

NEWS from Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson



Summer 2022

Year in Review

Dear Neighbor:

A year that seemingly began as a "return to normal" was struck with loss and uncertainty after the horrific mass shooting in Buffalo and the slew of United States Supreme Court decisions that upended everything from reproductive rights to public safety. **Through it all, I have been working hard to serve you and want to share some highlights from our productive legislative session in Albany.**

I am proud to say that we passed major legislation **protecting New Yorkers from gun violence.**

After the Supreme Court struck down New York's 100-year-old concealed carry law, my Assembly colleagues and I took action to ensure our state continues to enforce responsible gun ownership and safety laws.

Following the Supreme Court's reversal of nearly 50 years of precedent set forth by Roe v. Wade, we took the first step in amending the New York State Constitution by passing an Equality Amendment, which would **protect women's reproductive freedom** and other rights in our state.

I'm also working hard to **protect taxpayers and help save their hard-earned money.** I passed a **major Industrial Development Agency (IDA) reform bill** that will prevent corruption and conflicts of interest in our local IDAs. Further, since the beginning of this year, my office has been **handling**



Addressing the Assembly in Albany

complaints about Central Hudson's ongoing billing fiasco. I've held multiple forums to assist customers impacted by Central Hudson's negligence and called for an investigation into the company's billing practices. I won't stop fighting until customers are satisfied and Central Hudson gets its act together.

On the education front, New York has finally committed to **funding our public schools at 100% of Foundation Aid. We also provided pre-K funding to every district in New York for the first time.**

As I have every year, I am **continuing to pass local laws** that will help municipal governments manage their finances and other pressing issues. This year, I received requests from the cities of Newburgh and Beacon and am pleased to report that I **successfully delivered on all of them.** My office continues to assist hundreds of residents with a range of problems brought on by state agencies, including unemployment claims. If you need help resolving a problem with a state agency or Central Hudson, my office is here to help.

Thank you for letting me serve as your representative in the Assembly.

Very truly yours,

Assemblymember Jacobson sponsored and passed legislation that:

- **Eliminates opportunities for Industrial Development Agency (IDA) fraud and corruption** by prohibiting IDA officials, employees and independent contractors of the IDA from being employed or taking any position, paid or unpaid, with any entity applying for or receiving benefits with the IDA and for two years after the conclusion of an individual's IDA employment or rendering of services to the IDA (A.8200-B).
- **Makes the purchase or sale of body armor illegal unless** one is an active law enforcement officer, military, firefighter and other first responders, or employed in an occupation which requires the use of body armor (A.10497).
- **Requires the Workers' Compensation Board to appoint the Uninsured Employers' Fund** as the responsible party when the identity of the responsible insurance carrier for the employer cannot be determined within thirty days of the filing of a new claim (A.8726).
- **Authorizes the City of Newburgh to impose by local law, a tax on hotel and motel occupancy** of up to five percent of the daily rental rate. **This would also apply to bed and breakfast businesses** (A.9625).
- **Allows the City of Newburgh to establish a hearing procedure for code and ordinance violations** relating to conditions which constitute a threat or danger to public health, safety or welfare (such as sanitation and garbage violations) other than building violations (A.9650-A).
- **Provides an exemption to allow a Main Street restaurant in Beacon** to apply for a liquor license even though it is in the vicinity of a church (A.7989-A).

FIGHTING GUN VIOLENCE

We are all too aware that **our nation is suffering a plague of gun violence.**

There are too many illegal guns. And there are too many guns, both legal and illegal, in the hands of those who are mentally ill or are likely to cause harm to themselves or others.

Shortly after the tragic Buffalo Massacre where 10 innocent people were murdered while doing their grocery shopping, the United States Supreme Court struck down New York's 100-year-old concealed carry law.

While Washington refuses to act, I, along with the rest of the State Legislature's majority, took action to comply with the Court's decision while enacting measures to protect our residents from gun violence.

We **strengthened our red flag laws, expanded the eligibility requirements in the concealed carry permitting process,** and now require applicants to submit their social media histories for review. We also restricted the ability of individuals to carry concealed weapons in certain sensitive locations such as schools, governmental buildings, stadiums, medical offices, houses of worship, and public transit.

The shooter in the Buffalo Massacre was wearing body armor which protected him from the "good guy with a gun." **Criminals do not need body armor,** so I am especially proud that we passed my bill restricting the sale of body armor except to those whose occupations put them in danger of gun violence, including law enforcement, armored car guards, security guards, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians/paramedics.

As we all know, guns are not manufactured in the Hudson Valley, but too many guns find their way onto our streets. Most of these illegal guns come up the iron pipeline (Interstate 95) from the south where it's easier to purchase a gun. **I have long advocated for the State to take on illegal gun trafficking.** This year, Governor Hochul heard me and she is working with those states along I-95 to help stem this deadly flow.

Locally, I have secured funding for **gun buyback programs** which have taken more than 120 guns off our streets.

The battle against gun violence is never ending. We must continue to be vigilant.



With Governor Kathy Hochul signing our package of commonsense gun safety laws in June including my bill to limit those who can purchase body armor.



After a successful gun buyback in the City of Newburgh.



Presenting a grant to Grace Smith House in Poughkeepsie. Grace Smith House protects women and their children from domestic violence and abuse.



Announcing the new firetruck with Beacon City officials. I secured a grant which helped pay for the truck.

CENTRAL HUDSON BILLING FIASCO

Since the beginning of 2022, I have been hearing nonstop from Central Hudson customers with a range of billing problems, including missing or wildly inaccurate bills. One resident received a bill for \$700,000! Others had not received a bill for more than four months. Customers had called Central Hudson only to be told that their name or account number did not exist in the company's system.

On March 3rd, I held an online forum with Central Hudson so constituents could voice their concerns directly. Shortly afterwards, I introduced legislation to limit when a utility could issue estimated bills. On April 21st, I held another forum with the Public Utility Law Project so that consumers would know their rights in the face of these outrageous bills. During the online forum in March, Central Hudson said that the billing problems were due to new software. They also said that they wanted to eliminate estimated billing. So, on May 31st, I wrote to Central Hudson to find out if its billing software problems have been resolved. I also asked when they would do away with estimated billing.

Central Hudson did not respond so on July 5th, I wrote to the Public Service Commission (PSC) requesting that it open an investigation into Central Hudson's billing practices. The PSC agreed to open the probe.

I finally heard from Central Hudson which responded with many excuses and few solid answers.

I will keep you informed on this evolving situation. In the meantime, if you are still having problems with Central Hudson, please contact either one of my district offices.

I won't stop fighting until Central Hudson gets its billing act together.



Your electric bill should be timely and not be a mystery.

PROTECTING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS



Celebrating National Donate Life Month in April with the dedicated medical professionals at Montefiore St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital in Newburgh.

The Supreme Court has once again shown it is out of touch with the majority of Americans in its decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, a nearly 50-year precedent which provided Constitutional protections for the right to an abortion.

In 2019, I was proud to co-sponsor the Reproductive Health Act which codified *Roe v. Wade* in New York State. This past session, we took bold action once again to strengthen our reproductive health laws and provide much-needed protections for health care providers.

We also took the first step in amending the State Constitution by passing the Equality Amendment which would enshrine reproductive rights in the Constitution. The Amendment must pass another separately elected Legislature before it is put before the voters for passage.

A woman's health decision should be made only by that woman. Period. Unfortunately, unlike New York, in about half of the states in the Nation, women will no longer have their reproductive freedoms and the ability to make their own choices.

I will continue to fight to ensure that reproductive freedom and the ability of women to make their own health care decisions are preserved in New York.



Announcing a grant to Poughkeepsie Youth Organizations as part of the Gun Violence Prevention Program.

PREVENTING CORRUPTION AND CONFLICTS AT THE IDA

As New York State Comptroller, Thomas DiNapoli said, "An Industrial Development Agency's (IDA) core mission is to economically benefit their communities, not the officials running them."

Unfortunately, too many IDA officials abuse their positions to enrich themselves. As a result, these officials compromise the communities and taxpayers they are meant to serve, defrauding them of significant tax monies, sometimes totaling in the millions and even billions of dollars. These hidden conflicts and self-dealings call into question the integrity of the IDA system.

Last year, there was widespread corruption discovered at the Orange County IDA. Ultimately, the guilty parties were directed to repay more than one million dollars. **Despite their crimes, they received no jail time and weren't even fined for their actions.**

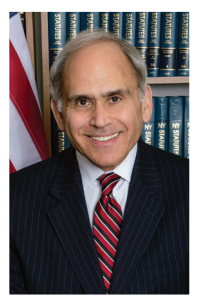
That's why I wrote and passed legislation **eliminating opportunities for IDA corruption** by prohibiting IDA officials, employees and independent contractors from self-dealing or otherwise taking advantage of their positions for personal financial gain.

But a prohibition without a penalty is not a deterrent. Thanks to my bill, any person violating these restrictions will be subject to a civil penalty of five times the compensation or benefit received by the person.



Presenting a grant to Fearless! (formerly known as Safe Homes) to assist with their efforts battling domestic violence.

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