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# Examiner

MEDIA

# ELECTION 2020

A Guide to the Candidates



# Mayer Seeks Re-election to Help Put State on the Road to Recovery

By Martin Wilbur

Virtually everyone is facing extreme challenges in 2020. State Sen. Shelley Mayer knows that if she is re-elected to a second full term to represent the 37th Senate District next week, her job and that of her legislative colleagues won't be easy.

The impact of the pandemic economically, emotionally and physically has left some families, businesses and schools in tatters in her expansive district that stretches from Yonkers to Bedford.

"It's an incredibly sad moment in Westchester history to have lines of people waiting for food," said Mayer, 67, a Democrat who is completing her first full term in the seat after winning a special election to replace George Latimer in April 2018.

The first item on Mayer's agenda is to help rebuild the business community, where so many of the jobs have been lost, and bolstering municipalities to avert layoffs and service cuts. The second, said Mayer, chair of the Senate's Committee on Education, is to make sure public schools are on solid footing.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has begun withholding portions of state funding in certain areas as the state faces a more than \$14 billion deficit, but is holding off on making a decision on education funding until after the election, she said.

While the state hopes for federal aid from Washington, Mayer said New York needs to combine that assistance with borrowing while increasing revenues. She favors a series of relatively small measures such as imposing a 2 percent increase in the top tax rate for those making more than \$5 million, a stock transfer

tax and a tax on those who own a second home in Manhattan.

"I agree you can't tax yourself out of it, but I don't think you should have blinders on and won't do any (new) tax," Mayer said. "That's where I think the governor is wrong. We need to do a combination, mindful of the fact that I guess some wealthy people could move their residence. Many are willing to be contributors to our economic recovery."

Mayer said she supports full table gaming at Empire Casino in Yonkers and World Resorts in Queens. Although the senator has been hesitant to support legalization of recreational marijuana because of opposition by many school groups, she said it will soon be approved.

"In my heart I'm skittish, but in my mind I'm pragmatic right now," Mayer said. "We need revenue. It's ultimately going to happen. It almost happened (already). I'm very worried about young children. I'm very concerned about the school community. They're really opposed to it. The PTA is opposed to it statewide, and some in the medical community."

"That being said, it's a source of revenue. I will always push to make sure that some of the revenue reserved is for schools and is not diverted to other purposes," she said.

Mayer said that nursing home visitation restrictions should be relaxed under a proposed bill with more realistic parameters. The 14-day period requiring a COVID-19-free facility before allowing visitors is too stringent and leads to residents' deterioration.

While many school districts worked hard to switch to remote learning on the fly last March and devise plans for this academic year, Mayer

said the pandemic has widened inequities. She has proposed a bill to provide universal broadband for all students at home and school buildings, a significant enough number of which still have substandard connections.

Mayer said foundation aid needs to be revised and districts should be repaid what is owed them. She backs a plan to move a portion of the school property tax burden to an income-tax based system.

The senator defended many of the legislature's bail reform measures that increased the number of suspects who were released without bail for nonviolent offenses. She said revisions were made early this year to incarcerate the repeat misdemeanor offenders and expand the list of crimes eligible for bail.

Spikes in certain crimes are more likely a result of the state releasing suspects because of the pandemic, Mayer said. However, the reforms needed because poor people and people of color were disproportionately being held for minor offenses, she said.

"The unions, in particular, and some of the chiefs and some of the more conservative elements in our communities misrepresented the changes that we made," Mayer said. "We were responsive to our communities. I fought hard for them. I didn't get everything I wanted. We made substantial improvements that didn't take away from the basic premise (that) your wealth shouldn't determine whether you're in jail."

Mayer supports expanded health care coverage but isn't necessarily on board with the NY Health Act. She said ideally the federal government should address



Shelley Mayer

widening coverage.

Last year's passage of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act was one of the strongest environmental bills in the nation, Mayer said, which calls for a 40 percent net reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and 85 percent by 2050.

She backs the \$3 billion green referendum that was postponed for at least a year.

Mayer said she enjoys fighting for all constituents in a diverse district.

"I'm very proud to have this job," she said. "It's an unbelievable opportunity but it's a tough time."

## Senate Challenger Saimovici Doesn't See Eye to Eye With Albany

By Martin Wilbur

It took until he was 70 years old for Dr. Liviu Saimovici to run for public office.

Born and raised in Communist Romania, the Rye resident and ophthalmologist immigrated to the U.S. in 1981. His candidacy was prompted by what he felt has been an increasing shift to the left by the Democratic Party and decided to challenge state Sen. Shelley Mayer in the 37th Senate District.

"I feel like we're slipping toward this Communist society, and I don't mean to sound like a freak or anything to suggest anything like that is going to happen, but you know that Hitler was democratically elected and so was Chavez, so I don't want to see these things happening," Saimovici said.

What he sees happening is an increasing dependence on government to solve problems and policies that are antithetical to successful business, and throwing money at issues that fail to solve problems. Saimovici cited, for example, the state's current average public school per-pupil spending of about \$22,000 a year, but the statewide results have been middling at best.

He would like to see a common-sense rollback of overbearing regulations – from the hundreds of hours of required training for someone to give shampoos at a hair salon to the state's Scaffold Law– that is causing businesses to flee or avoid New York. Retaining and attracting businesses will help the state rebound more quickly by enlarging the tax base.

"New York State has become one of the least business-friendly states," Saimovici said. "Part of the problem is the high taxes and the high amount of regulation."

Regarding the state's response to COVID-19, Saimovici said Gov. Andrew Cuomo imposed the mask mandate too slowly. He said more vigorous testing of nursing home residents, staff and visitors could have eased some of the disastrous impacts of the virus that has claimed more than 6,000 lives in the facilities and allowed people to visit.

The state should be more aggressive regarding school attendance, particularly if districts have enough room and use gymnasiums, auditoriums and other large-space areas, Saimovici said. In New York City, use of hotels and other facilities that are currently underutilized could provide temporary classrooms for schools there along with temporary structures, he said.

Saimovici is strongly opposed to the NY Health Act, explaining that when the state gets involved in running large bureaucracies it is beset with problems. Having spent time in Israel and England, he said socialized medicine isn't the answer either, Saimovici said.

He called for health insurance companies to be regulated by the state similar to utilities.

"I don't think that United Healthcare should be listed on the stock exchange and strive to make a profit every quarter," Saimovici said.

Saimovici agreed with the legislation



Dr. Liviu Saimovici

allowing medical marijuana, but opposes its recreational use because it could be another source for impaired drivers or become a gateway to other addictions.

Saimovici reserved some of his strongest comments for the state's bail reform. While agreeing that poor people should not be held in jail longer for the same offenses as those who have more money, letting suspects walk out of jail for serious offenses has been wrong.

"I couldn't believe they were so stupid to pass it in the first place," Saimovici said. "It was very political and they (the Democrats) were pulled to the left by Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez and her gang."

Instead, he said the state should have passed legislation resembling the First Step Act, federal prison reform guidelines that were adopted by Congress in late 2018 to reduce recidivism and lower the prison population.

Saimovici said he is for responsible gun ownership, background checks, training and licensing. But the current spike in crime, in particular the rise in shootings this year in New York City, has taken place despite some of the supposedly strongest firearms laws in the nation, he said.

"I'm not for a free-for-all, to go to the supermarket and get a gun," Saimovici said. "Don't get me wrong on that. I believe in very strong training and proof that you know what you're doing. I grew up in the shadow of World War II and I believe that six million of my people would not be so easily gassed had they been able to defend themselves."

Saimovici said he supports expanding renewable energy but fears passage of the postponed \$3 billion referendum that was to be on the ballot would become "a boondoggle."

Finally, Saimovici is a strong advocate for term limits, believing that it propagates professional politicians instead of encouraging citizens to serve the public.

"I'm not a professional politician, that's why I'll make decisions not based on the lobbyists and professional politicians," he said.



# Astorino Looks to Return to Office in 40th Senate District Battle

By Martin Wilbur

Over the past couple of years, Rob Astorino has been keeping an eye on what's been going on in Albany and hasn't liked what he has seen.

The former Westchester County executive said the state had been in a downward trajectory even before the pandemic struck earlier this year. Prior to COVID-19 decimating New York's coffers, the state was already facing a \$6 billion deficit related to Medicaid and made a feeble attempt to address the unfolding economic crisis when working on Fiscal Year Budget 2021 in late March, Astorino said.

Add the controversial bail reform measures enacted in 2019, and the longtime Mount Pleasant resident was convinced to make another run for public office, this time against Democratic incumbent Peter Harckham for the 40th state Senate District.

"It's one thing to be able to manage the state and it's another to rebuild it, and that's why with this no cash bail and rampant crime and these attacks on police officers, the upside-down world of somehow criminals are good and cops are bad, really pushed me into running," said Astorino, 53, who served eight years as county executive before losing to George Latimer in 2017. "I feel like I had an obligation to try and fix what's wrong."

He noted similarities between the current situation facing the state to what he encountered coming in as a new county executive at the start of 2010. Facing a financial crisis, Astorino vowed no tax increases and

made sure that anything in the budget was open for discussion.

The state's current strategy, Astorino said, seems to simply be hoping that the Democrats win control of the U.S. Senate and Joe Biden is elected president so it can receive a bailout.

"That's not a business plan, that's not responsible, that won't fix any of our problems," Astorino said. "That will not have a huge effect on all the residents and businesses escaping New York. So some pandemic relief I think is necessary, but the \$6 billion that is growing, that is the state's own fault, and bad policies and bad decisions. These need to be corrected and that's what I will be part of."

Instead of entertaining a raise in taxes, Astorino suggested that the state should be reducing taxes and regulation to spur business and grow the economic base. Once that occurs, some of the challenges will start to take care of itself, he said.

Furthermore, thousands of regulations, some of which Astorino called "absurd," are holding back growth.

As a parent of three children, Astorino said he has been frustrated as school districts have been overly cautious, playing havoc with families' schedules and children's ability to learn. One COVID-19 case sometimes unnecessarily shuts down a school building for up to two weeks because children are far more unlikely to get sick, he said.

"I can't even keep track (of their schedules), but I do know one thing, they're not learning the way they used to learn in the classroom,"



Rob Astorino

he said.

The growing discontent with the unpredictable schedules, children regressing in some cases and escalating school taxes has put the spotlight on education funding and what taxpayers are getting for their money.

Astorino is calling for an independent investigation into the decisions that led to nursing home residents with COVID-19 being released from the hospital back to their facilities. He said it's an issue that Harckham and other Democrats don't want to discuss.

"We don't want this repeated and we want to learn from the mistakes, but to say that it's

the CDC's fault, or the president's fault, or Fox News' fault, come on," Astorino said.

Astorino said what followed the Democrats' bail reform was as disastrous as it was predictable and reflects what is wrong with one-party rule in Albany. While the goal to make bail and incarceration more equitable may have been commendable, Democrats failed to listen to law enforcement and district attorneys who warned the legislature of releasing suspects accused of certain offenses dangerous, he said.

He called the law "a get out of jail free card," and the lack of judicial review where suspects are released for what most people consider are violent crimes may be the law's worst aspect.

Soaring crime rates in New York City and car theft that is up 65 percent in Westchester is the result, Astorino said.

"If Peter Harckham had listened to the district attorneys in both parties, judges, law enforcement, they may have had an acceptable bail reform law like in other states," Astorino said.

Astorino agreed with some decriminalization of marijuana but legalizing recreational use is sending the wrong message. As a proponent of limited, fiscally prudent and smart government, he would oppose the NY Health Act.

He does want to see term limits approved for state office holders.

"If you can't accomplish what you're setting out to do in 12 years, then you've failed," Astorino said.

## Harckham in Tussle in First Re-election Bid for State Senate Seat

By Martin Wilbur

Two years ago, state Sen. Peter Harckham rode a blue wave of Democratic enthusiasm to become the first member of his party to represent northern Westchester and Putnam counties in the state Senate in just over 100 years.

Next week, Harckham, 60, is looking for a similar scenario to play out,

"It's been an incredible honor and privilege," said Harckham who previously served more than seven years on the Board of Legislators. "I've met the most amazing people, folks from all over the district. We've done some great things on a statewide level, we've accomplished some really good things at the local level and now we're confronting things, challenges that no one could have ever imagined."

Perhaps the biggest challenge is a state budget and economy that has been ravaged by the pandemic. Harckham said to close the estimated \$14.6 billion deficit there needs to be a combination of cuts, new revenues and assistance from Washington. Without the latter, the consequences would be "dire to the economy," he said.

Already, Gov. Andrew Cuomo's budget team has begun withholding money to contract agencies and local governments, Harckham said. To make any cuts permanent, the governor would need to ask the legislature's approval.

The overwhelming portion of the deficit – about \$13.5 billion – resulted from sales tax revenue that evaporated, Harckham said. Much of the rest came from a loss of gaming and OTB revenues, he added.

Refuting the arguments of his opponent, former Westchester County executive Rob Astorino, Harckham said the \$6 billion Medicaid deficit early this year was closed by the time the budget was approved. Recommendations from the governor's Medicaid Redesign Team were not enacted because the state would have lost out on funding from the federal government if changes were made now.

"So what the governor was planning to do to reduce the rate of growth can't be done until after the coronavirus emergency is over," Harckham said.

Harckham said visitation at nursing homes must be reinstated for the physical and mental health of the residents. Currently, his legislative staff is working with the Montrose VA to allow residents to receive visitors safely.

He said what has been learned from the early months of the crisis is nursing homes can't admit residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 or have staff members who are positive work.

Everyone agrees that students need to be back in the classroom but local school boards, educators and parents must make the final decision, Harckham said. Many families when given the choice are opting for virtual learning.

"Whether it's schools, whether it's getting consumers to our businesses, all of this comes down to keeping the virus at bay, keeping our population safe and staying vigilant about masks and hand washing," Harckham said. "So it's all tied together."

Capturing a greater share of districts' rightful state aid is crucial to having many of the higher needs schools regain firm financial

footing and offer a strong education, he said. Incorporating the 2020 Census data into the outdated state calculations and devising a fair and clean formula will be essential, Harckham noted.

In 2019, Harckham said he was able to secure a combined \$10 million for the Peekskill, Brewster and Ossining school districts.

The senator said the NY Health Act is an aspirational goal of increasing insurance coverage but the state can't afford to pursue it at this time. A federal approach to expanding health care is preferable. The pandemic has exposed the pitfalls of employer-based insurance, he said.

Harckham accused Astorino of repeatedly making false and misleading claims about bail reform. There is no evidence that eliminating bail for non-violent offenses has caused a spike in crime in New York City or elsewhere, he said. Furthermore, disproportionate long-term incarceration of minorities and defendants with less money has historically hurt Black and brown communities, Harckham said.

Earlier this year, the legislature revised the law, adding a series of offenses that now require bail, such as domestic violence and repeated offenders, he said.

"If people want to double down on a policy that is regressive and you know disproportionately impacts minority communities, that is the very definition of systemic racism," Harckham said.

A key disagreement holding up the legalization of recreational marijuana is how to split the revenues. Harckham said Cuomo wants the money to go to the general fund



Peter Harckham

while the legislature has been steadfast in making sure that at least 20 percent goes to substance abuse disorder treatment, prevention and education.

Harckham agreed with the decision to postpone the \$3 billion green referendum for at least a year. Westchester legislators also worked with the Public Service Commission to have a small increase on utility bills to sustain the cessation fund to provide relief to the communities affected by next spring's closure of Indian Point.

The senator has also introduced legislation calling for all new cars to be gas-free by 2035.

# Reichlin-Melnick Looks to Use Varied Experience to Pave Path to Albany

By Abby Luby

Elijah Reichlin-Melnick is running for the 38th state Senate District to work as part of a Democratic majority and to continue his efforts as legislative director to state Sen. James Skoufis.

He is pitted against Republican Bill Weber to replace David Carlucci, who ran unsuccessfully in the Democratic primary for the 17th Congressional District. The Senate district includes Ossining in Westchester and most of Rockland County.

"The Democratic majority made great progress with civil rights, LGBTQ rights, reproductive health and gun safety," Reichlin-Melnick said. "I want the opportunity to be part of making New York work better for regular people."

Reichlin-Melnick, 36, earned a bachelor's degree from Cornell University, was an elementary school teacher at an inner-city school in New Haven, Conn. and is currently serving his second term as a Nyack village trustee. He worked as a regional planner and was an aide to Rep. Nita Lowey and other elected officials.

One way of dealing with the state's roughly \$14 billion deficit is to increase taxes on those earning over \$5 million or more, Reichlin-Melnick said.

"We need a mix of cuts and ways to raise revenue," he said.

Taxed items could include a surcharge applied to people owning property not living in New York, such as those owning luxury condos or second homes. Raising state revenue could also be accomplished by legalizing marijuana.



Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

"Neighboring states have already legalized marijuana; it is becoming untenable for New York to be the holdout," Reichlin-Melnick said. "We have legalized tobacco and alcohol, which have serious health impacts and people still use them."

Reichlin-Melnick supports using marijuana revenues for public health programs and treatment options addressing the opioid epidemic.

"Marijuana is not a gateway drug to opioids; they are two different things," he said.

The state's plight of nursing homes during the pandemic when countless numbers of

residents and staff died should prompt an investigation of the industry, and the state should solicit feedback from regulators. He said there was a lack of policies and procedures in place to safely protect nursing home workers and residents.

One of the biggest failures was the lack of personal protection equipment for nursing homes, Reichlin-Melnick said.

A bigger investment is needed to improve school buildings, he said.

"Ventilation is a major factor that could help prevent the spread of the virus in an older building where the windows can't open," Reichlin-Melnick said.

He would support more aid for additional cleaning staff and other personnel.

The school district foundation aid formula is convoluted and out of date, according to Reichlin-Melnick.

"State funding was supposed to equalize huge disparities between the wealthier and poor districts," he said.

Reichlin-Melnick cited Ossining, which has seen growth over the last decade while the number of English as a Second Language classes have increased, but the district's state aid has failed to be maintained.

Sharing services with neighboring villages is a must to ease taxpayers' property burdens.

"We have many districts overlapping where a consolidation of services can save large amounts of money for small local governments who can't front those costs and have to impose property taxes," Reichlin-Melnick said.

He supports the NY Health Act and would like to see every New Yorker receive universal health care.

"One doesn't have to go bankrupt to pay for prescription drugs and NY Health is a way to get there," he said.

Reichlin-Melnick also wants to help the independent pharmacist who is being squeezed out of business.

"Drug companies have a huge role in setting pricing which has forced smaller pharmacies to close," he said. "Other programs require consumers to get their drugs by mail. We need more pricing transparency, which the insurance companies seem to object to."

Monitoring the 2019 bail reform is essential, Reichlin-Melnick.

"We need to continue to see how it's working and look at the discovery process and how long prosecutors turn over evidence," Reichlin-Melnick said.

He also supports New York gun laws as well as the Second Amendment right to own guns.

"I'm proud that New York has a tough gun law, but we need to do a better job," he said. "We need to get the guns out of the hands of people with a history of domestic violence or who have a violent history."

Shorter winters, a growing frequency in hurricanes and storms signal the impact of climate change, which was the impetus for the state's green referendum. The \$3 billion referendum has been postponed until at least next November.

"I support the green referendum," said Reichlin-Melnick. "We have to invest in our future and invest in green energy, sustainable industries and shift from fossil-powered cars (to) other sustainable sources for cleaner air."

## Weber Ready to Sharpen His Pencils to Help State Out of Fiscal Crisis

By Abby Luby

Bill Weber believes he is best suited to deal with New York State's budget crisis. Weber, a certified public accountant who has worked for a Rockland-based accountant's firm for more than a decade, said the state spends too much money on legislators' unnecessary pet projects.

"If elected I will look at the budget on a line-by-line basis so see what the priorities are and where spending is appropriate or not," he said.

Weber, 51, has lived in Rockland County all his life. He has been involved in local politics and ran unsuccessfully for Ramapo Town Board and later for town supervisor. In both races he drew the highest votes for a Republican candidate seen in at least a decade.

If elected to the state Senate, he wants to focus on campaign finance reform and term limits. Billions of dollars are being wasted and there are too many corrupt politicians, he said.

"I don't want to see politicians remain in office for decades and become out of touch with their constituents," Weber said.

Weber favors stronger state protocols to protect communities from not only COVID-19 but any future pandemics.

"We need to evaluate what went wrong, not only in the nursing homes, and figure out how to have the appropriate amounts of

supplies for the next flare up," he said.

Weber's wife Lisa is the acting superintendent for the Suffern Central School District where their four children go to school. When the schools reopened after the state lockdown, Weber said the state education and state health departments had failed to deliver adequate guidance to the public and districts for September to allow for the maximum number of students to successfully return to the classrooms.

"It's not one-size-fits-all," Weber said. "Some districts are larger and have more space."

Critical of the NY Health Act, Weber supports insurance plans that are affordable for individuals to purchase and to encourage more employee-based plans. He also is critical of the legislature for failing to hold pharmaceuticals accountable when it comes to making drug prices affordable.

Reducing, or at least maintaining, property taxes is crucial and a sign that promised state aid has failed to materialize, Weber said.

"There's no certainty on funds coming back to the district," Weber said. "A lot of districts have reserves but those will be utilized faster if the state doesn't get its financial condition in order."

The impact is most noticeable in districts where the find state funding formula is



Bill Weber

uneven and shortchanges districts.

"The formula needs to be fixed," Weber explained. "You can't fix this with a hope and a prayer. We have to make sure money is spent on the highest priority, which is the education of our kids."

Weber is against legalization of recreational marijuana but favors its use for medical purposes.

"We need a study that involves law enforcement and health providers before

moving forward on legislation," he said. "There could be unintended consequences. Marijuana and other drugs lead to the use of harder drugs like opioids, but it doesn't mean we can't look at legalizing it down the road. I'm just not there yet."

Weber called for the repeal of the 2019 bail reform law.

"I'd like to rip it up and start from scratch," Weber said. "New York did it willy-nilly in the middle of the night. It's causing additional crimes and recidivism rates are up."

Weber wants a new bail reform law to include input from police chiefs and the state's district attorneys. Weber's two brothers currently serve in the NYPD and his father, a retired NYPD officer, previously served as president of the Rockland County Shields.

As for New York State's strict gun laws, Weber said he wouldn't make any changes but would explore bolstering it in areas "to make sure we drive crime out of the area and make it safe."

Although Weber said he is pro-environment, he is wary of the \$3 billion green referendum that was postponed for this year and might appear on the 2021 ballot.

"I'd want to make sure the environment is clean and safe, but we can't commit (to the referendum) until we know what the budget deficits are going to be," he said.



# Jones Looks Forward to Being Part of Major Changes in Washington

By Martin Wilbur

In June, Mondaire Jones turned the eight-candidate 17th Congressional District Democratic primary that some observers thought would be a nail-biter into a rout.

Now, he's looking to complete his political ascent with a victory in the general election and succeed retiring Rep. Nita Lowey as the district's congressional representative.

Jones has been labeled as liberal, extreme, far left and worse by some of his detractors, but to Jones the issues he supports are common-sense stances to help working- and middle-class families improve their lives: affordable quality child care, a \$15 minimum wage, education equity, lifting the \$10,000 cap on the SALT deduction and support for infrastructure projects.

"This is the important work that anybody that wants to represent this district in Congress must do because lives are at stake, too many lives have unnecessarily been lost and we've got to gin up the economy again, and that includes assistance for small business and also for people who are struggling to pay the cost of rent or mortgage," said Jones, 33, a product of the East Ramapo School District and a graduate of Stanford University and Harvard Law School.

Getting the COVID-19 pandemic under control must be successful to have any longstanding economic recovery. It starts my changing the leadership in Washington, one that believes in science and take the steps needed to protect people, Jones said.

As a supporter of Medicare for All but who would be willing to incrementally improve the Affordable Care Act to start, Jones has said that health care should be a right, not a privilege, that travels with you when you change or lose your job.

"(The pandemic) has exposed a lot of deficiencies in our social safety net; 100 million are underinsured," he said. "We have to make sure that we don't have a health care system that continues to tie health care to your employment status."

Jones pledged to fight for the elimination of the \$10,000 limit on the state and local tax deduction that has punished too many hardworking families locally.

The failure of the Republican-controlled Senate to pass the Heroes Act, which was approved by House, prevented \$1 trillion in state and local aid from being distributed around the county, he said.

Jones supports a major infrastructure bill that would create thousands of jobs while also paying for the necessary rebuilding of many roads and bridges throughout the nation, along with light rail, which the district desperately needs.

He decried the Trump administration's hostility toward immigration, which included the family separation policy at the border and putting children in cages. Jones wants to see comprehensive immigration reform that should offer a pathway to citizenship for 12 million undocumented people and DACA recipients.

Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity, including immigrants, who for generations have helped the United States



Mondaire Jones

renew itself.

"Immigrants are people we need to see when we look into the mirror," said Jones, who had previously worked for the Westchester County attorney's office. "We need to see immigrants as our friends, our neighbors, our loved ones, as our family members and, of course, people who are helping us get through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and the worst health crisis since the 1918 Spanish flu."

Jones supports the Green New Deal, which he called "a jobs creation program" that would push the country toward the

goal of 100 percent renewable energy. He estimated that it could create as many as 20 million new jobs.

As a result of the Trump presidency, Jones said he will work to bolster some of the institutions that he believes have been weakened over the past four years and subjected to political manipulation. For example, reforms are needed for the postal service to make sure that operational changes aren't made by the whim of the president or the postmaster general, he said.

Over the summer, Jones successfully sued President Trump and the postmaster general by obtaining an injunction that will treat all voting ballots as first class or priority mail from Oct. 26 through Nov. 6.

Jones said he supports what he calls expansion, not packing, of the U.S. Supreme Court. If Judge Amy Coney Barrett is confirmed this week, expansion is needed to achieve the balance that a 6-3 hyper-partisan majority would undercut, he said.

Having grown up in Section 8 housing, the son of a single mother, Jones said he is determined to provide future generations with the opportunities that were available for him.

"It would be the honor of my life to serve the people of this district in the United States Congress," Jones said. "I look forward to bringing my experiences at the local and federal levels to the policymaking process to the halls of Congress, and I look forward to bringing the kind of perspective that we need to bring us out of this national nightmare."

## Political Newcomer Schulman Goes After Big Prize in Congressional Tilt

By Martin Wilbur

Shortly after Maureen McArdle Schulman retired from the New York City Fire Department in 2003, she would spend about a decade helping to watch over her young grandchildren.

Afterwards, when she had the time to focus on the news and the various issues of the day, Schulman had trouble recognizing the political landscape.

"I looked around and said what happened, what happened to the state I loved, the country I loved," Schulman said. "I really felt like the politicians weren't doing the best for my family, my community and my country."

Schulman, 61, a Yorktown resident since 1984, has been so troubled since last year at the state's bail reform and the state's acceptance of late-term abortions, that she summoned the gumption to run for Congress.

She entered the Republican primary earlier this year and easily secured the nomination after receiving the backing of the Westchester County Republicans.

Growing up as the lone girl in a house with five brothers helped to steel Schulman's resolve. She had hoped to become a police officer, but ultimately opted for the FDNY, and was part of the first class of 38 women firefighters in 1982.

"I was never told there wasn't anything I couldn't do, so long as you work hard and



Maureen McArdle Schulman

you do your due diligence, then you can do anything," Schulman said.

While New York has avoided the worst of the latest COVID-19 surge despite recent upticks, the pandemic is reaching new peaks in the nation's heartland. Despite that, Schulman advocates delegating control of decisions on matters such as mask wearing to local decisionmakers.

"I don't believe in a national mask mandate. I don't believe in a national anything," Schulman said. "I think it's worked much better on a local level. Give them the information and let them make an informed decision on it."

The same is true when it comes to

reopening the economy – provide localities with the best information available, Schulman said. Likewise, if a business owner wants to mandate masks for its customer, then the patron can either comply or shop somewhere else, she said.

Schulman is skeptical of large amounts of money being sent from Washington to state and local governments. She believes that too many governments have made bad decisions and are using the pandemic to erase their deficits.

Instead, federal aid should go to small businesses. She cited some \$25 million in taxpayer money going to the Kennedy Center as a misplaced priority.

"There were small businesses that really could have used that money and it went to the Kennedy Center?" Schulman said. "There are people who can't feed their kids, who can't pay their rent and we give \$25 million to the Kennedy Center?"

She applauded the Trump administration for its strong alliance with Israel, demanding other NATO countries pay a greater share for protecting Europe and pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal.

While Schulman wants to see the country increase its reliance on renewable energy, she criticized the Green New Deal for its unrealistic timetables and expense. Among the safest forms of energy has been nuclear power, but one of the most important energy sources, Indian Point, is scheduled to close

next spring.

"It's going to take 2,000 wind turbines to supplement that loss of power," she said of Indian Point. "Where are 2,000 wind turbines going? Where are these solar farms going? We don't have room in Westchester and Rockland County for these things."

Schulman said in order to lower the tax burden, she would work to entice businesses to come to the district, which would expand the tax base.

She opposes the Affordable Care Act and would like to see it scrapped except for the provision which protects people with pre-existing conditions. There should be greater encouragement of health savings account and for multiple businesses to form a larger group to purchase private insurance, which would lower expenses.

"I feel like every time the federal government gets involved in something, it's not the answer, it's just more of a problem," Schulman said.

Schulman is considered a long shot in the race, with Democrat Mondaire Jones seen as a prohibitive favorite. But Schulman didn't want to look back and regret not taking a chance.

"So I turned around and decided, what the heck," she said. "I don't want to turn around in 10 years and say would of, could of, should of. Let's see what happens."

# Maloney Looks to Keep 18th District Blue in Congressional Race

By Anna Young

Democratic Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney faces Tuxedo resident and engineer Chele Farley for the 18th Congressional District seat. Maloney is a Cold Spring resident.

## Sean Patrick Maloney

As Maloney vies for his fifth term, he is proud of his efforts to support the Hudson Valley but recognizes the challenges ahead.

"I'm proud of my record – passing 40 bills into law, helping over 8,000 folks here in the Hudson Valley and returning over \$25 million to taxpayers – but there's still more work to be done," Maloney said. "I look forward to continuing my fight for more infrastructure investment here in the Hudson Valley, strengthening our family farms and helping our veterans, servicemembers and military families."

Maloney has pressed for more support for residents, small businesses, students and teachers as a result of the pandemic. That includes providing area hospitals with supplies they need for frequent, rapid-response testing, reinstating expanded unemployment insurance benefits through January, renewing the Paycheck Protection Program and approving another stimulus package.

Additionally, Maloney noted the urgency in supporting farmers with emergency pandemic assistance, getting schools the sanitation and technology needed to teach students safely and providing desperately needed state and local funding for New York.

"If we don't, we're going to see our law enforcement, firefighters, teachers and public health professionals lose jobs, and counties and municipalities will be forced to cut essential services," he said. "That's just not acceptable right now. These heroes are fighting this fight day and night and they deserve better."

With the Affordable Care Act in jeopardy, Maloney said it would be reckless to repeal it during a global pandemic. He said overturning the ACA without a replacement would cause 23 million Americans to lose their health care, increase the costs of coverage and deny coverage to 130 million people with pre-existing conditions.



Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney is facing Chele Farley in the 18th Congressional District race.

As the country reels from the killing of George Floyd, Maloney said he helped pass the George Floyd Justice in Police Act in the House, which would ban chokeholds, maintain data on police misconduct and require body and dashboard cameras. If re-elected, he said he would continue to combat systemic racism while also supporting strong community policing.

Maloney also backs comprehensive immigration reform that includes 21st century technologies and emphasizes the value immigration adds to the economy. Securing elections and thwarting off national and international terror threats in his position on the Intelligence Committee and combating climate change are also critical issues, he said.

As he faces re-election during an unprecedented time, Maloney said there's too much divisiveness throughout the nation. He added that the country and state need to put people first, and citizens need to unite.

"I've always said that it doesn't matter who you vote for or who you support – it matters that you're my neighbor here in the Hudson Valley," Maloney said. "I've worked across the aisle on bipartisan bills and initiatives to strengthen family farms, protect and better serve our veterans and ban oil barge anchorages on the Hudson River, and that's why I've been so successful in delivering for the Hudson Valley."



## Chele Farley

After a failed attempt to unseat U.S. Sen. Kristen Gillibrand two years ago, Farley has her eyes set on running incumbent Sean Patrick Maloney out of office.

Farley, who spent more than 25 years working in financial services, is running for Congress to squash the turmoil that has spawned across communities caused by hyper-partisan fighting. She said Maloney has lost touch with Hudson Valley issues and now sides with the "political elite."

"I'm an engineer and I know how to fix things," Farley said. "I got into this race to fix Congress and put our country back on a strong, more prosperous course."

Farley said the most pressing issue impacting constituents is the Defund the Police movement and a trend toward pro-criminal policies. If elected, she plans to be an advocate for law enforcement and a proponent of public safety, starting first with reversing the bail reform laws.

With COVID-19 causing many unease, she said school districts need to be equipped with the resources to send children back to the classrooms safely. She also supports another stimulus package to provide residents with additional relief.

Farley also stressed the need to lower taxes and ease the property tax burden

in her region. She said if the system is fixed, more can be invested in the region's crumbling infrastructure, ease the property tax burden and advance pro-growth policies that will create jobs.

"I will go to Congress to fight to get some of that money back and spent in the Hudson Valley to lower our property taxes and improve our infrastructure," she said. "I lost power for six days in August due to downed power lines. This is inexcusable and dangerous."

Farley also believes in protecting the borders and passing common-sense immigration reform that would terminate sanctuary cities, end the visa lottery and streamline the process for vetted legal immigrants, institute asylum reform, strengthen border security and provide President Donald Trump with the resources he needs to build a wall.

She said that while the immigration system is flawed, it's essential Congress find a way to secure the borders while still allowing immigrants who have undergone background checks to safely enter the country.

Regarding health care, Farley said she would protect those with pre-existing conditions if the Affordable Care Act is overturned. She said the ACA has not lived up to most of the promises made to those in need. She added that too many are paying more for insurance that offers fewer services and a lesser quality of care.

If elected, Farley said one of her top priorities in Congress is to cut through the partisan red tape and work across party lines.

"The problem with Congress is that too few members are actually looking for resolutions and instead are focused on running interference by obstructing the other side from passing substantive legislation," she said. "I believe in term limits and know that the longer a politician is in office, the less accountable they become to the people who elected them."

## Editor's Note

93rd Assembly District candidate John Nuculovic (R-Bedford) and state Sen. Sue Serino (R-Hyde Park), who represents the 41st Senate District, did not respond to The Examiner's requests for interviews.

## Early Voting Continues Through Sunday Across the Area

New York State continues to conduct early voting at designated polling sites throughout the area until this Sunday, Nov. 1.

There is one early voting location in Putnam County, located at the Board of Elections, located at 25 Old Route 6 in Carmel.

In Westchester, any registered voter may go to cast their votes at any one of the 17 polling places throughout the county.

Hours for early voting will be the same in both counties: 12 to 8 p.m. on Oct. 27 and 29; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Oct. 28 and 30; and 12 to 5 p.m. on (Oct. 31 and Nov. 1).

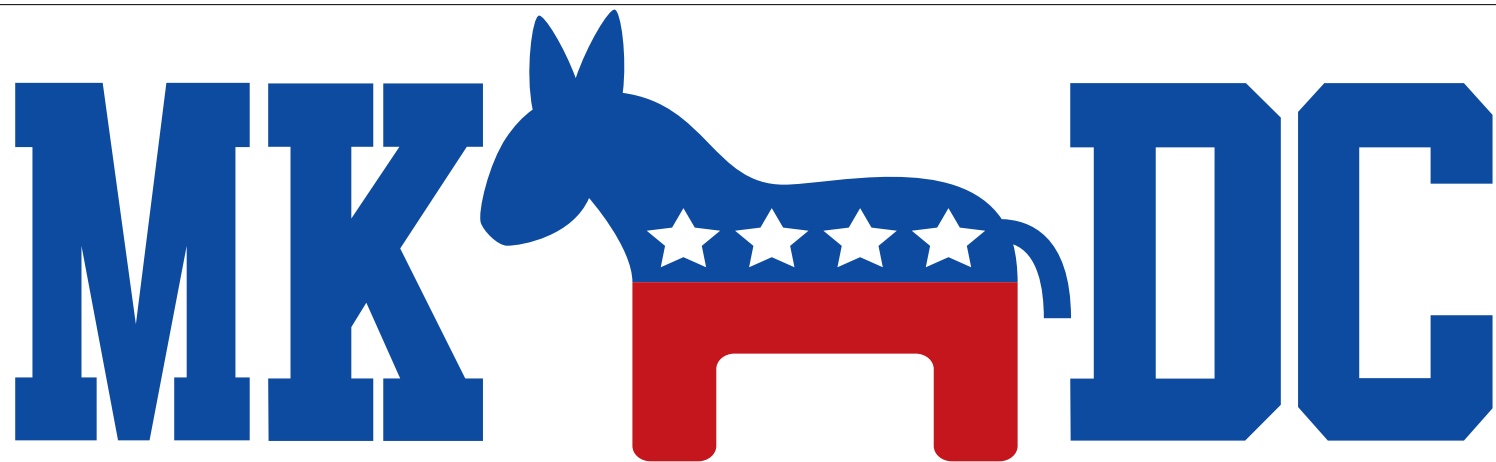
Below is a list of the early voting locations with full addresses in Westchester County:

- Eastchester Public Library, 11 Oakridge Place, Eastchester, N.Y. 10709
- Veterans Memorial Building, 210 Halstead Ave., Harrison, N.Y. 10528
- New Rochelle City Hall Annex, 90 Beaufort Place, New Rochelle, N.Y. 10801
- Mamaroneck Town Center, 740 W. Boston Post Rd., Mamaroneck, N.Y. 10543
- Westchester County Board of Elections, 25 Quarropas St., White Plains, N.Y. 10601
- Grinton I. Will Library, 1500 Central Park Ave., Yonkers, N.Y. 10710
- Mount Kisco Memorial Complex at Leonard Park, 1 Wallace Drive, Mount Kisco, N.Y. 10549
- Riverfront Library, 1 Larkin Center, Yonkers, N.Y. 10701
- Pound Ridge Town House, 179 Westchester Ave., Pound Ridge, N.Y. 10576
- Greenburgh Town Hall, 177 Hillside Ave., White Plains, N.Y. 10607
- Mount Vernon City Hall, 1 Roosevelt Square, Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10550
- Peekskill Nutrition Center, Neighborhood Center, 4 Nelson Ave., Peekskill, N.Y. 10566
- Yorktown Cultural Center, 1974 Commerce St., Yorktown Heights, N.Y. 10598
- Somers Town House, 335 Route 202, Somers, N.Y. 10589
- Joseph G. Caputo Community Center, 95 Broadway, Ossining, N.Y. 10562
- Dobbs Ferry Village Hall, 112 Main St., Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. 10522
- Mount Pleasant Community Center, 125 Lozza Drive, Valhalla, N.Y. 10595

For voters in Westchester with any questions, call 914-995-5700 or visit <https://citizenparticipation.westchestergov.com>.

For more information in Putnam County, visit [www.putnamboe.com](http://www.putnamboe.com) or contact the Putnam County Board of Elections at 845-808-1300 or [boe@putnamcountyny.gov](mailto:boe@putnamcountyny.gov).





October 13, 2020

The Mount Kisco Democratic Committee is proud to endorse the following candidates for ELECTION and RE-ELECTION:

LOCAL OFFICE:

- |                 |   |                 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| Mark Farrell    | - | Village Justice |
| Karen Schleimer | - | Village Trustee |
| Anthony Markus  | - | Village Trustee |

COUNTY OFFICE:

- |                        |   |                   |
|------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Nilda Morales Horowitz | - | Family Court      |
| Michelle Schaurer      | - | Family Court      |
| Mimi Rocah             | - | District Attorney |

STATE OFFICE:

- |                   |   |                   |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| Pete Harckham     | - | NY State Senate   |
| Chris Burdick     | - | NY State Assembly |
| E. Loren Williams | - | NYS Supreme Court |
| Alexandra Murphy  | - | NY Supreme Court  |
| Robert Ondrovic   | - | NYS Supreme Court |
| Sam Walker        | - | NYS Supreme Court |

FEDERAL OFFICE:

- |                           |   |                            |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Mondaire Jones            | - | Congress                   |
| Joe Biden & Kamala Harris | - | President & Vice President |

914-864-3304- OFFICE  
646-349-2037-FAX  
917-734-3932-MOBILE

118 N. BEDFORD RD  
MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549

# Chiulli Makes Second Assembly Run in Bid to Unseat Galef

By Anna Young

Lawrence Chiulli is vying for the opportunity to further help his community if he's elected to represent the 95th Assembly District.

The 23-year-old Cortlandt resident and Army National Guard member, returns to challenge incumbent Sandy Galef, a Democrat, after failing to win two years ago. While Chiulli accepted defeat in 2018 and maintains his immense respect for Galef, he believes she has served long enough, asserting that career politicians are threats disguised as heroes.

"She is going for her 14th term. Why on Earth should someone serve 28 years in the same seat and expect to convince constituents she is here to make changes to our government?" Chiulli said. "Enough of the status quo. The answer is simple – term limits."

Chiulli added that his decision to run came after receiving requests from residents to end the "lunacy in Albany." He said Galef has voted on "horrid bills" and has poorly handled situations of importance to the district she represents. The 95th Assembly District covers Peekskill, Cortlandt, the Town and Village of Ossining and parts of Putnam County, including Cold Spring and Philipstown.

While Galef voted in favor of bail reform, Chiulli, who touts himself as a justice reform advocate, pressed that it's a poor law that needs to be repealed and rewritten. He said bail reform has caused a spike in crime and fails on all accounts, citing the discovery laws as putting witnesses and victims in danger.

Additionally, he said the law leaves loopholes for defense attorneys to get



Lawrence Chiulli

hardened criminals off and the requirements place a serious financial burden on taxpayers.

Chiulli also contended that Galef has mishandled the closure of Indian Point. Chiulli said it's a poor deal, but agreed the state needs alternate sources of energy. He added his support to transition to renewable energy.

If elected, the Westchester Community College graduate, who's running on the Republican and Conservative lines, said one of his top priorities will be the health of his constituents. Regarding the NY Health Act, Chiulli said the plan is financially unsustainable,

adding that a plan must be funded federally, otherwise New York will accrue more debt.

However, with a roughly \$14 billion state budget deficit and Gov. Andrew Cuomo considering 20 percent across-the-board cuts if federal assistance doesn't come through, Chiulli said it isn't right for politicians to harm the education system, hospitals and local governments due to their poor decisions.

To ease the property tax burden, Chiulli said officials need to "look at where its spending is and cut it," suggesting the public school's budget must be examined as well.

The STAR program also needs to be enhanced to allow lifelong residents to retire in the state, he said.

"The harsh reality of this is New York's finances haven't been handled correctly for years; COVID-19 for obvious reasons sure has made them worse," Chiulli said. "Our federal government most likely does not want to bail out current New York lawmakers due to their horrendous state spending disguised as COVID-19 bailout."

If elected, he'll propose delaying non-essential government projects and relocate funds to areas that are jeopardized by cuts. He pressed that essential personnel who have worked throughout the pandemic must remain off limits.

Continuing to open the state safely is also a priority, Chiulli said. He asserted that state debt will increase under current conditions. Additionally, Chiulli wants to ensure protocols and procedures are put in place to better handle the care of nursing homes during the pandemic.

With most school districts throughout

Westchester and Putnam opened for in-person learning with considerable restrictions, Chiulli said he plans to visit each school in his district to ask superintendents and teachers what could be done to improve teaching and learning. He added that it's imperative to address the psychological, emotional and financial well-being of teachers, families and students.

Chiulli said school budgets should have a yearly audit to address wasteful spending and identify where cuts can be made.

Chiulli said the state must reduce fatalities from drugs and opioids before legalizing another drug. He indicated he would support legalization of recreational marijuana as long as there's safe and sensible plans in place first.

New York has among the most stringent gun laws in the nation, but Chiulli believes those laws are unconstitutional and hurt those who are registered to carry firearms. He said laws should target criminals, but the Safe Act made law-abiding citizens criminals overnight.

While many have labeled the Nov. 3 presidential election as the most important in the nation's history, Chiulli is asking residents not to vote strictly party line. Consider the candidates and vote for the person who represents their ideals and will best serve the area, he said.

"This race isn't about Democrat or Republican, this is about candidates," Chiulli said. "I understand people want to vote with their party but if people do not do their due diligence and see the substance of the candidates, then we are going to lose democracy."

## Galef Touts Experience as Veteran Legislator Seeks 14th Term

By Anna Young

With New York State hit hard by COVID-19, Assemblywoman Sandy Galef is encouraging voters to rely on her experience to turn things around.

"I know people want all this turnover, but when you have someone with so much experience, to have someone to get the problems solved is so helpful during this time," said Galef, who is seeking her 14th term. "We need people there right now who can help with that structure because we have a huge problem ahead of us."

Prior to 1993, when she began serving in the Assembly, the 80-year-old Democrat was a former schoolteacher and served 13 years as a Westchester County legislator. She is once again facing Republican challenger Lawrence Chiulli.

Galef, an Ossining resident, is keenly aware there are multiple serious challenges facing her constituency – taxes, health care, schools and unemployment. But she's also focused on election reform to guarantee absentee voting is accessible to everyone.

With a roughly \$14 billion state budget deficit, Galef said the problem will worsen if the federal government doesn't provide assistance. Currently, Gov. Andrew Cuomo is suggesting 20 percent across-the-board cuts if money fails to arrive from Washington.

"A budget is always a guideline but knowing that we were really spending wildly on COVID-related issues, and it's been going on, we knew there would be across-the-board

cuts," Galef said. "We're trying to put pressure on our federal legislators so we don't have to make those cuts."

To make up for the deficit, Galef noted the state could hike taxes on higher income earners, but that all suggestions should be considered. With little revenue to make up the shortfall, Galef noted many communities and organizations will be hurt financially, including schools, hospitals, nursing homes, municipalities and organizations that rely on state funding. Some sacrifices will have to be made, she warned.

As chair of the Real Property Taxation Committee, Galef issued concern about elimination of the STAR Program. If re-elected, Galef stressed she would work to make sure it remains intact.

School officials often cite a lack of equity in state education funding. Galef said more foundation aid is required for higher-needs districts to provide equal opportunities to all students. She said more money should be steered to ensuring students have the necessary tools to learn, including ensuring necessary access to technology.

Galef added that while officials have reopened schools safely, she worries that students may require re-evaluation when the school year is completed to make certain their learning hasn't lagged. Some students may need to repeat certain courses or curriculum, then be pushed along when ready, she said.

At the height of the pandemic in early spring, Galef acknowledged there were severe problems managing nursing homes,



Sandy Galef

but officials were unaware what they were facing when the virus struck. Galef has made suggestions to safely resume visitations, but said it's a tough decision to make when you're dealing with vulnerable individuals.

"If you open it up too much, loved ones die, and then you've done the wrong thing," Galef said. "It's a bad situation all over."

Galef has voted in support of the NY Health Act. She said the pandemic has highlighted a lack of equity in the health care system. However, the state currently doesn't have the financial resources to pursue the legislation,

Galef mentioned.

While she supports the \$3 billion green referendum and its ability to produce jobs, combat climate change and introduce alternative energy, it was a wise decision to postpone it until taxpayers feel comfortable supporting that level of borrowing.

Galef has maintained her opposition over the years to legalizing recreational marijuana, although she supported medical marijuana. The assemblywoman cited studies that claim marijuana is a gateway to hard drugs and worries about the impact it could have on developing minds.

"For me to foster another type of drug that may not be helpful for their life, I haven't been convinced it's a good thing for the health of a young person," Galef said. "Instead of going with the science, I'm listening to the medical professionals."

There has been no shortage of critics of the state's bail reform law, but Galef has supported it. She said officials could make further revisions once there's been an opportunity to analyze its progress. However, she doesn't believe the law has sparked more crime.

Since COVID-19 hit in March, Galef said she has continuously worked to help those in need. While she has not indicated if this will be her last Assembly run, it will depend on the issues.

"It's all about having enthusiasm for the job; the job keeps changing because the issues keep changing," Galef said. "But we'll see what happens the next time around."



# Byrne Vying for Third Term Against Veterans Advocate From Somers

By Rick Pezzullo

Republican Assemblyman Kevin Byrne is running for a third two-year term in the 94th Assembly District against Stephanie Keegan, a Democrat from Heritage Hills in Somers who has advocated for veterans' issues on the federal level.

Byrne, 35, a Carmel resident, is proud of the legislation he has championed and the funding he has brought to municipalities in the district.

"I've always been honest about what I'm doing and why I voted the way I did," Byrne said. "We have much more work to do."

Keegan, 61, is a former educator who also worked in the medical field. One of her three sons, Daniel, served in Afghanistan for 26 months. When he returned home, he struggled to get the care he needed. After a long struggle with PTSD and addiction, he died in 2016. Keegan has been carrying forward his legacy ever since.

She's been to the State of the Union in Washington, D.C. as an honored guest, and spoken on panels with presidential candidates. She's traveled the nation to tell Daniel's story and deliver legislation that puts veterans first.

"This the perfect place for me to put my foot in. It's time we have someone who represents everyone in the district," Keegan said. "I'm absolutely an underdog. Being a woman and a Democrat in this district, it's an uphill battle, but I'm kind of optimistic."

The district includes Brewster, Carmel, Southeast, Putnam Valley, Somers and Yorktown.



Assemblyman Kevin Byrne looks to fend off a challenge from Democrat Stephanie Keegan in the 94th Assembly District race.

## Issues

Byrne said the top priority for the state will be getting past the coronavirus, which he stressed should involve the legislature "reasserting itself" and not relying exclusively on Gov. Andrew Cuomo's guidance.

"I don't like how the governor has continuously moved the goalpost, but I think we did the best that we could," said Byrne, who noted his office assisted about 300 residents navigate the Department of Labor's unemployment process. "We did act quickly. The legislature shouldn't just rely on executive orders. We are facing



unprecedented challenges with COVID-19."

Keegan said the pandemic has been "unchartered territory" and praised the response of state officials.

"I'm really, really proud of how the governor has handled this and the way the residents of the state, except for a few communities, have responded to the guidelines," she said. "New York has been a role model."

Endorsed by the CSEA, Byrne said it's important for the state to make it easier for small businesses to open and operate.

"I want to be welcoming to every business of every size," he said. "We want

the storefronts filled."

Keegan supports establishing a Division of Supplier Diversity to make government contracts more accessible to LGBT, disabled and veteran-owned businesses.

"There is no diversity in our businesses in the district," Keegan said. "To keep communities vibrant, we need to bring a reason to be there. I will work hard on that. It's not easy for anyone to open a business."

Byrne said the so-called no cash bail law that was "rammed through the budget in 2019" was "a disastrous way of running a government."

"We didn't have a problem with bail in Westchester and Putnam. There were problems in New York City," he said. "It's not fear mongering. It's still a major problem."

Keegan said she was "definitely in favor of an improved bail system."

"I think this is a good step in the right direction," Keegan said of the legislation. "Having a cash bail system seems inequitable. We have to make this equitable."

Byrne said he had respect for anyone who wants to "stick their neck out and run for public office," but contended Keegan was "misinformed on some of the issues."

Keegan said she has been "very disappointed" by Byrne's representation.

"This seat needs to be held by someone who (the residents) feel comfortable to talk to," she said. "My life experience as a mother, advocate and educator have brought me to this point. I am here because I want to help."

# Putnam Legislature Chair Faces Challenge From Kent Firefighter

By Rick Pezzullo

The race for the District 3 seat on the Putnam County Legislature pits Chairwoman Toni Addonizio against Vincent Fiorentino, a 19-year volunteer firefighter.

Addonizio, who has led the nine-member, Republican dominated legislature for the last two years, is seeking a third three-year term.

"I would like to think I bring every side into account and think things over," Addonizio said. "I try my hardest. That's all you can do. I feel there is a lot more I want to accomplish."

Fiorentino, 60, who has lived in Kent for 34 years, unsuccessfully ran for the Kent Town Board in 2003 and 2005. He is a union representative and organizer for 5,500 members in Operating Engineers Local 30.

"I'm running to represent the residents of Putnam County," Fiorentino said. "It's about quality of life for everyone, not just a select few. I will be an independent voter. I won't be a puppet like everyone else on that legislature. We have to stop the nonsense."

On the legislature, Addonizio, an associate broker with Houlihan Lawrence

in Brewster, has served as chair of the Rules, Economic Development and Health committees. She is a member of the task force fighting the war on opioids and was instrumental in bringing the Hope Not Handcuffs program to the county.

Addonizio is also a member of the Putnam County Veterans Medal Advisory Board, assisted in helping the Putnam SPCA find suitable office space and has partnered with the nonprofit organization Second Chance Foods in Brewster to provide food for about 20 families a week in the county who reached out to her on Facebook.

"I really do enjoy volunteering. I don't want to see anyone go hungry," she said. "I want to reach out to anyone struggling with food insecurity."

Fiorentino maintained Addonizio enjoyed publicity, whereas he is focused on making a difference with the fire department.

"It's all about the safety and health in this county," he said. "I'll put my record against her any time."

Fiorentino said he would save the county money each year by refusing to accept its medical coverage and criticized the legislature for approving a large raise for itself and Putnam County Executive



Toni Addonizio, the chairwoman of the Putnam County Legislature, has a challenge in next week's election from Vincent Fiorentino.

MaryEllen Odell.

Addonizio countered by pointing to the county's Aa1 rating from Moody's.

"This high rating saves Putnam hundreds of thousands of dollars because of the low interest rate of bonding," she said.

Addonizio said she is confident Putnam will rebound from the financial difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite running against an incumbent, Fiorentino is optimistic he has enough



personal connections in Kent to be a strong contender.

"It's going to be a close race," Fiorentino said. "If I can persuade a few people, and people come out to vote, I have a shot. Let's see how the dice roll."

Two other county legislators, William Gouldman and Amy Sayegh, are running unopposed for re-election.





# Chappaqua Resident, Scientist Makes First Bid for New Castle Town Board

By Martin Wilbur

It was the logical next step for Lori Morton to run for New Castle Town Board.

The 15-year Chappaqua resident has gradually increased her involvement in the community during the past decade, volunteering for the Chappaqua Children's Book Festival and the PTA STEM Committee before contributing her time to the New Castle Democratic Committee.

Morton believes her background in science can give the board a bit of a different perspective.

"I really felt like this was the next step," said Morton, vice president of research at Regeneron, where she has worked for 18 years. "I feel like I have something to contribute to the discussion and a perspective and a way of thinking that I have to offer that is perhaps unique from other people."

While Morton is the lone candidate on the ballot in the special election to serve the remaining year of Supervisor Ivy Pool's Town Board seat, a write-in candidate, Thomas O'Connor surfaced last week. O'Connor decided to jump in after there has been increasingly tense opposition to the town's proposed Form Based Code.

If Morton emerges from the suddenly



Lori Morton is running on the Democratic ticket in next week's special election for one New Castle Town Board seat. She is the only candidate on the ballot but another resident just announced he has started a write-in campaign.

contested election, the Form Based Code is likely to be the most prominent issue once she is seated on the board. The code

is meant to help officials make downtown Chappaqua more vibrant by de-emphasizing uses and stressing appearance with the goal of having more people live and work in the hamlet.

She said an exciting aspect of the code is that it provides the community an opportunity to map out the future and choose a design for downtown Chappaqua that is desirable. Morton is hopeful there will be evolution during the process to work out various issues and help the town address the issues it wants to solve.

"One of the things I like about the concept of Form Based Code is that it allows the municipality to determine all these things up front so that a developer is bound by them and it puts the town, I think, in a starting position of power rather than being reactive over individual proposals," Morton said.

The goal, according to Morton, is for the Town Board to arrive at an agreeable final form that addresses the public's concerns. Currently, two issues that have produced the most outcry have focused on the potential height of buildings that could be developed in the future and how many school-age children any mixed-use development would generate.

"I think they are doing exactly what they

should be doing, which is listening to the public and collecting the perspectives of people who are supportive and critical of the plan and hopefully taking that information to inform the next draft," Morton said.

Morton said she hopes that New Castle can be a community that can be attractive for people of any age and not only for families with school-age children.

She applauds the work that the Council on Race and Equity and the many community volunteers who are engaged into make New Castle a more welcoming, inclusive and diverse community. Morton said she looks forward to seeing some of the council's recommendations put into action.

An issue of importance to Morton is the restoration of greenspace throughout the town. Preserving greenspace for both Chappaqua and Millwood is critical along with adding to the town's inventory.

Morton said she will likely run for a full four-year term next year. The fact that next week's special election is only to serve one year didn't cause her to hesitate.

"It was just an opportunity to jump in because I intended on jumping in so there's no reason to wait," Morton said.

## Three Long Shot Candidates Ready for 17th Congressional District Run

By Martin Wilbur

Michael Parietti knows all about long shot campaigns. He's run six of them before this year, all in Rockland County, either for county legislator or for municipal office.

He registered as a Republican when he was 18, graduated from West Point, then served as an infantry officer and platoon leader. After leaving the military he became a sales representative in the pharmaceutical industry and later a managed care specialist.

By the time he reached his 30s, Parietti, was disillusioned with the major political parties, which he felt were drifting to the fringes and not addressing the everyday needs of people. So he was instrumental in forming the Preserve Ramapo Party, which addressed many local issues, and more recently with the Serve America Movement Party (SAM).

He thinks there will be defectors from both major parties in the race, especially with Rockland County having close to 28 percent of its voters not affiliated with a party.

"I feel like I'm a more moderate candidate," Parietti said. "So you throw in the Preserve vote with the independents and then I think there are a lot of moderate Democrats that don't want to vote for Mondaire Jones. You put that all together and I really think I can win this up the middle."

Parietti, 58, is part of a trio of minor party candidates for the 17th Congressional District race who are each trying to pull off an upset over Democratic nominee Mondaire Jones. He will be joined by Yehudis Gottesfeld, who is on



Yehudis Gottesfeld

the Conservative line after she lost the Republican primary in June to Maureen McArdle Schulman, and Josh Eisen, an independent candidate who had originally planned on competing in the Republican primary.

Eisen, 48, appears on the independent Education Community Law (ECL) line, after initially campaigning last winter with the intention of vying for the Republican nomination. He thought the GOP should be represented because the last two election cycles the Republicans didn't bother nominating anyone to take on Rep. Nita Lowey.

But he clashed with Republican Party brass in Westchester because of some of his views, in particular his support for



Michael Parietti

legalizing recreational marijuana, his belief that life does not begin at conception and no objections to the Plan B pill.

With as much as \$1 million to spend on his campaign, most of which he said is his own money, the Harrison businessman believes he has a path to victory.

"So back to where I was originally, I think voters should be able to have an option and thankfully the polling is showing it's a real dogfight between Mr. Jones and myself," Eisen said.

Gottesfeld is a 25-year-old engineer from Ramapo who started



Josh Eisen

volunteering to work the disabled when she was 11 years old. She was trounced by Schulman in the June primary but had secured the Conservative Party line in both Westchester and Rockland County.

Among the reasons Gottesfeld is running is to make sure that there is as much local decision-making as possible rather than edicts coming down from Washington.

"I think it's important to put as much over to the local governments rather than the federal government," she said. "The local government is closer to the people."





# Burdick Ready to Head to Albany to Tackle State Challenges

By Abby Luby

Chris Burdick is running for the 93rd Assembly District because it is an opportunity that comes around once in a generation.

"You have a Democratic governor, a democratic state senate and assembly. The old boy's network has been swept away," Burdick said.

Burdick, 69, who is opposed by Republican John Nuculovic, said the current state government is more inclusive and he wants to take his seven-year experience as Bedford supervisor and apply it on a statewide level.

"My experience and accomplishments, among others, include bringing affordable housing and sewers to the town," he said. "Addressing environmental issues have been very helpful to the district."

Burdick's tenure as supervisor was preceded by four years on the Town Board. He ran and has won for supervisor three times, and was unopposed the last two election cycles.

He holds a master's degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a juris doctorate from Seton Hall Law School. He and his wife Illyria have been married for 34 years. They have three adult children and a baby granddaughter.

The sprawling state budget deficit concerns Burdick who supports exempting health care and education from funding cuts.

"The first found of pandemic relief from the feds did bring in billions to aid health care and education, but we will need another relief package," he said. "Until we see the (state)

budget bill, it's hard to identify those areas that shouldn't be spared. We need to see what the facts are."

COVID-19 triggered New York's shutdown in order to stop the spread of the virus, a move Burdick supported because since June New York has been perhaps the most successful state at keeping transmission rates low.

"There were some draconian measures taken that had to be imposed but it saved thousands of lives," Burdick said. "Going forward, we have to re-examine and reform our protocols when populations are compromised."

Reopening schools in the fall when COVID-19 numbers were low was impressive, but Burdick warned that vigilance must be exercised.

"We have to constantly look at the data about how outbreaks can occur and what we can do to avoid a reoccurrence," he said.

Burdick supports the NY Health Act despite serious challenges because "health care is a human right in my mind."

"The initial years will be expensive but over the long term it will save health care dollars and lives," Burdick said. "We need to address those people concerned that they might lose their plans."

If the current fiscal crisis continues to confront the state, Burdick said the NY Health Act may be difficult to implement.

As Bedford supervisor, Burdick has long supported and adhered to the property tax cap. If elected to the Assembly, Burdick said he would support state Sen. Shelley Mayer's bill, the Shared Help Assessment to Rebuild

Education Act, that would place a temporary income tax increase on those earning more than \$5 million annually.

Burdick said he would support the legalization of recreational marijuana use if the bill includes steps to ensure safe use.

"There is still research to be done on the impacts of marijuana, like how it can impair driving," he said. "Revenue should go towards programs on drug issues rather than to the black market and organized crime."

Burdick doesn't see legalizing marijuana impacting the opioid epidemic because he said marijuana is also a very effective medicinal use and can deter use of other drugs.

Burdick said he supported the 2019 bail reform but wants further revisions.

"The underlying premise is that nobody should be held in jail because they can't afford to pay bail," Burdick said. "It's unjust and directly impacts people of color and the poor."

Claims of crime spikes because of bail reform has not have supporting data, Burdick claimed.

"We're going to need to take another look at (bail reform) and make certain changes," he said. "We also don't want to see it go too far."

A new gun law that addresses firearm activity is supported by Burdick. "Ghost Guns," – homemade firearms or parts of guns that can be bought on the internet – is of particular concern.

"The gun isn't registered and there's no way to trace it and can evade gun regulations," Burdick said. "We need to do more."

As vice chairman of Sustainable Westchester, Burdick said the \$3 billion New



Chris Burdick

York State green referendum would create debt service and go into future budgets. It was postponed until at least 2021 because of the fiscal crisis caused by the pandemic.

"Maybe we can spend less and look at \$1 billion or \$500 million," Burdick said.

Initiatives such as reducing carbon emissions, increasing usage of renewable energy, building solar farms and partnering with sustainable businesses are among the green actions that would restore the economy, he said.

## Smythe Returns to Make Second Run for State Senate

By Joan Gaylord

After losing by 688 votes to Republican state Sen. Sue Serino in 2018, Democrat Karen Smythe returns to the political fray in this year's 41st Senate District race.

Smythe said it was her frustration with how government is working – or not working – that prompted her to enter politics.

"Compromise has become a dirty word," she said. "And I'm concerned about the way that women's rights are moving backward. I realized I needed to get involved in our government, to get up off the sidelines."

The Poughkeepsie native has deep roots in Dutchess County. A graduate of Vassar College, she became the fourth generation and the first daughter to run her family's union construction business, C. B. Strain & Son.

After the family decided to sell the company, Smythe transitioned to marketing and served as the president of Beatrix Farrand Garden Association.

The issues she cares most about are the environment, women's rights, taking care of veterans, fair wages and creating a level playing field for all New Yorkers.

A step toward achieving these goals would be to take a close look at the state budget. While Gov. Andrew Cuomo is considering 20 percent spending cuts in response to the looming budget deficit, Smythe said she opposed across-the-board reductions.

"I know from running a business that you have to prioritize your spending," she said.

Smythe would prioritize state spending



Karen Smythe

for education, housing and mental health programs, saying that harsh cuts in those areas would be devastating.

As communities weigh their response to conditions created by the pandemic, especially with schools and nursing homes, Smythe said government has an opportunity to evaluate recent practices to determine what has worked well and what hasn't, especially since it does not appear the pandemic will abate any time soon.

"Some schools have reopened very successfully," Smythe remarked. "What

have they done differently? We need to learn from these experiences because it is important to get kids back into school."

Just as important, she said, is ensuring that schools and families have the technology they need. She noted that 26 percent of Poughkeepsie residents do not have access to affordable broadband, forcing students to learn in parking lots and libraries, a situation that exacerbates inequalities.

Smythe said she supports quality, affordable health care for all New Yorkers but isn't convinced the NY Health Act is the solution.

"I don't think we're there yet," Smythe said. "I believe more should come from the federal government. The more people involved, the cheaper it would be."

Smythe is also concerned about keeping property taxes affordable, a critically important issue for seniors who hope to stay in their houses.

However, she does not believe the tax structure can be changed quickly, especially since property taxes fund public schools. Smythe would like to see the state government explore alternate ways to fund education, which would ensure greater equity in educational opportunities.

Smythe supports legalizing adult-use recreational marijuana. She believes it would allow New York to regulate its use, bring in tax revenue and support small businesses.

"We would have to do it properly. We don't want people driving or working under the influence," she said.

Smythe said she has spoken with

veterans who have found it difficult to obtain medical marijuana, which can be an effective treatment for PTSD.

"I believe we need to do everything we can do to support them," she said.

As for last year's bail reform efforts, Smythe said there has been excessive misinformation and fearmongering. The new law, she said, doesn't let criminals out of jail.

"The purpose of bail is to ensure that someone who has been accused of a crime comes back to court," Smythe said. "If the person has been accused, the label 'criminal' is not accurate."

She agreed that if a crime is egregious, the accused should not be released. What happens more often, she said, is people who can afford bail get released while those who can't sit in jail, sometimes for more than a year before their trial.

Smythe said that statistics fail to support the belief that the new law accounts for increases in crime. She points instead to the recession and rising unemployment that have made people "desperate."

On the issue of gun violence, Smythe said the state must do more to increase gun safety, working to reduce illegal guns, particularly do-it-yourself "ghost guns."

The treasurer of the VFW Auxiliary at Post 170 in Poughkeepsie, Smythe cited spiraling homelessness and suicide rates among veterans.

"Programs and policies that help veterans better integrate back into civilian life are important to me," Smythe said.

The graphic features a central green rounded rectangle with a white border. Inside this rectangle, the words "ELECTION" and "2020" are prominently displayed. "ELECTION" is in red with a black outline, and "2020" is in white with a black outline. Below this, the phrase "EVERY VOTE COUNTS" is written in blue with a red outline, enclosed within a white rectangular area that also has a red border. The entire central graphic is set against a background of a blurred American flag. At the top and bottom of the image are horizontal bands: the top band is blue with white stars, and the bottom band is red with white stars.

**ELECTION**  
**2020**

**EVERY**  
**VOTE**  
**COUNTS**