subsequent map from the Legislature, however, passed both

houses on Wednesday and was signed into law by the Governor. This map varied less than 2% from the IRC map, with the main changes centered around the capital region and NYC. I will note in the final map, Cortland County was divided between NY19 and NY22 districts. Additionally, Tompkins County, as part of NY19, is demographically and geographically unique from much of the rest of the congressional district. While I share concerns that have been raised about ensuring a voice for the 125th Assembly District, my hope is that whoever wins these congressional seats will fully serve, listen to, and represent our district. You can [view the maps online](#).



Bird Safe Buildings Act Renamed the “FLACO Act”

Flaco, the Eurasian eagle-owl, captured the hearts and minds of New Yorkers upon its escape from the Central Park Zoo, and its untimely death from a collision with a building was a heart-wrenching end. Flaco’s death highlighted that nearly a quarter million birds in New York City, and

approximately one billion across the country, die each year from collisions with buildings. However, [these deaths are preventable](#). We need to make simple alterations to our buildings to make them more bird-friendly, and I'm proud to rename the Bird Safe Building Act ([A7808/S7098A](#)) that I sponsor with Senator Brad Holyman-Sigal to the FLACO Act ("Feathered Lives Also Count" Act) for a renewed push on this important legislation. Birds are essential for the integrity and health of almost every terrestrial ecosystem in the world, and unfortunately, the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) reports that we have lost about 3 billion birds over the last 50 years, including over 25% of all migratory birds. This is a trend we need to stop, and I'll continue to advocate for this bill this legislative session. You can read more in these recent articles from the [NY Times](#) and [Town and Country](#).



Rally for Plastic Reduction

As we tackle the mounting challenges of plastic pollution and waste management, the [Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act](#) and

the [Bigger Better Bottle Bill](#) stand as beacons of progress. I was proud to join a rally with my Senate and Assembly colleagues and citizens from across NY State advocating for these bills. Each year, over 33 billion pounds of plastic pollution enter the ocean worldwide, and we can prevent this. By ensuring responsible packaging practices start from the point of production, we can safeguard our environment for future generations and also foster a culture of sustainability and stewardship. We need a comprehensive state program of regulations and incentives that encourages reduction in plastic production, reduces plastic consumption, and incentivizes recycling and repurposing. This package of bills will do just that and ensure there are sufficient funds for enforcement. We are rapidly approaching the end of the viable lifespan of our state landfills, and we must start today to reduce and divert material from these landfills. This package will make a huge step forward towards the landfill diversion we need! You can [watch a brief video](#) of my comments at the rally.



Around the District

Village of Groton Awarded \$4.5 Million NY Forward Grant

I was thrilled to honor Groton and their stellar winning application for a N.Y. Forward Grant in Binghamton with Governor Hochul and officials from the Village of Groton. The [Governor announced](#) Groton was this year's Southern Tier region winner of the \$4.5 million NY Forward grant for a collection of projects, including the renovation and reopening of a local landmark as a destination restaurant. The NY Forward Program builds on the momentum of the state's Downtown Revitalization Initiative and provides funding for smaller and rural communities to revitalize their downtown areas. These funds will not only revitalize downtown Groton but also pave the way for sustainable economic growth, job creation, and enhanced quality of life for all residents. I look forward to seeing Groton's vision come to life through the local planning and development process and see the downtown projects honor and enhance the culture of the community.



Ithaca Chili Cook-off

I had so much fun serving as a judge for the 2024 Ithaca Chili Cook-Off! We have amazingly talented and creative chefs in our area restaurants, and I was overwhelmed by the over 30 varieties of chili with ingredients that spanned from mango to kimchi and every bean and meat you can imagine going in chili, each that represented the spirit of the sponsoring chef or restaurant. The variety of drinks and snacks from our region's breweries, local cideries, wineries, and beloved establishments did not disappoint either, including a new one for me, shiitake-infused spirits. I love how creative our community is!

The votes for the People's Choice winner are still being counted and will be announced later this week, but congratulations to the winners below!

Meat Category:

1. Taverna Banfi at the Statler Hotel

2. Antler's Restaurant

3. Ithaca Waldorf School

Vegetarian Category:

1. Antlers

2. Ithaca Southside Community Center

3. Moosewood

Chili-Inspired: Oracle Chocolates - I've literally never tasted anything like their hot chocolate and fresh made marshmallows! They use a handmade chocolate ganache mixed with a dairy or non-dairy creamy drink that blew my mind. I will be heading to the Farmer's Market for more!



Reminder: Nominations for 2024 Women of Distinction Awards due March 5

I have been amazed and heartened by the nominations that have been submitted so far for the 2024 Women of Distinction Awards. As a reminder, I am seeking nominations of women from the district who deserve recognition for their contributions to our community, either through their community leadership, civic participation, service, volunteerism, or other noteworthy accomplishments. To nominate a woman, complete the online [Nomination Form](#) by **March 5, 2024**.

Awardees will 1) Receive an official Assembly Certificate of Merit; 2) Be recognized at a reception in their honor at the Ithaca District Office on March 15; and 3) Be highlighted on my social media throughout March.

In addition, one woman will be chosen to be highlighted by the Legislative Women's Caucus. Her picture will be included in a display in Albany with other women throughout New York State for Women's History Month and will be invited to an Assembly reception in Albany. Thank you for taking the time to recognize the work of outstanding women from the district!



Assemblymember Anna R. Kelles
is seeking nominations for the

2024 WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS



Nominations must be submitted by **03/05/24**.

Nominations may be submitted online at:
bit.ly/2024WomenofDistinction

New Laws

Ithaca Carshare Legislation Now Into Effect

I am thrilled that [A5718B/S5959B](#) that was signed by Governor Hochul in September is now in effect as of March 1, ensuring Ithaca Carshare can access the insurance they need through a risk retention group to relaunch operations. Ithaca Carshare, a membership-based carsharing service that has served the community for 15 years, paused operations on May 19, 2023 and faced permanent closure, leaving more than 1,500 local members without access to 30 vehicles for their transportation needs. Over the last year, I heard from hundreds of constituents how important carshare is to them and how they relied on it for their transportation needs, so it is exciting to have this vital transportation option returning to our community, and I look forward to celebrating their relaunch with the community.

The law applies to all transportation nonprofits and will benefit carshares and transportation agencies across the state. As transportation is one of the greatest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions, continuing community carsharing and moving forward with the electrification of carshare fleets are important steps to combating transportation's impact on climate change.

New Laws in Effect

We pass many important laws in the State Assembly, and I encourage you to review the new legislation signed into law by the Governor [taking effect in](#)

[March 2024](#). I'm proud to highlight three new laws below that I co-sponsored:

- [A.68-A](#) Directs the commissioner of education to issue guidance to school districts for developing programs to attract underrepresented candidates into the teaching profession and to identify funding available to school G pc for such purposes.
- [A.4009-A](#) Provides notice of voting rights to persons released from local jails.
- [A.1967](#) Requires disclosure of information concerning flood insurance on property condition disclosure statements.



Photo credit: Spectrum News 1/File photo

Community Resources

Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes (SCAHC) Program

From the Governor's Office: Governor Kathy Hochul recently made an [announcement](#) in response to a spike in reported hate crimes including availability of the state's Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes (SCAHC) grant program.

The SCAHC grant program will allow organizations at risk of hate crimes or attacks because of their ideology, beliefs or mission to strengthen safety and security for employees and individuals they serve. Eligible organizations may apply for up to \$200,000 to fund improvements to their physical security and cybersecurity. Questions about the request for applications can be submitted to dcjsfunding@dcjs.ny.gov. The deadline for applications and vulnerability self-assessments is noon on Friday, May 17, 2024. The [Grants/Funding page of the DCJS website](#) has information about eligibility requirements, instructions, guidelines and additional information.

Cortland County Job Fair

Job seekers are invited to a Spring Job Fair on March 14 from 12 - 2pm at SUNY Cortland in Corey Union. Attendees are welcome to contact the [Cortland Works Career Center](#) prior to the event for assistance updating their resume.



SPRING JOB FAIR



**THURSDAY
MARCH 14TH, 2024
NOON-2:00PM**



**SUNY CORTLAND
COREY UNION FUNCTION ROOM
103 PROSPECT TERRACE**

**OVER 60 BUSINESSES!
FREE TO ATTEND!**

**VISIT CORTLAND WORKS CAREER CENTER
FOR A RESUME UPDATE PRIOR TO THE EVENT**

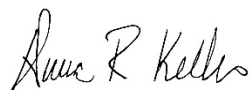


Free Name Change Clinic for LGBTQ+ Folks

The LGBT Resource Center at Cornell University, in collaboration with the Volunteer Lawyers Project, will offer a free, public [Legal Name Change Clinic](#) for LGBTQ+ folks who wish to change their name on legal and identifying documents. The clinic will be held at Cornell's campus (626 Thurston Avenue) on Friday, March 22 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Name-changing legal documents will be completed and filed on your behalf by volunteers and staff members.

In order to schedule an appointment, you must be a member of the LGBTQ+ community and fill out [this intake form](#) by March 7. At the end of the form, you will need to upload a high-resolution picture or scanned copy of your certified birth certificate. Then, you can select an appointment time located at the end of the intake form, or by clicking [this link](#). Completing the intake form as soon as possible is ideal, as appointment slots are limited and individuals will be offered an appointment on a first-come, first-serve basis. For further questions or more information please view the [FAQ document](#) or email Cortney Johnson at cj366@cornell.edu.

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

**ALBANY
OFFICE**
LOB 833

**CORTLAND
OFFICE**
83 Main St.

**ITHACA
OFFICE**
130 East

Albany,
NY 12248
518-455-
5444

Cortland, NY
13045
607-208-2024

State St.
Ithaca,
NY
14850
607-277-
8030

Assembly District 125 | kellesa@nyassembly.gov