



October 16, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

Like many of you, I was horrified and dismayed by the assault on Israel last week that killed more than 1,300 people. The escalating conflict that has ensued continues to cause significant loss of life and a humanitarian crisis, as innocent civilians are suffering without food, water and electricity. I unequivocally condemn the violence in the region, and my heart aches for the suffering of civilians in conflict zones. As history continually has shown us, violence has never successfully resolved conflict. Violence will not bring forward peaceful, stable communities where people of differing religions and cultures can live and thrive.

As in other parts of the country and world, hate speech, discrimination, and even violence have escalated against both Jewish and Muslim Americans. Here in New York, we need to ensure that our communities remain safe, respectful places where people of all religious and ethnic backgrounds can live, work, study and play in peace. I am committed to the safety and well-being of all my constituents.

If you would like to contribute to the humanitarian efforts in the region, [NPR has compiled a list](#) of organizations that can help victims of the war.

NYSEG Rate Increases Approved

The New York State Public Service Commission [approved rate hikes](#) on Thursday for NYSEG and RG&E, although rates approved were approximately 50% less than what was initially requested by the companies. I have advocated for months that the rate hikes be rejected outright, as any rate hike will be a financial burden for families and businesses and will reward companies with histories of poor customer service and mismanagement. My office remains a resource to help constituents with billing issues connect with NYSEG representatives or the PSC for assistance. I will continue to advocate on behalf of NY ratepayers to keep rates affordable while working to help New York move toward climate solutions.

Legislative Update

NY HEAT Act

The recent NYSEG rate hikes highlight the pressing need to pass the New York Home Energy Affordable Transition Act, or more commonly known as the **NY HEAT Act** ([A4952A Fahy](#)). We have ambitious climate goals, and to meet those goals, we need to transition away from gas and other fossil fuels, while keeping rates affordable. The bill caps utility bills for low- and moderate-income families at 6% of their income, resulting in approximately \$75/month savings. The bill also ends the “100-foot rule” which requires utilities to install new gas lines for free for customers who live within 100 feet of an existing gas main.

These infrastructure costs of over \$200 million are currently passed on to ratepayers. I have been happy to lend my voice at recent press conferences, [calling on Gov. Hochul to include the NY HEAT Act in her Executive Budget](#). Thank you to the SUNY Cortland students with NYPIRG who hosted a teach-in event on the NY HEAT Act as part of the Hot Chili Tour. So glad my staff was able to attend to help spread the word!



Circular Shift

I had a great time at [Circular Shift 2023](#) in New York City, presenting on my Fashion Act bill and connecting with other industry and policy leaders focused on innovation for a circular future. The [Ellen](#)

[MacArthur Foundation provides helpful context](#) for the circular economy, defining it as “a systemic approach to economic development designed to benefit businesses, society, and the environment. In contrast to the ‘take-make-waste’ linear model, a circular economy is regenerative by design and aims to gradually decouple growth from the consumption of finite resources.” The textile industry is one of the highest consumers of energy, water, raw materials, and farmland, and one of the greatest contributors to air pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change. In the last sixty years, the amount of clothing waste the U.S. has sent to landfills has increased tenfold. To curb the environmental devastation of this “take-make-waste” pattern, and to create new economic opportunities, we need legislative action and oversight to make lasting change towards a truly sustainable system. I look forward to the bill moving forward in the upcoming legislative session.



Around the District

Cortland County Community Stakeholder Discussion on Asylum Seekers

Thank you to the organizers of the Cortland County Community Wide Stakeholder Discussion on Asylum Seekers, New Americans and the Future Economic Resiliency of Cortland County. A member of my staff was able to attend the event, and it was great to see the interest and attendance from elected officials, non-profit organization leaders, healthcare organizations, school districts, and businesses. Learning from the experience and expertise from the panel who have worked with refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants in Onondaga County for decades will help Cortland County understand the possible challenges and opportunities. The United States has always been a beacon of hope for immigrants searching for a better life. Asylum seekers from Venezuela will be eligible to apply for Temporary Protected Status, which will allow them to work legally in the United States, and advocacy continues to expand that status to asylum seekers from additional countries. At a time when many businesses are struggling to secure adequate workforce, welcoming new immigrants can help our businesses and communities grow. The New York State Department of Labor continues to [collect information from businesses interested in hiring](#) asylum seekers once they are authorized to work. I look forward to supporting Cortland County as they engage in further discussions and clarify next steps.



Racker Community Celebration Dinner

I had an amazing night celebrating the dedicated staff and work of Racker in our community for individuals with developmental delays or disabilities. Congratulations to all the [award recipients](#)! I was moved to tears more than once hearing about your inspiring, life-changing contributions.

In New York, we need to adequately fund and support the professionals and organizations who work with individuals with disabilities. In the 2023-2024 NYS budget, I supported an 8.5% Cost of Living Adjustment for direct support professionals; unfortunately, only a 4% COLA passed. Funding for Early Intervention (EI) services, such as speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and counseling also continues to fall short. An audit conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller found that 51% of New York children who qualified for Early Intervention did not receive timely services. For the 2024-2025 budget, I am proud to support the budget request of an 11% reimbursement rate increase for Early Intervention service providers, sponsored by Assemblymember Lunsford. I will continue to use my voice in the Assembly to advocate for funding and policy that

supports the ID/DD population, their families, and the professionals who work with them.



Community Resources

Salvation Army Christmas Program

The Salvation Army in Tompkins County is providing free assistance to those who need help getting food or toys this Christmas. Applications for their Christmas Program are now open and will close Nov. 10. You can apply for assistance either online or in person. All applicants must provide picture ID, proof of birth for all children on the application (i.e. birth certificates) and sizes and gift interests (under \$40) for children 0-17.

To make an appointment to apply in person, call the Salvation Army office between 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. on weekdays at 607- 273-2400.

Online applications are available at these links:

- [Tompkins County](#) (Not Dryden or Lansing)
- [Lansing](#)
- [Dryden](#)
- [Food Only](#) (Families with no children at home)

For more information on The Salvation Army Christmas Program, or to receive the application by email, contact Captain Stacy McNeil or

Diana Vrabel at (607) 273-2400
or empithaca.christmas@use.salvationarmy.org.

TCPL Water Quality “Data Jam”

The Tompkins County Public Library, in partnership with Community Science Institute (CSI), is offering a Water Quality “Data Jam” event on Friday, November 3 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. At this event, CSI staff will facilitate team exploration of water quality questions using CSI’s free, online database. Community members with questions such as "How good is the water quality in Six Mile Creek?" or "Where on Cayuga Lake do Harmful Algal Blooms occur most frequently?" will have an opportunity to delve into the data and answer those questions themselves. To learn more and register, visit <https://www.tcpl.org/event/data-jam-community-science-institute-0>

For any further questions, contact Tom Fredette at tfredette@tcpl.org or 607-272-4557, ext. 271.

Ithaca YMCA Trunk or Treat

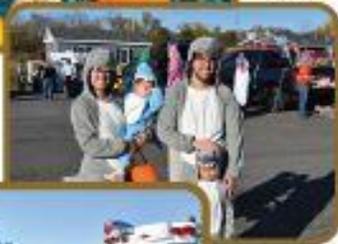
I hope you can plan to join my staff and I this Saturday, Oct. 21 from 1 - 3 p.m. at the Ithaca YMCA for some Halloween fun!



TRUNK OR TREAT AND PUMPKIN PALOOZA!



Bring the **whole family** to the Ithaca YMCA for some Halloween fun! October 21st is the annual Trunk or Treat and Pumpkin Palooza, a free community event from **1:00 - 3:00 PM**



Bring a swimsuit and catch pumpkins as the pool transforms into a **Floating Pumpkin Patch**, paint a pumpkin, bounce in the bounce house, and so much more at this spooky bash!



Trick or treat at over 30 volunteer-run cars, all costumed to the nines. Don't forget to vote for the best decorated trunk!



Whole Picture
Health & Vision
See the Whole Picture. Treat the Whole Person.

Thank you to Whole Picture Health and Vision for sponsoring this event.



Present this flyer to TCAT and receive free bus fare to Trunk or Treat and Pumpkin Palooza on October 21st.

The YMCA of Ithaca and Tompkins County | 50 Graham Road West, Ithaca NY, 14850

Free COVID Tests

The federal government relaunched its free COVID-19 at-home tests program. Households can receive four free rapid tests delivered directly to their home. For more information and to place an order, visit <https://www.covid.gov/tests>.

**Free at-home
COVID-19 tests**

**ORDER
TODAY!**



COVID-19
Antigen Test

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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