



Assemblymember  
**Chris Burdick**

*Supporting the 93rd Assembly District*

## 2022 NYS Assembly Newsletter

Dear Friends,

Over the last year-and-a-half, I have had the honor to serve as your Assemblymember, sitting on the Correction, Environmental Conservation, Housing, People with Disabilities and Veterans' Affairs Committees, as well as serving as Chair of the Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities. I was sworn into office in January 2021 at the height of the pandemic, and it has been so gratifying to see the strides New York has made since then. While the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet behind us, life does seem to have returned to (our new) normal.

Because of the pandemic, this was the first full session that took place in Albany (rather than remote participation), and what a session! It would require me to write a book (rather than a newsletter) to discuss all that the legislature accomplished, but I do hope you find the following pages to be a useful update. I also hope, if you have not yet done so, that you will sign up for my email newsletter at [tinyurl.com/BurdickNewsletter](https://tinyurl.com/BurdickNewsletter).

While you might assume that legislation is the main

focus of being an Assemblymember – and indeed it is an incredibly important focus – I consider my duty to assist my constituents and my partners in government of equal, if not greater, importance. My office helps residents deal with problems involving any NYS agency, including the Department of Labor, DMV and DOT. If we can't help directly, we are almost always able to put people in touch with the right agency, government entity, community based organization, or nonprofit that can help. Never hesitate to reach out.

Finally, if you have a concern about a bill – or simply an opinion that you would like to voice – I welcome that as well. Hearing from my constituents allows me to better represent my district, so please feel free to reach out with any concerns, issues, or problems.

*Chris Burdick*

**Assemblymember Chris Burdick**

100 South Bedford Rd, Suite 150, Mount Kisco, NY 10549  
914-244-4450 • [burdick@nyassembly.gov](mailto:burdick@nyassembly.gov)

## New York Stands Strong for Reproductive Rights

Even before the Supreme Court struck down fifty years of settled law in June by overturning *Roe v. Wade*, New York was already working to further ensure that a woman's right to choose was protected.

During regular session, we passed five pieces of legislation to protect reproductive health care providers, as well as to provide a safe haven to those who come to New York to seek reproductive health care.

One of my bills, the Freedom from Interference with Reproductive and Endocrine Health Advocacy and Travel Exercise (FIRE HATE) Act (A.10094), was included in that package. The FIRE HATE Act establishes a cause of action for unlawful interference with certain rights protected under New York State law, including the right to legally terminate a pregnancy. The FIRE HATE Act similarly protects those who come to New York for gender-affirming health services.

Following the Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the legislature, in an extraordinary session, took the first step needed to enshrine reproductive rights in the New York State Constitution (A.41002). The amendment, which also includes additional protections for sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, age and other protected classes, will need to pass in one more legislative session before going to the voters for their approval.



With Governor Hochul, following her signing the FIRE HATE Act into law.

## Protecting New Yorkers from Gun Violence

Following the tragedy in Buffalo and other recent mass shootings, the Assembly acted quickly to pass groundbreaking legislation to help keep families safe, including laws that:

- ✓ Strengthen New York's Red Flag Law. (A.10502)
- ✓ Raise the age to purchase a semi-automatic rifle to 21 and require a license to purchase. (A.10503)
- ✓ Eliminate the grandfathering of high-capacity magazines. (A.10428-A)
- ✓ Ban bulletproof vests for all except people in eligible professions. (A.10497)
- ✓ Implement enhanced safety and security measures at gun stores. (A.1023-A)

After the Supreme Court struck down our state's long-standing common-sense law on concealed weapons, the legislature, in an extraordinary session, passed additional measures to protect New Yorkers (A.41001), which include:

- ✓ Prohibiting the carrying of concealed weapons in sensitive public locations such as schools, stadiums, childcare centers, hospitals, and subways.
- ✓ Establishing that concealed weapons are prohibited by default on private property unless expressly authorized by the owner by the posting of a sign.
- ✓ Expanding requirements for concealed carry permits – including character references, firearm training courses, and background checks – and disqualifying applicants with documented instances of violent behavior.
- ✓ Requiring permit applicants to undergo training on the handling of guns, establishing state oversight of background checks (including regular checks on permit holders for criminal convictions), and creating a statewide license and ammunition database.

## Educational Funding & Middle-Class Tax Cuts

Over the last two years, the NYS legislature has made its biggest commitment to public education ever, committing to fully fund Foundation Aid (the largest category of unrestricted state aid supporting our public schools) within three budget cycles. State aid helps maintain the excellence of our schools while holding down school property taxes. We also provided significant increases in funds to the state's higher education system.

Speaking of taxes, the legislature fully implemented (on an accelerated timeline) New York's middle-class tax cut in the 2022-23 budget. As a result, the state's middle-class tax rates are the lowest in 70 years for taxpayers with a combined income between \$29,700 and \$323,200.

## Protecting Our Environment

The 93rd Assembly District is home to some of the most beautiful and environmentally sensitive areas in our state, and dating back to my days as Bedford Town Supervisor and even before, protecting the environment has always been of utmost importance to me.

The 2022-23 budget provides a record \$400 million for the New York State Environmental Protection Fund to support climate change resilience, advance conservation efforts, and increase recreational opportunities. Additionally, the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act will appear on this year's general election ballot. **You will see the question (Proposition 1) on the back of the ballot, so please flip it over.**

If approved by voters on November 8, the Bond Act will make \$4.2 billion available to:

- ✓ **Safeguard clean drinking water** by preventing sewage and other pollution from reaching our reservoirs, lakes, rivers, beaches, and bays by protecting the natural sources of our drinking water, and by replacing lead pipes.
- ✓ **Modernize infrastructure** by updating aging or failing drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure, as well as transportation infrastructure that repeatedly floods.
- ✓ **Help clean the air we breathe** by planting more street trees, paying for zero emission school buses, and upgrading public buildings to improve energy efficiency and air quality.
- ✓ **Protect public health** by expanding renewable energy, creating community gardens, conserving family farms, building cooling centers that save lives during heatwaves, and reducing pollution in disadvantaged communities.
- ✓ **Restore wildlife habitats**, such as forests and wetlands, which prevent dangerous flooding and help naturally filter our water.
- ✓ **Build and expand access to parks**, campgrounds, and nature centers.
- ✓ **Advance environmental justice** by directing 35-40 percent of total funding to disadvantaged communities, which are the communities often harmed most by pollution.

## Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

I was honored last year to not only be appointed to the newly-created Committee on People with Disabilities, but to be appointed Chair of the Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities. As this was not an area with which I previously had much experience, I quickly formed an advisory committee of advocates and experts to help me with my work.

Through the committee and by meeting with wonderful employers such as the Prospector Theater in Ridgefield (which, if you haven't visited, I highly encourage it)



and Spectrum Designs in Pleasantville, I learned that so many individuals with disabilities not only want to work and contribute, but have the capacity and capability to do so. In the case of the Prospector, the theater's guiding principle (in addition to providing an extraordinary theater-going experience for all) is to find the "sparkle" in each of its over 100 "Prospects" (employees), approximately 75% of whom self-identify with a disability. They find each Prospect's "sparkle" (their passion) and translate that into appropriate roles at the theater. Moreover, they make sure the Prospects have the tools and support they need to be successful in those roles.



#### ***Our Visit to the Prospector Theater.***

I also visited and spoke with other employers both in my district and elsewhere in the state, such as ShopRite in Bedford Hills and Price Chopper in Schenectady, to get their experiences and perspective as well.

Last October, my colleagues and I held a 10-hour public hearing on barriers to employment for people with disabilities, which highlighted more employer success stories like the Prospector. We also heard about how we could improve employment opportunities through state agencies and contracts with them. During that hearing, not only did we hear from businesses and government agencies, but also advocates, parents of people with disabilities, and people with disabilities themselves - some of whom traveled far and waited all day to testify. Thank you to all those who made the trek up to Albany to make their voices heard.

This year, the legislature put together a package of bills focusing on those with disabilities - including proposals addressing both employment and non-employment issues - that cleared with strong bipartisan support. We passed nine bills, including two I authored to help provide additional employment opportunities: a proposal to modernize the preferred source provisions of state law to increase employment for people with disabilities among companies with state agency contracts (A.8549-C), and a proposal to create a pilot program for best hiring, training, and employment practices for both profit and nonprofit firms (A.8915-A).

I am so pleased with the strides we have made in this area over the last year, but there is still so much more that needs to be done. Indeed, with the oft-cited workforce shortages, it simply makes good business sense that employers look to people with disabilities to help fill their needs. We need to do all that we can to get that message out.

## **Elevating Veterans Services**

The New York State Division of Veterans' Services was established over 75 years ago to serve World War II veterans. Although the Division has adapted to technological changes since it was first created, its structure and purpose (until this year's legislative session) has remained largely unchanged. At the same time, only an estimated 17 percent of the overall veterans population have been accessing their earned benefits.

This year, as part of the budget, the legislature elevated the Division of Veterans' Services to a full department, beginning on April 23, 2023. This change highlights the importance of, and our respect for, veterans and their service. Veterans service programs will now be consolidated for one-stop access, eliminating confusion and frustration, and helping to make these programs more readily accessible to veterans and their families. This change may also lead to additional federal funds being available to New York for veterans services.



*Delivering Valentines for Veterans back in February.*

## **Supporting Our Municipalities & Nonprofits**

As a member of the Assembly, I have had the opportunity, working with my colleagues, to provide funding opportunities for local nonprofits and municipalities.

I am delighted that I have been able to secure funding for several nonprofits in my district that have been doing an exemplary job, including the Community Center of Northern Westchester, Friends of Karen, Girls Inc. of Westchester County, Harrison Children's Center, the Harrison Public Library, Hope's Door, Lifting up Westchester, the LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center, Neighbors Link, Northern Westchester Hospital Association, PACE Women's Justice Center, TRA/Westfair and the Women's Enterprise Development Center.

My colleagues and I also recently secured \$350,000 for Latino U College Access (LUCA) in the NYS budget. LUCA empowers first-generation Latino youth on their path to college and graduation through individualized mentorship and culturally relevant, bilingual programming for students and their families.



The funding will be used to increase services in White Plains, Ossining, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown and Elmsford, and expand services to Port Chester, New Rochelle, Peekskill, Bedford and Mount Kisco.



*Last October's announcement of \$400,000 in state funding to help build Lewisboro's new inclusive playground, which is scheduled to be installed this fall.*

improve or expand physical assets, provide jobs, and will provide significant benefits to the communities they serve. For instance, I am working to secure funding for the Town of North Salem in the amount of \$125,000 for critical electrical upgrades to the Schoolhouse Theater building.

The building, recently acquired by the town, will serve as a center for live performances and senior programs.



**Announcing the funding for LUCA at White Plains High School.**

In addition to grants secured for nonprofits, I also have been able to secure grants specifically for capital projects. For instance, last year I was able to secure \$1.1 million in grants to district municipalities to help fund inclusive and accessible playgrounds, park facilities upgrades, green space enhancements, train station security and safer sidewalks and parking lots.

I am well underway in the capital grants process for 2022 and am excited at the wide array of wonderful capital projects the municipalities and nonprofits in my district are planning or have launched. These projects

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248

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## News from Assemblymember **Chris Burdick**



## Recognizing Our Interns

Before the end of session, several of my hardworking interns (Flora, Jack, Izzy, and Nadia) were able to make the trip up to Albany. With the end of session nearing, it was an exciting day to be there, with dozens of bills passing (including two of my own). I introduced the interns on the floor of the Assembly Chamber after they toured the Legislative Office Building and the Capitol. Seeing the wonder and awe in their eyes reminded me of what a remarkable place our Capitol is and how privileged I am to serve our community.



I am so grateful to our interns for all that they do to help my office function at its very best. I look forward to seeing great things from them in the future!