

# Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions

Carl E. Heastie, Speaker • Amy R. Paulin, Chair

## Message from the Chair



Dear Friend,

On behalf of the New York State Assembly Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions, I am pleased to share with you the Committee's accomplishments and initiatives from the 2018 legislative session.

The Committee has jurisdiction over the laws concerning private, not-for-profit, and public corporations in New York State. Much of the Committee's focus is on the organizational framework and activities of the state's public corporations, largely referred to as public authorities. Public authorities are created in state law, operate at the state and local government level, and provide services such as mass transit, development and operation of infrastructure, power generation, and capital construction. While these entities perform vital public services, it is imperative that they act with transparency and are held accountable through public oversight.

Consequently, the Committee devotes significant time to considering legislation that promotes accountability and holding public oversight hearings of public authorities.

During the annual state budget process, the Committee reviews funding for transportation authorities and works to ensure that funds are appropriated wisely. New York has a mass transit system in nearly every major population center across the state with a public authority operating most of these systems. The Committee has a particular interest in the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which runs the largest mass transit system in the nation and has extensive capital requirements.

In addition, the Committee monitors the operations and policies of the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) and considers legislation that amends Public Service Law. The Committee takes an active role in protecting consumers and reports significant legislation that modernizes and amends Public Service Law.

The Committee also examines legislation affecting the governance of for-profit and not-for-profit corporations in the state, including cemetery corporations.

As detailed further below, the Committee reported several key bills during the 2018 session that passed the Assembly, some of which also passed the Senate and are awaiting signature by the Governor. The Committee also held a hearing with the Committee on Energy to examine utility companies' response to Nor'easters and took an active role in the budget process.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and useful.

Sincerely,



Amy R. Paulin  
Chair, Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions



Chair Amy Paulin and other Westchester members of the Committee meet with Catherine Rinaldi, the new President of the Metro North Railroad. L to r: Assemblymember David Buchwald, Metro North President Catherine Rinaldi, Chair Amy Paulin, Assemblymember Tom Abinanti, and Assemblymember Steve Otis.



Chair Amy Paulin and other members of the Committee ask questions during the Assembly Budget Hearing on Transportation, which included the MTA and Thruway Authority, in late January.

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND USEFUL INFORMATION



### NYS Public Service Commission and Your Utility Companies

The purpose of the Public Service Commission (PSC) is to ensure residential and business consumers in New York have access to electric, gas, steam, water, telecommunications, and cable TV services that are affordable, safe, and reliable – while protecting the natural environment. Here's some tips on dealing with utilities and the PSC. The staff arm of the PSC is the Department of Public Service (DPS).

#### ***Do you have a dispute with your utility company?***

For assistance with a dispute with an electric, gas, telecommunications, or water utility, please contact the Office of Consumer Services within the Department of Public Service. There are a number of ways to contact the Office of Consumer Services:

Online: <http://www.dps.ny.gov/> and go to "Complaints"

Phone: Toll Free at 1-800-342-3377 or 1-800-662-1220 for those with Hearing/Speech Impairments

Fax: 518-472-8502

Mail or in person at the nearest office location:  
Albany • Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 3,  
Albany, NY 12223

Buffalo • Ellicott Square Building  
295 Main Street – 10th Floor, Room 1050,  
Buffalo, NY 14203

NYC • 90 Church Street, New York, NY 10007

Long Island • Department of Public Service –  
Long Island Office  
125 East Bethpage Road, Plainview, NY 11803

#### ***Is there a gas leak?***

If you smell, see, or hear a natural gas leak in your immediate area, evacuate and call 911 or your local gas provider. Do not try to find the leak or use anything that is electronically powered as that can ignite the gas. Let your local utility company handle the situation for everyone's safety.

#### ***Do you see downed power lines?***

If you see downed power lines, stay away and call 911 or your local electric provider. Always assume that it is a live power line and do not touch anything the line is in contact with. When moving away, shuffle your feet, do not run. If your vehicle is in contact with downed power lines, stay inside until electrical workers tell you it is safe to leave. If you must evacuate your vehicle due to other imminent danger, jump from the vehicle away from the downed power line, land with your feet together and shuffle away from the vehicle.

#### ***Is there a water main break?***

If there is a water main break, please contact your local water provider as soon as possible. If asked to by your water authority, please use bottled water or conserve your water supply and ration its usage. A good way to do this is to fill up your bath tub before water service is shut off. After water service has been restored, please run your taps for a period of time to ensure that there is no dirt, fungi, or bacteria in your water supply that can cause harm to yourself and family.

#### ***Safe Digging***

To protect our underground utilities and structures from damage and service disruption, please call, toll free, 811 before digging. The 811 service ensures that everyone involved in the process, including the excavator, business or homeowner, and utility companies, are all on the same page so a project runs smoothly and safely for everyone involved. For more information please go to <http://newyork-811.com/> (serving NYC & Long Island) or <https://www.digsafelynewyork.com/safety-training/education> (serving Westchester and the rest of New York State).

### National Do Not Call Registry

The National Do Not Call Registry accepts registrations from both cell phones and land lines. To register by telephone, call 1-888-382-1222 (TTY: 1-866-290-4236). You must call from the phone number that you want to register. To register online, visit [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov). If you register online, you will have to respond to a confirmation email.

# Legislative Update 2018

## **A.467-A (Paulin)**

**Passed both Houses, awaiting Governor's signature**

This bill would require gas companies to categorize all reported leaks of natural gas by severity and report annually to the Department of Public Service on the date of repair, location, and severity of each leak. That information would then be available to any municipal or state public safety official, and to members of the legislature. The bill would also require the Public Service Commission to investigate the need for additional winter surveillance of gas pipelines, due to the number of dangerous leak incidents precipitated by frost.

## **A.8288-B (Paulin)**

**Passed both Houses, awaiting Governor's signature**

This bill would require gas and electric corporations, the New York Power Authority and the Long Island Power Authority to provide annual transparency statements to customers that detail charges included in the delivery service portion of utility bills.

## **A.8882-C (Fahy)**

**Passed the Assembly**

This bill would establish internet service neutrality requirements to prohibit broadband internet service providers from blocking lawful content, impairing internet traffic, and engaging in paid prioritization, and prohibit certain state and municipal entities from contracting with a broadband internet service provider unless it complies with such internet service neutrality requirements.

## **A.9805-A (Abinanti)**

**Passed both Houses, awaiting Governor's signature**

This bill would establish a process to pay cashless tolls and fines in law. The bill sets up a framework regarding notice to customers, signage, penalties, the ability to contest, debt collection, and vehicle registration suspensions. Additionally, the bill requires the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority to implement a temporary amnesty program.

## **A.9861-C (Lentol)**

**Passed the Assembly**

This bill is intended to address the temporary closure of a portion of New York City Transit's L line and would require the MTA to develop an "L subway line closure mitigation plan." The plan would require, among other things, the MTA to address transportation alternatives to accommodate diverted riders, make transportation facility improvements, utilize bus lane cameras, and provide for public input throughout the closure. Additionally, this bill would authorize the city of New York to utilize photo enforcement for violations of High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes.

## **A.9985 (Paulin)**

**Passed both Houses, awaiting Governor's signature**

This bill would require any municipality or operator that engages in excavation related to underground pipelines or conduits to require its excavators to complete a training and education program. The bill also requires the training and education program to be offered in-person and online and the certification to remain effective for five years.

## Support for the MTA: Funding the Subway Action Plan

In her first year as Chair of the Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions, which has an oversight role for the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), Assemblymember Amy Paulin was focused throughout the budget process on the state's role in providing support to address the transportation challenges surrounding the New York City Subway system.

A well-functioning MTA is not just critical for residents of New York City. It is a necessity for those who commute to work each day from Westchester and Long Island, as well as Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, and Rockland Counties.

As part of the FY2018-2019 state budget, New York implemented a surcharge on for-hire vehicles in Manhattan below 96th Street, including taxis and ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft, which will raise \$415 million each year for the Subway Action Plan and outer borough transit improvements.

In June, the new NYC Transit Authority President, Andy Byford, presented his ambitious "Fast Forward" plan to the Committee. The plan would dramatically escalate investment in upgrading and modernizing infrastructure, with an emphasis on replacing the outdated signal system with a modern, computer-based train control system, and improving the bus network through the addition of new buses and routes.

Since a safe and reliable transit system is critical to New York's economy, Chair Paulin is committed to working with President Byford and MTA leaders, Com-

mittee members, the Governor, and the Speaker to address the needs of the system.

Assemblymember Paulin anticipates holding a hearing in the near future on the upcoming 2020-2024 MTA Capital Program, to gain insight and provide input before the Program is adopted next year.

Chair Paulin also had the opportunity to meet with Catherine Rinaldi, the President of Metro North Railroad, together with the other Westchester County members of the Committee. She has been regularly following progress on the renovations being made at White Plains, Hartsdale, Scarsdale, Crestwood, and Port Chester Stations in 2018-2019, and how they are affecting off-peak service, overnights, and weekends.



*Chair Amy Paulin meets with Andy Byford, the new President of the New York City Transit Authority.*

## Public Hearing on Utility Companies' Response to Nor'easters

This year, Assemblymember Paulin was appointed Chair of the Assembly Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions. In that capacity, she convened a hearing jointly with the Chair of the Energy Committee, to examine the response of utility companies to the winter snowstorms that slammed into the Hudson Valley in March and left hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers without power for as many as ten days.

Winter Storm Riley hit New York State on Friday, March 2 with wind gusts between 50 and 80 mph, and a combination of rain and snow. Over 500,000 customers lost power as a result of the storm, with the vast majority of outages occurring in the Hudson Valley (including Dutchess, Putnam, Sullivan, and Westchester counties). A mere five days later, the region was hit with another nor'easter, Winter Storm Quinn, with high winds and over 15 inches of snow falling in the Hudson Valley. The delays in power restoration were extensive, with thousands of customers who had lost their power during Riley still without electricity for days after Quinn.

Chair Paulin and other members of the Committees heard directly from representatives of these utilities, including Con Edison, the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG), Central Hudson Gas & Electric, and PSEG Long Island, on how they had planned for these storms in terms of operations, staffing, and communications, how that preparation impacted their respective storm responses and their abilities to coordinate with municipalities to restore power, and how the results of these storm events would influence their planning for future weather events.



*Chair Amy Paulin tours the New York Power Authority's Integrated Smart Operations Center and meets with NYPA CEO Gil Quinones and White Plains Mayor Tom Roach.*

The Committees also heard testimony from the Public Service Commission, the state regulatory body that is conducting its own review of storm responses. Finally, the Committees heard from representatives from County and municipal governments, including Westchester County Executive George Latimer, Westchester County Legislators Michael Kaplowitz and MaryJane Shimsky, and White Plains Mayor Thomas Roach, who had produced their own review, in cooperation with local elected officials throughout the County, of the performance of the utility companies and had made recommendations for improvement.

"Not all utility customers had the same miserable experience," said Assemblymember Paulin. "PSEG Long Island customers had a quicker restoration time and a better customer service experience. We need to learn the lessons of what went wrong – and right – in March and apply them moving forward so we're not repeating this pattern for future major storms. This hearing was just the first step."

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248

2018 Legislative Update from the New York State Assembly

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## Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions

Assemblyman Amy R. Paulin, Chair