



**Assemblyman**  
**TOM**  
**ABINANTI**  
*Reports to the People*

WINTER 2012

Dear Neighbor,

*My report to you earlier this year focused on budget-related matters and legislation to reform the way the state regulates residential and day facilities for people with disabilities.*

*This newsletter touches on some efforts to enhance public safety and protect our environment statewide. It also highlights some regional and local matters that directly affect our Westchester, Greenburgh and Mount Pleasant communities.*

*The legislative session had successes, but also left a long list of things undone – many of which are on the “to-do” list for next year.*

*If I may be of any assistance to you, please don't hesitate to contact my office.*

## **ASSEMBLYMAN ABINANTI ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO NEWTOWN GUN VIOLENCE**

Our hearts go out to those in Newtown, Connecticut. Yet, in truth, we are all affected. Every violent incident diminishes us all and sets the stage for the next.

Newtown is just the latest, most horrific example of the rampant gun violence plaguing all of our communities. Let it not be just another - let it move us to do what we should have done long ago.

I echo Mayor Bloomberg's outrage over the failure of this country's leadership to take steps to stop the violence. I propose a common-sense plan:

First, keep guns away from those who would misuse them. Ban military-style weapons; register all guns, regulate their transfer, and mandate their secure storage; carefully license every gun owner, train them in gun safety and check on them periodically.

Second, use more mental health professionals in the community to minimize

the likelihood of violence. We have annual physicals, dental exams and car inspections – but we avoid mental health professionals.

Finally, change our culture and the political discussion. Stop glorifying violence, guns and those who use them. Stop the polite language about those who protect them politically. Members of Congress and state legislatures who refused to renew the assault weapon ban – who refused to pass common-sense gun laws – bear responsibility for their failures. Guns are not toys and we should stop treating them like toys. The second amendment doesn't guarantee the right to bear arms to kill innocent teachers and children.

We are under siege by those who misuse guns – no man, woman or child in this country is safe. Per Bob Dylan, “How many deaths will it take till we know that too many people have died?”

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# A SAFER COMMUNITY - A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT

## DNA DATABANK

The legislature passed a new law requiring that DNA samples be collected from everyone convicted of a felony or Penal Law misdemeanor. This will help get dangerous criminals off the street. The new law also gives those who may have been wrongfully convicted more access to the DNA databank to help prove their innocence.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

To enhance protections for domestic violence victims from repeat offenders, the legislature passed new laws that define a new felony for those who repeatedly commit specified misdemeanor offenses and that permit courts to consider prior violations of an order of protection and firearm use in determining bail.

## CYBER-BULLYING

To protect children from bullying and cyber-bullying, the legislature established a mandatory reporting system for all bullying incidents and required new training for certain school staff.

## MICROSTAMPING

The Assembly passed legislation to strengthen our gun laws. To assist law enforcement in tracing weapons, the legislation requires that all semiautomatic pistols made for or delivered to a New York dealer be microstamped with a unique code which is transferred to shell casings when the gun is fired. (The bill awaits Senate action.)

## I-STOP

To limit prescription drug abuse, the legislature created a new Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing (I-STOP) which: 1. requires doctors to review a patient's controlled-substance prescription history before giving another such prescription; 2. requires pharmacists to report controlled narcotics in real time; 3. establishes a program for safe disposal of unused medications; and 4. provides for medical education courses and public awareness measures about pain management and prescription drugs.

*Assemblyman Abinanti with Westchester Library System President Dave Donelson and Executive Director Terry Kirchner after they testified at an Albany hearing on state library funding.*



## WATER PROTECTION

The legislature passed several new clean water measures co-sponsored by Assemblyman Abinanti, including: a Sewage Pollution Right to Know Law requiring public notification of sewer discharges into waterways; a law to better control invasive species in our waterways; and legislation to increase the Environmental Protection Fund with monies from unredeemed "bottle deposits" (vetoed by Governor).

## HEALTH

The legislature approved several new laws to promote individual health, including: prohibiting smoking within 100 feet of school entrances; requiring a parent's permission for tanning and body piercing of minors; and allowing pharmacists to administer shingles vaccinations prescribed by a health care professional.

*Assemblyman Abinanti with Guy Davis and Peter Yarrow at the Clearwater Festival.*



## HYDRO-FRACKING

Assemblyman Abinanti opposes permitting hydraulic fracturing for natural gas in New York. He called for Environment Committee hearings in Westchester to encourage public discussion about the hazards of fracking. He co-sponsored several bills which passed the Assembly to require a comprehensive health impact assessment of fracking, regulate drilling waste and affirm local governments' zoning power to regulate drilling. (The bills await Senate action.)



*Assemblyman Abinanti with Greenburgh Supervisor Paul Feiner and Town Clerk Judith Beville presenting historic register designation to the Hartsdale Canine Cemetery representatives.*



*Assemblymembers Abinanti and Galef with environmentalists supporting legislation to keep hazardous hydrofracking wastewater out of Westchester.*

# Our Community

## UNPLUG CON ED

After Superstorm Sandy, Assemblyman Abinanti called for the replacement of Con Edison as Westchester's power provider. As a public utility and monopoly, Con Ed controls delivery of electricity and gas to most of Westchester.

While commending the efforts of Con Ed employees, Abinanti criticized Con Ed's storm response in Westchester as "totally inadequate," "a management fiasco" and "a poor plan, poorly executed." He charged that in Westchester, Con Ed did not have enough workers, failed to coordinate with local governments (who responded more timely) and failed to give the public necessary information. Assemblyman Abinanti characterized Con Ed's storm response as typical of its long-term neglect of Westchester. He has asked for Assembly hearings on Con Ed's poor response.

## BAR TRUCKS FROM PARKWAYS

Assemblyman Abinanti introduced legislation to require the State Department of Transportation to install height-restrictor bars across certain entrances to Westchester parkways to deter oversized trucks from entering.

About 800 trucks wandered onto Westchester's passenger-only parkways and over 50 struck bridges last year. Trucks on parkways are a hazard not just to bridges but also to passenger vehicles.

Similar height devices are commonplace to keep tall vehicles out of parking structures. One such device spans the northbound lanes of Manhattan's Henry Hudson Parkway. Then a county legislator, Assemblyman Abinanti first suggested these physical warning devices in 2001 and has urged their installation since.



*Assemblyman Abinanti and Congresswoman Nita Lowey, with FEMA and NYS representatives addressing emergency funding for waterfront businesses damaged by Superstorm Sandy.*

## T Z BRIDGE RESIDENT DISCOUNTS

Assemblyman Abinanti has proposed a Tappan Zee Bridge EZ Pass discount for Westchester residents to protect them from proposed toll increases for the new bridge construction.

Assemblyman Abinanti has proposed changing the formula for allocating the Thruway system cost which

charges more for the TZB toll to subsidize the rest of the system. He also suggested that the state construct one new bridge rather than two and use the existing bridge for buses and greenway-recreation purposes to lower costs, reduce community impacts and make the project more community friendly.

## GREENBURGH – Park Tennis Bubble

The legislature approved Assemblyman Abinanti's legislation to allow Greenburgh to lease an underutilized portion of its town park for commercial seasonal public tennis facilities. The new law is intended to provide the community with more recreational opportunities and provide the town with revenue.

## MOUNT PLEASANT – Towers Plan Topples

Assemblyman Abinanti joined with the Pleasantville mayor, other local officials and numerous residents, to convince the Department of Transportation to cancel its plans for seven 120-foot microwave communications towers along the Saw Mill River Parkway. Well-informed and well-organized citizens working together can make a difference!

### WEBSITE:

<http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Thomas-J-Abinanti>

### FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/#!/assemblymanabinanti>