



# Assemblyman Steve Otis



## Legislative Update

December 2025

Dear Friends,

*This newsletter shares details on some of the issues that have been part of my advocacy and work this year.*

*Through my role as Chair of the Assembly Science and Technology Committee, I have been able to play a leadership role on rapidly changing technology issues facing New York, the nation, and the world. My continued work on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data privacy, and digital equity has allowed me to make a difference on these issues in New York.*

*I continue to be a leading advocate for state funding for clean water and storm resiliency, grant funding very important to Westchester municipalities.*

*This year brought a \$1.7 billion increase in state aid to local school districts that are now bracing for federal cuts which will affect education and most other state services including healthcare, energy, and environmental programs. Fighting for our school districts to receive their fair share of state aid has been a priority of mine for many years. Having won full allotment of Foundation Aid, thereby bringing short-changed districts to the levels they deserved was a major victory. The new battleground will be maintaining funding and making sure any changes to the formula treat Westchester districts fairly.*

*I have also been an advocate for Westchester-based New York School for the Deaf and other schools serving students with disabilities.*

*During the holiday season, please remember local retailers in your shopping plans. They are an important part of our Westchester economy and the community life of the Sound Shore.*

*Your patronage will help in many ways.*

*I hope that you will contact me with your ideas for legislation or on issues where I can be of assistance. My commitment to thoroughness in addressing the issues facing Westchester and our state drives this work. I am looking forward to more success in the new legislative session starting in January.*

*I wish you and your family happiness in this holiday season.*

Warm regards,

Steven Otis  
State Assemblyman

### District Office:

222 Grace Church Street • Port Chester, NY 10573  
914-939-7028

### Albany Office:

Room 739, Legislative Office Bldg. • Albany, NY 12248  
518-455-4897

Email: [otiss@nyassembly.gov](mailto:otiss@nyassembly.gov)

Website: [nyassembly.gov/mem/Steven-Otis](https://nyassembly.gov/mem/Steven-Otis)

## AI Policy Issues a Hot Topic for Public and Private Sector

As Chair of the Assembly Science and Technology Committee, I am very involved in a variety of emerging and fast-moving AI policy issues. Part of my responsibility is to track legislative and policy developments in New York, other states, the federal government, and across the globe. In New York our legislative focus has been on transparency, fairness, and quality control of AI use by government. Legislation I sponsored in 2024 regarding AI use by state agencies in employment decisions was signed into law (Chapter 674 of 2024; Chapter 96 of 2025).

This year we have passed new legislation that builds on the 2024 legislation for disclosure of AI tools used by government when making consequential decisions (A8295-D). I have worked on several issues related to AI use affecting publishers and broadcasters (A8595-B).

For the second year, I participated in the annual Converge Conference sponsored by the Westchester County Association, The STEM Alliance, and Westchester County.

“The Hudson Valley Digital Innovation Conference: Transforming Business in the Age of AI and Quantum Computing,” again brought technology companies, academics, government officials, and not-for-profit leaders together to discuss cutting-edge issues in technology and society.

The subject of my panel was “Policy & Protection – Regulating Telecom and AI for the Public Good,” which provided a good discussion of developments in AI policy in New York and around the country. New York has attracted microchip manufacturing companies and launched the Empire AI Consortium to use AI for the public good. The engaging panel ensured a good discussion. Panel members are listed in the photo caption below.



Assemblyman Otis speaking on a panel on “Regulating Telecom and AI for the Public Good” with (l – r) John Emra, President of AT&T Atlantic Region; Albert Pulido, Deputy Secretary for Finance and Technology for Governor Hochul; Judah Holstein, Westchester County Legislator; and Karim Mohammadali, Manager of Government Affairs and Public Policy for Google.

## Port Chester Indoor Recreation Space Under Construction

I was very excited to participate in the groundbreaking for the village of Port Chester’s project to transform the old Horton School Gymnasium into a revitalized indoor recreation and multi-purpose space that will be used by the village’s Recreation Department, Youth Bureau, and for other community-based activities.

The renovation, long discussed by village officials, will increase the functionality of the space through renovation of the gymnasium, bathroom facilities, kitchen, and storage rooms, giving it the potential to be converted into an emergency shelter.

Funding for the project combines village funds with \$750,000 in a state grant Senator Mayer and I secured for the project. The gym restoration has been a planning priority for the village for many years.



Left to Right: Village Trustee George Ford, Assemblyman Otis, Mayor Luis Marino, Village Trustee Sylvia Dundon, Village Trustee Phil Dorazio, Senator Shelley Mayer, Village Trustee John Allen, and Village Manager Stuart Rabin.



# New Rochelle City Court's Opportunity Youth Part Continues to Change Lives



*Assemblyman Otis with County Legislator Shanae Williams, Judge Jared Rice, Congressman George Latimer, and Judge Eileen McCarthy at the New Rochelle City Court Opportunity Youth Part Five-Year Anniversary Celebration.*

It is always a moving experience to attend Opportunity Youth Part (OYP) ceremonies in the courtroom of New Rochelle City Court Judge Jared Rice.

The OYP model provides the courts involved with Emerging Adults—16 to 24 years old—facing misdemeanor or felony charges with the opportunity to obtain a favorable legal outcome after being connected to local community organizations providing critical, immediate interventions needed to steer these individuals to a better path. The program was created by Judge Rice working with the New York State Unified Court System Office for Justice Initiatives. OYP connects Emerging Adult offenders with a program of assessment, social service assistance, counseling, and other interventions to change the direction and prospects at this pivotal juncture in their lives.

At the five-year anniversary celebration, ten All-Stars of the program were recognized for their achievement. Each was presented by the caseworker from the local agency that provides services for the court that is essential to making the program a success. In the five years of the program, 140

young adults have successfully completed the program. Impressive statistics show that 87% of participants leave the process without a criminal record and 95% have not returned to New Rochelle City Court for additional criminal cases.

In Albany I have been an active supporter for the program, successfully advocating for increased state funding for Alternative Court Programs such as New Rochelle’s OYP and in securing state grants to help fund the social service agencies that serve Judge Rice’s program in New Rochelle.

What is most impressive about New Rochelle’s OYP program is the range of local services brought in to help change the direction of the lives of the youthful offenders. Judge Rice’s prior service on the New Rochelle City Council provided a grounding in what services are available and needed in the city. The range of services offered here is what distinguishes New Rochelle’s OYP program from other successful court diversion programs. You can read more about the program by reading the OYP Five-Year Annual Report summary on my Assembly website.

Judge Rice and the New Rochelle OYP has been recognized by Court of Appeals Chief Judge Rowan Wilson who has visited the program and shared his support for the OYP model: “The Opportunity Youth Part embodies the problem-solving approach that should animate our courts. Instead of reflexively doling out criminal sentences, the court system, the prosecution, the defense, social workers, and case managers work together toward a common goal: improving the lives of troubled emerging adults by providing wraparound services... which makes the community better, stronger and safer. OYP’s innovative approach, as well as the care and compassion Judge Rice and his team afford to every single person, is what we and our partners in the executive and legislative branches are working towards as we reimagine our courts statewide.”

My goal is to continue to support the program in New Rochelle and to work with Judge Rice and state officials to replicate this model in other communities. At the end of the ceremony, I was honored to be recognized as the 2025 Community MVP for the program, an award that has been given at each year’s anniversary celebration. The real heroes are Judge Rice, court staff, the social service agencies that partner with the court, the Westchester County District Attorney’s Office, and the New Rochelle Police Department who all work together to make this program a success.

## Mamaroneck-Larchmont Route 1 Complete Streets Project a Major Priority

The timing of a major NYS Department of Transportation project for the Boston Post Road corridor in Mamaroneck and Larchmont provides a once in a generation opportunity to evaluate and implement traffic and pedestrian safety design improvements for Route 1.

Since January of 2024, Senator Mayer and I have been working together on plans for improvements on the corridor with NYS DOT, local municipal and school officials, and traffic safety advocates. In June, DOT hosted a well-attended open house that included local officials, parents, and community advocates. Our goal is to integrate and seek funding for well-designed pedestrian safety, traffic calming, and safe routes to school sought by the community for Boston Post Road. DOT

consultants are in the process of reviewing the public comments to the presentation materials displayed at the open house and will come back with a revised design based upon those comments. I am following this process closely. We have had great interest and support from NYS DOT in working with community suggestions.

Our long-standing commitment remains to work with every level of government to improve traffic and pedestrian safety infrastructure. The NYS DOT is also ready to work with the three municipalities and the two school districts on any short-term requests that they feel need to be addressed while the major project is advancing.

## Science and Technology Site Visits in Binghamton

The Binghamton area has a history of being a leader in New York State’s technology innovation and continues to host key research and educational centers for our future of technology.

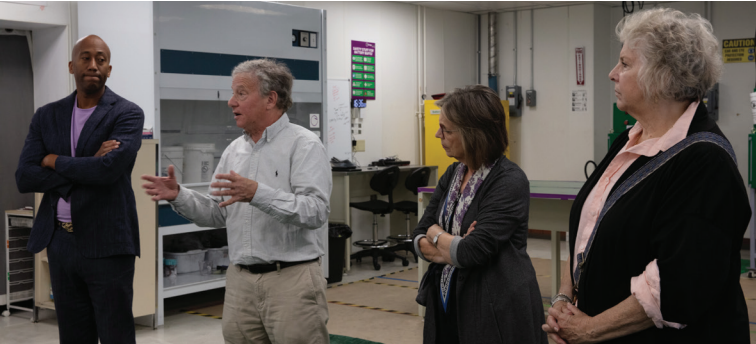
This summer I organized two days of site visits and meetings in Binghamton for the Assembly Science and Technology Committee with SUNY Chancellor John King.

For the area’s technology legacy, we visited the TechWorks Center for Technology & Innovation where we met with retirees who built the flight simulators for NASA’s Apollo missions to the moon, and worked on the original main frame computers for IBM, a company founded in Binghamton. TechWorks volunteers spoke about Binghamton’s role in past technological breakthroughs.

We visited the lab of Bridge Green Upcycle, which is pioneering and implementing lithium battery recycling. Bridge Green extracts lithium, cobalt, nickel, and manganese from batteries, which can directly feed back into the sector to help strengthen domestic production and mitigate trade deficits. The company’s goal is to “Clean up Clean Energy.” We visited their research facility on the SUNY campus in Endicott and discussed their plan to expand battery recycling with new plants in New York.

Battery storage technology was also the topic of another tour at the SUNY Broome campus, where we saw the university’s research and development of expanded storage technology. We joined SUNY Chancellor John King in a discussion of the SUNY Reconnect Program that provides retraining programs for adults in fields where workers are needed. SUNY Reconnect funds degrees in several high-demand fields, including Advanced Manufacturing, Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Engineering, Technology, Nursing and Allied Health Fields, Green and Renewable Energy, and Pathways to Teaching in Shortage Areas.

At Binghamton University we received briefings from their Innovative



*Assemblyman Otis asking questions at a briefing at Bridge Green Upcycle, a firm pioneering and implementing lithium battery recycling methods. The Assemblyman is with Assembly colleagues Clyde Vanel, Donna Lupardo, and Didi Barrett.*

Technologies Complex (ITC) on topics that included battery technology, AI, and data center efficiency research, as well as touring numerous research labs.

The interdependence between private sector companies and SUNY was one theme that resonated. The scientific research equipment used by SUNY is often more advanced than equipment in the hands of private companies. The working relationship between companies in need of assistance and SUNY’s research programs benefits our economy and the high-level educational experience offered by SUNY.

In 2024 our committee visited science and technology sites in Buffalo where New York’s Empire AI Consortium is centered at Buffalo University. We have planned future trips to match the committee’s work with in-person meetings with researchers and educators on the front lines.



# New York’s Commitment to Clean Water and Storm Resiliency Funding Continues

I continue to be a leading advocate of vital state programs to help local governments fund clean water infrastructure projects. In this year’s state budget, we continued to maintain the \$500 million annual allocation for clean water programs. I again organized the Assembly advocacy for this funding with my colleague Assemblyman John McDonald of Cohoes. In 2015 we initiated the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA) grant program, which has to date brought over \$3 billion in grants to over 1,100 projects across the state. In Westchester, \$132 million in grants has been awarded to 53 projects. Every dollar reduces the burden on local property tax bills to pay for what are essential water infrastructure programs. Most of the annual \$500 million appropriation goes to the WIIA program and related Intermunicipal (IMG) grants.



In addition to pressing for the continuation of the \$500 million, I have advocated for increased water infrastructure funding to address our stormwater and flood resiliency needs. In addition to the specific clean water allotment, other funding is made available through the \$425 million Environmental Protection Fund and the NYS Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act.

I again hosted my annual Water Infrastructure Grant Workshop to provide Westchester municipal government staff and officials and environmental advocates important updates on current state grant opportunities from a variety of state agencies. My goal is to make sure Westchester municipalities have the latest information on state water grant opportunities and to bring those resources to our county. Our key partners are the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The workshop is scheduled to coincide with the opening of the grant application round each year. We were also joined by representatives of the NYS Department of Health (DOH), NYS Department of State (DOS), and the federal Sea Grant program.

Special thanks go to Governor Kathy Hochul, NYS EFC President Maureen Coleman, and DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton for the tremendous staff support for this valuable annual meeting. We were again joined this year by

State Senator Shelley Mayer with whom I work closely on flood mitigation and water grant funding issues.

**Town of Rye** - Good news comes throughout the year. The Town of Rye was just awarded \$8.1 million from New York’s Green Resiliency Grant program for the Rye Town Park Sustainability Project, which includes porous pavement, bioretention, rain barrels, stream daylighting, and drainage enhancements. These upgrades will help alleviate flooding and erosion while creating a safer, more sustainable park and beach along Long Island Sound. Town Supervisor Gary Zuckerman and town staff have worked for several years to refine and enhance this project making this award possible.

**Blind Brook Watershed** – Earlier in the year, Governor Hochul and NYS DEC announced \$21 million in funding for three flood mitigation projects on the Blind Brook watershed. DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton came to Westchester to share the announcement of funding for Blind Brook projects in the City of Rye and the Village of Rye Brook.

Funding will help replace the county-owned Playland Parkway and Oakland Avenue bridges in the City of Rye. In Rye Brook, the East Branch of Blind Brook will be uncovered using natural stream design techniques and will expand floodplain areas with nature-based solutions. The project will include the creation of a properly sized, multistage channel and floodplain, installation of native plantings, grade control structures and scour protection measures along the restored channel to prevent damage and protect upstream infrastructure. Funding for the Blind Brook projects will come from the Environmental Bond Act’s Restoration and Flood Risk grant program.

**Village of Mamaroneck** – Last year the Village of Mamaroneck was awarded \$6.6 million in NYS Green Resiliency Grant (GRG) funds for flood resiliency projects in the village.

My staff and I work very closely with every municipality on grant applications and projects sought by local officials. My goal is always to help identify funding sources, work to help maximize scoring criteria in specific applications, and partner with local officials on securing funding.

## Utility Rate Approval Process Must Be Reformed

I have actively opposed the recent Con Ed rate increase application and participated in a joint filing by the Assembly Westchester Delegation opposing the rate increase with the NYS Public Service Commission, which was settled in November.

The broad opposition to the increase application included a filing by 40 Westchester local governments jointly in opposition. As a result, a settlement agreement is now before the PSC. In the settlement, Con Edison’s original proposed electric rate increase of 13.4% would be reduced to 2.8% and the gas charge request for a 19% increase would be reduced to 2%. Those lower percentage increases would be repeated annually for the next two years.

The settlement terms are a vast improvement over Con Ed’s original application but does not go far enough. The process that the PSC currently

uses to review, calculate, and determine rate increases allows utilities to pass along most operation costs to the consumer. Utilities should not be allowed to use their monopoly status to pass practically all operation costs to ratepayers, thereby shielding the company from responsibility for expenses that owners of any other businesses would share.

I am a cosponsor of legislation in the Assembly that would reform the rules that determine what costs are allowable charges to consumers in rate application cases. Senator Mayer is the lead sponsor in the Senate. The bill reforms key elements of the rate-setting process to reign in the current cost allocation rules that now place these costs unfairly on the shoulders of ratepayers. We need to pass this reform in the next legislative session (A1082/S1896).



*The Community Resource Center in Mamaroneck, which was badly damaged during Hurricane Ida in 2021, has been reimagined and re-opened to the community following a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 15th. Following the extreme flooding in the Village of Mamaroneck after Ida, the CRC relocated its operations to the St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Mamaroneck, thanks to the generosity of Rev. Tami Burks-Condon. The rebuilding was made possible primarily through the generous financial support from the community. Fundraising, grant writing, design, and planning by CRC staff and board, as well as state grants that both State Senator Shelley Mayer and I were able to secure all played a key role. The CRC is back in an expanded and reimagined campus that will serve the community. Above I am pictured with Rev. Tami Burks-Condon, CRC Executive Director, Jirandy Martinez and CRC Director of Operations, Marco Bohorq.*



*Hosted by Monroe University in New Rochelle, Volunteer NY gathered students and college representatives to volunteer and pack meals for Westchester families in need and commemorate a national day of remembrance and service following the tragedy of 9/11. I was joined by staff from Volunteer NY Dylan Pyne and Katie Pfeiffer; Levi Duvall from The Pack Shack; New Rochelle Mayor Yadira Ramos-Herbert; Chris Barto of Monroe University; Deputy County Executive for Westchester Richard Wishnie; and Volunteer NY Executive Director Polly Fanning.*

## Digital Inclusion Programs Deliver Needed Skills

I have continued my role as the leading advocate for digital equity and inclusion programs in the state legislature. I work closely with the New York State Digital Equity Network (NYSDEN), the statewide organization of digital inclusion program providers.

### Federal Funding Eliminated

Over the past three years, NYSDEN has been working with the NYS ConnectALL office on the writing of the NYS Digital Equity Plan to outline the state’s programs and qualify for federal funding. Efforts on the issue nationwide suffered a major setback when earlier this year President Trump deactivated the federal Digital Equity Act and has frozen already allocated federal funds.

In their justification for ending the program the Trump Administration mistakenly claim that digital equity programs are “discriminatory.” but the reality is that these programs simply target individuals without digital skills training, devices, or broadband service.

The NYS ConnectALL office had already issued an RFP for digital capacity

grants based on the expected federal money. When the federal funding was withdrawn, Governor Hochul took the extraordinary step of allocating \$7.4 million in state funding to allow some grant funding to go to programs providing services.

### Digital Inclusion Programs More Important Than Ever

Digital Inclusion programs are nationally recognized as an essential tool in bridging the inequities of digital access. These programs provide broadband access, a device, and hands-on training to individuals in need of these tools.

With the rapid growth of AI, the gap faced by individuals already left behind on digital access, device, and literacy skills has grown even larger.

The programs provide skills for education, work, employment search, health care access, economic development, financial literacy, and retraining programs provided by labor unions. Programs are often provided to senior citizens, disadvantaged students, recently incarcerated individuals, and many other New Yorkers who have found themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide.



## NYSDEN Annual Conference

I recently spoke at the second annual conference of the New York State Digital Equity Network (NYSDEN). The headline topic was “Advancing Access Through Collective Advocacy” with a focus on how NYSDEN members can work together to advocate for essential digital equity and inclusion programs.

Following the successful 2024 conference in Syracuse, this year’s gathering brought a larger turnout to Stony Brook University’s Center of Excellence in Wireless and Information Technology (CEWIT). The over 100 participants from across the state included government officials, nonprofit leaders, workforce and healthcare professionals, digital equity practitioners, funders, and local agencies involved in digital equity work.

I spoke on a panel addressing the need for funding due to given changes in Washington. The “Funding in Freefall — Strategies for Sustaining Digital Equity in a Shifting Landscape” discussion brought together private and public sector advocates for digital equity programs to discuss the path forward following President Trump’s elimination of the federal Digital Equity Act.

In Westchester I have secured state grant funding each year to support local digital inclusion programs throughout the Sound Shore communities I represent.



*Assemblyman Otis on a panel at the NYSDEN conference, (l-r) Otto Kerr, Federal Reserve Bank of New York; Monica Hidalgo, NY Presbyterian Hospital; Tisha Pryor, NYS ConnectALL office; and Christine Barr Carmasse, Mission Ignite.*

## AED Bill for Nonpublic Schools Signed by Governor Hochul

Legislation I sponsored with State Senator Shelley Mayer to expand the use and availability of AED (automated external defibrillator) equipment by youth sports programs and camps was signed into law in 2023. AED equipment saves lives in cases of Sudden Cardiac Arrest. These important safety devices have been required in public school buildings for over two decades.

This year our new legislation requires nonpublic schools to provide and maintain AEDs in their school facilities. Nonpublic schools will also have to ensure an AED is available for all school-sponsored competitive athletic events that may occur off-site. The bill includes liability protection and protection from the scope of practice claims for individuals who use an AED in a nonpublic school in good faith in an emergency and outside of the scope of their normal duties.

More than 357,000 EMS assessed cardiac arrests occur outside of the hospital each year in the United States. Almost 90% are fatal, but victims who receive immediate medical attention, including CPR and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), are much more likely to survive than those who do not<sup>1</sup>. Eighty percent of incidents of Sudden Cardiac Arrest in youth sports settings result in fatalities.

Students, teachers, and visitors all stand to benefit from the availability of AEDs in school buildings, including in nonpublic schools. Indeed, the American College of Cardiology advocates for AEDs in all population dense locations, including in all types of schools.

Our partners on this issue have been the Project Adam affiliate at Westchester Medical Center’s Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital. Program Co-Coordinator Alice Schoen and Dana Colasante, both Rye Brook residents, brought the issue to our attention a few years ago after they each saw the lives of family members saved after suffering sudden cardiac arrest at youth sports events where an AED device was available. If you are interested in learning more about sudden cardiac arrest visit Project Adam through the WMC website: <https://www.wmchealth.org>.

We are working with Westchester Medical Center and Project Adam to make AED devices available to youth sports groups in the communities I represent. (A6486/S2590, Chapter 422 of the Laws of 2025)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.heart.org/-/media/Files/About-Us/Policy-Research/Fact-Sheets/Acute-Care/Out-of-Hospital-Cardiac-Arrest.pdf>

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



Assemblyman

# Steve Otis

Legislative Update

December 2025

PRSRT STD.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Albany, New York  
Permit No. 75

## Legislation to Advance EMS Reform Passes Both Houses

In recent years, I have worked to advance reforms that will stabilize and improve the currently fragmented and shrinking EMS response system we have in New York State. A step forward has been accomplished through passage by both houses of my legislation requiring EMS plans by county through a locally driven process (A8086-A). The bill is now being reviewed by the Governor and her staff. My legislative partner on this issue is State Senator Shelley Mayer.

Broader reform legislation sponsored by Senator Mayer and me was discussed during budget negotiations this year without agreement (A8086). Our approach is to understand that throughout New York State, EMS is provided through a variety of organizational structures including municipal, intermunicipal, not-for-profit or for-profit contract coverage, and special districts. Our belief is that the best way to grow EMS service is to have local officials choose the structure that they believe will best address their needs.

In recent years smaller changes have been made to assist EMS programs such as expanding the eligibility for the state health insurance program (NYSHIP) for not-for-profit EMS employees, which we won in 2023.

Without agreement on our major reform legislation this year, we passed

a new bill to create plans that will match local preferences with the organizational structure of their choosing. We have met with local officials, EMS officials, not-for-profit and for-profit representatives and believe our amended bill (A8086-A) is the best approach to bring us the structural changes EMS needs to rebound in New York.

EMS staff retention, response time, and program survival has been going in the wrong direction for several years. We need to give local officials the tools to select and support the organizational structure that they believe will work best in their areas. In Westchester EMS services are provided in different ways in each community using the full range of structures described in our bill. A one-size-fits-all structure will not succeed.

Senator Mayer and I have been in regular communication with EMS officials throughout Westchester and across the state. Westchester officials have already convened a planning group in advance of the signing of our legislation. Their work will proceed.

We believe the road to improved service is through the approach outlined in our planning bill and the broader menu of reforms we have supported. Our work will continue to make needed reforms a reality.