

A Special Supplement

**Examiner**  
MEDIA

# VOTE 2020

## A GUIDE TO YOUR LOCAL PRIMARY ELECTIONS

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June 16 - June 22, 2020

## 17th Congressional District

# Buchwald Looks to Make Jump From Albany to Washington

By Martin Wilbur

It may be fitting that David Buchwald is running for the congressional seat that is being vacated this year by Rep. Nita Lowey. While a physics major at Yale, he interned for the 16-term legislator in 1997.

Now, Buchwald, 42, a tax attorney by trade who has served on the White Plains City Council and the last seven and a half years representing the 93rd Assembly District, is hoping to succeed Lowey "to build upon her legacy of accomplishment."

"My intention has always been to help people and to solve problems," Buchwald said. "That's what I've had the honor of doing as a public servant now for 132,000 residents of Westchester."

The dual crises – health and economic – caused by COVID-19 will almost certainly need to be addressed by next year's Congress. Buchwald said the federal government must approve adequate assistance to fund state and local governments and school districts, which have been ravaged the past three months.

There should be an immedi-

ate two-year suspension of the \$10,000 limit on state and local property tax deductions and support must be gathered in Congress for a complete overturn of the 2017 tax law, said Buchwald. (He wrote the state law that would force President Donald Trump to submit his state tax returns to Congress. The president is fighting that law in court.)

Buchwald said he would propose three new higher tax brackets for those who earn more than \$5 million, \$10 million and \$100 million a year. Those percentages would need to be negotiated depending on various factors but would be greater than 40 percent.

He also would work to tax capital gains as ordinary income, support a nationwide transfer tax to raise revenue and curtail high-frequency trading and make it less attractive for corporations to send

jobs overseas. Buchwald said he's looking forward to implementing more equitable tax proposals.

While helping states, municipalities and schools and supporting infrastructure investment will be expensive, it's the type of spending that saves and creates jobs.

"We have to focus on getting the economy back on its feet and keeping people healthy because these things are pillars that will

provide the economic activity and the fiscal revenue that we need going forward," Buchwald said.

He supports a public option for health insurance so everyone has access to affordable coverage and healthcare. Insurance for those citizens through an employer or union would continue, he said.

"I think that's essential to establish for the American people, and we can have a government-run healthcare option that is efficient and responsive to the pub-

lic's needs," Buchwald said.

He also said he would work toward the negotiation of drug prices and paid sick leave for all Americans.

When he arrived in Albany in January 2013, Buchwald's first vote was for the NY SAFE Act, the month after the Sandy Hook massacre. Buchwald would push for many of the same measures in a federal bill – safe storage laws, a Red Flag law, enhanced background checks, strengthening gun-free school zones, a ban on assault weapons and limiting high-capacity magazines.

On criminal justice issues, Buchwald said he supports a national law to have an independent prosecutor on officer-involved shootings, diminished reliance on private prisons and ending mandatory minimum sentences that target people of color.

He said the nation's immigration policies during the Trump Administration "goes against American values." Buchwald is a strong supporter of DACA, and backs the roughly 700,000 people brought here as children becoming citizens. He would also re-

store annual refugee acceptance to previous levels.

"We are at our best when we are a welcoming country and people, and although we have gone through cycles of isolation and closing our welcoming arms, the United States and the world is worse off under these circumstances," Buchwald said.

The assemblyman supports the Green New Deal, saying the development of green energy benefits the environment and the economy because it creates new jobs. Buchwald co-sponsored legislation in Albany that sets firm benchmarks for emissions reductions over the next 30 years in New York by investing in new technologies, a template that should be emulated nationally.

As a state legislator Buchwald has sponsored more than 70 bills that have become law.

"I have passed more legislation than anyone else in this campaign and that in a time of crisis in our country, Democratic voters are looking for someone who on Day One can make a difference in Washington," Buchwald said.



DAVID BUCHWALD

# Carlucci Quietly Sets Out to Make His Mark in Primary

By Rick Pezzullo

You may not see State Sen. David Carlucci in television ads but he is considered one of the top contenders in next week's 17th Congressional District's Democratic primary.

In two polls, the 10-year legislator is among the leaders and believes there are many reasons he has emerged as one of the favorites.

"This community is my home, I didn't just move here to run for this seat, this is where I grew up and have lived my entire life," Carlucci said. "I am raising a family here, and have represented many of the residents in this district, as a state senator for nearly a decade."

That doesn't just mean passing legislation, but actually helping them with more mundane issues, whether that's unfair billing from a utility or when someone's insurance company wouldn't cover a medically vital procedure.

"People know my office has been there for them, and I do not think people forget those kinds of things," he said.

Carlucci, 39, of Clarkstown, currently represents Ossining and Briarcliff in Westchester and most of Rockland Coun-

ty. His passion for public service is what motivated him to run for Congress.

"We have the opportunity to elect a representative who can carry on Congresswoman Nita Lowey's passion for service and helping people, and I believe I am the right person for the job," he said.

Shortly after taking office in Albany,

Carlucci and three other senators formed the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), which caucused on its own and allied with Republicans, a move he defended. He supported key Democratic legislation, including the Reproductive Health Act, the SAFE Act and marriage equality.

"Residents should know that I have been a lifelong Democrat and nothing else," he said. "They should feel confident by my voting record and the legislation I

have delivered. I want residents to know I am going to Washington to serve as a Democrat, and rhetoric trying to paint me any differently is not true."

Carlucci said the Trump Administration was ill-prepared to handle the coronavirus pandemic, having cut staff whose job was to watch for global health problems and attempted to reduce funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

He said the administration ignored multiple warning in January and February about the COVID-19 outbreak in China.

"It's clear further that science has been ignored and a national testing strategy was never developed, leading to many more countless deaths hitting our poorest communities and communities of color the hardest," Carlucci said. The response and economic recovery to COVID-19 is one of the most urgent issues our next member of Congress will face."

During the pandemic, Carlucci introduced legislation to safeguard school funding, prevent stimulus checks from being garnished by creditors, delay quarterly property tax deadlines and prevent small business unemployment insurance rates from skyrocketing.

He supports the HEROES Act, universal paid sick leave, extending unemployment benefits, financial relief for small businesses and free COVID-19 vaccines once available. But the HEROES Act must be improved to respond to the healthcare crisis in low-income communities, Carlucci said.

While the bill increases federal Medicaid payments by 14 percent for healthcare services, it doesn't prevent states from cutting people off Medicaid. To guard against that, Carlucci recommends exempting New York from the "maintenance of effort" provision.

Carlucci, who supports the Affordable

Care Act, would like to create a public Medicare option.

"This way people who like their doctors can keep their doctors, and for people who want a better choice, they should have the right to choose one," he said. "Everyone will be able to opt in to an affordable, comprehensive public alternative."

A public option would incentivize private insurers to compete and reduce costs, Carlucci said.

Common-sense gun laws must be supported by Congress to save lives. He plans to introduce an Enhanced Safe Act if elected to Congress, which would be a national version of the NY SAFE Act.

On immigration, Carlucci has vowed to stand up against holding people in cages and separating children from their parents at the border. He said he will fight to end separations of families by repealing section 1325 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

He also supports a better pathway toward citizenship for Dreamers and those under Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure. He mentioned Spring Valley, which he has represented for the past 10 years, is home to one of the nation's largest Haitian populations in New York.

"Many people in Spring Valley are TPS recipients who are contributing to our economy by working and living here legally," he said.



DAVID CARLUCCI

## 17th Congressional District

## Military, Upbringing Define Issues for Castlebury-Hernandez

By Abby Luby

**R**eal-life experiences shape the congressional campaign of Asha Castlebury-Hernandez.

A military war veteran who was deployed for 30 months in the Middle East, Castlebury-Hernandez is also an educator and national security expert. She is married to a Mexican immigrant and mother of a three-year-old daughter.

"As the only working mother of a young child in the campaign, I understand the inequities in child care," she said. "On a federal level we can combat the increasing costs for child care in this country. Working parents find it very hard to pay more than \$800 a month for child care."

Because her husband was brought to this country as a child, Castlebury-Hernandez learned firsthand how difficult it is to attain citizenship.

"Our immigration policy is deeply flawed," she said. "I support DACA and would make sure immigrants don't have to wait five years to achieve citizenship but (can) become citizens as soon as they graduate high school."

Castlebury-Hernandez, 36, was born in White Plains and raised in Tarrytown. She now lives in Elmsford with her husband Vladimir and their daughter. She studied at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and currently teaches foreign policy and grand strategy at Baruch College. Previously, she taught at Fordham University.

"One of the main reasons I'm running is

the concern for the safety and security of our country," Castlebury-Hernandez said. "We are seeing China and Russia out-perform us for military might. If we continue to authorize an excessive military budget to show we are stronger, we will fail."

Castlebury-Hernandez said the United States can outperform those rivals with a smaller, more cost-efficient defense budget and still be competitive.

"We also have to restore nuclear proliferation treaties, especially since Russia is in the business of expanding their nuclear arsenal," she said. "We are now investing more in nuclear weapons with taxpayers' money just to keep up with the Chinese and Russians."

A pathway to denuclearization of North Korea would require more oversight by Congress while engaging in a series of effective talks.

Castlebury-Hernandez said securing a trade pact with China has to involve the international community.

Disturbing to Castlebury-Hernandez is the Trump Administration's reduction of funds to the United Nations and its withdrawal from UNESCO.

"Taking money away from the U.N. hurts our leadership, especially when it comes to dealing with women and girls on an international scale," she said.

Her family's working-class background highlights the many economic disparities in the 17th Congressional District. Permanent reinvestment of the full state and local tax deduction is critical.

"This is a major concern for high-earning

households who are still struggling to live in this district," Castlebury-Hernandez said. "We can start by restoring the deduction for the next two years; that's better than nothing. But then we have to restore it permanently."

Castlebury-Hernandez just lost her grandfather, who died from a coronavirus-related illness. The loss highlighted the importance of affordable healthcare. While supporting Medicare for All, she said Congress should first stabilize the Affordable Care Act and offer a public option.

Controlling prescription drugs prices is also a priority.

"We have pharmaceutical companies buying elected officials – Republicans and Democrats – that questions moral and ethical issues," Castlebury-Hernandez said.

"We need to get rid of tax breaks given to pharmaceuticals, especially for the upcoming post-pandemic need for medication."

Allowing foreign pharmaceutical companies to compete should also be considered, she said.

Gun violence became real for Castlebury-Hernandez in 2011. She and her sister were walking in a White Plains park when they narrowly missed getting shot in the crossfire between two men.

"We need to take assault weapons off the streets and have universal background checks that synchronizes federal and local systems," Castlebury-Hernandez said.

"We don't want to take away Second Amendment rights but we have to adapt to the 21st century to protect ourselves."

Improving the transit system in Rockland County to connect commuters with the city and Westchester is among Castlebury-Hernandez's priorities for infrastructure improvements. Reducing noise at Westchester County Airport is also critical, she said.

"We see a lot of neglect of our roads and highways in the most vulnerable communities," she said.

Castlebury-Hernandez is a supporter of the Green New Deal.

The great disparity in campaign funds for the seven candidates in next week's primary represents inequality to Castle-

bury-Hernandez.

"I love participating in our democracy but when it comes to running for office there are a lot of undemocratic issues and one is raising money," said Castlebury-Hernandez, who supports campaign finance reform. "It's unfair that a candidate can put in their own money. PACs don't look at qualifications, it's about how much money a candidate can raise."

She said educating voters about her qualifications and leadership is more important than her fundraising totals.

"A person's qualifications and experience is what voters understand."



ASHA  
CASTLEBURY-HERNANDEZ

## Farkas Touts Experience as Key Factor in Times of Crisis

By Martin Wilbur

**E**xperience is often considered important, but Evelyn Farkas believes that in a crisis it becomes an irreplaceable quality.

That's why Farkas said she is best suited to succeed Rep. Nita Lowey in the 17th Congressional District next year. She will compete for the Democratic nomination against six opponents in next week's primary.

"This is a moment in our history like no other, and right now what we need in Congress is people with experience because we're in the middle of multiple crises," said Farkas, who was raised in Chappaqua and now lives in Pleasantville. "We have a pandemic, but we also have a climate crisis and we have a crisis of democracy."

Farkas, 52, spent 20 years working for the federal government, much of it in national security. She worked at the Pentagon and was serving as a senior adviser to the Allied commander in Europe when former secretary of defense Leon Panetta tabbed her as assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine

and Eurasia in 2013 under President Obama. Her portfolio included 14 countries.

To address the economic crisis, Farkas said the U.S. needs a 21st century New Deal that implements the vision of the Green New Deal – greater investment in renewable energy, electrification, infrastructure and other projects that will create new jobs while tackling climate change. Projects small and large could be addressed, such as installing car charging stations to encourage the use of electric vehicles and building more rail service.

Congress must help states and municipalities deal with the economic deterioration caused by the pandemic. She said the federal response in closing down the country and procuring tests and equipment was so weak that it worsened economic and health conditions.

Despite the steep expense of

fulfilling these needs, Farkas noted that the country has wrongly lowered the tax burden on the wealthy. She said she supports new higher brackets on earners of over \$1 million and \$5 million and to tax capital gains as ordinary income.

"It shouldn't just be (earned) income," Farkas said. "There shouldn't be a tax break for people who make money in the stock market."

Farkas supports a federally-funded public option for health insurance in addition to continuing private insurance for those who have the latter, saying it's "a universal human right to have access to quality, affordable healthcare."

She would support granting Health and Human Services the authority to negotiate the price of pharmaceuticals and allow for public-private partnerships and nonprofits to produce medicine.

"Big Pharma is gouging America

and Americans," Farkas said. "That is unacceptable and the federal government needs to have the right to negotiate these prices."

A child of 1950s Hungarian refugees, Farkas said the nation must stop demonizing immigrants and resume a normal flow of refugees. If elected, she pledged to outlaw the separation of children from their families and increase staffing with lawyers and counselors to properly evaluate and process those seeking asylum.

The rise in hate crimes and racial incidents, including law has been a stain on the nation.

"We have strayed so far from our ideals in this country, the fact that a police officer in 2020 has just murdered someone for alleged use of counterfeit money, it breaks my heart," Farkas said. "This is not the country I grew up in."

Farkas said the country's response to the scourge of gun violence is "something we should be ashamed of." She supports the House's legislation that calls for an assault weapons ban, prohibiting high-capacity magazines, universal background checks, a federal registry for gun ownership and Red Flag

laws.

"I would fight for this legislation that has been passed already by the House and it's sitting in the graveyard in Mitch McConnell's desk," Farkas said.

While China seeks to exert its economic muscle, Farkas said the greater immediate threat to the United States is Russia. With their invasion of Ukraine and interference in the 2016 election, they pose a much graver threat to American democracy and the international order.

But the United States is ignoring civil rights abuses around the globe, particularly in Hong Kong, she said.

Electing leaders, including members of Congress who are mature and principled, will be essential for the country to bolster its international standing.

"We, the United States, we have to stand up for decency, we have to stand up for human rights and we have to stand up firmly against the Chinese on these issues," Farkas said. "But that doesn't mean we have to have a confrontation, a military confrontation. We have to stand up for the rights of the people who are suffering."



EVELYN FARKAS

## 17th Congressional District

# Inspired By Lowey, Fine Looks to Chart a Path to Washington

By Abby Luby

Allison Fine said she was inspired to run for Congress because of her connection to Nita Lowey.

"Nita Lowey is our greatest champion for women's reproductive rights and worker's issues and I want to build on her legacy in those areas," she said.

Fine is a proponent of initiatives to help workers embrace innovation and entrepreneurship to develop an economy that invests in renewable energy, which encourages entrepreneurship.

A former chairwoman of National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) Pro-Choice America, Fine, 56, has authored three books about online activism. She grew up and lives in Sleepy Hollow with her husband. The couple has three grown sons.

Fine criticized the initial federal stimulus package, which failed to deliver needed funds to small business owners and workers.

"The money has been going out largely to the banks," she said. "If we want to keep businesses afloat, funds have to go to the payroll companies. Instead

we now have millions of dollars flailing around in a patchwork of state and federal unemployment systems putting everyone in desperate circumstances."

For Fine, the nation has failed to assist the hungry. In addition, COVID-19 testing should be more readily available and a plan for vaccine distribution should be worked on now.

Fine is concerned about the impact of the government stimulus on the national debt and deficit. If elected, she would divert funding from a Defense Department that is "bloated beyond its needs" to health and education programs.

To tackle the national debt, Fine said a shift of federal funds to make it easier to finance start-ups, support technological innovations and STEAM education for girls would be a path to a stronger economy.

"Students are buried in debt and can't take a chance to start a new company, something that has been made harder with over-

regulation, and accessing capital is also so hard," Fine said.

Repeal of the 2017 tax bill, which includes the limit on the state and local tax (SALT) deduction, is high on Fine's list. For those earning more than \$250,000 a year, she proposes increasing the federal tax rate by four points.

"SALT has hit our district very hard, where real estate is very expensive and is a hardship on those counting on a larger deduction," Fine said. "It makes the sale of higher-end houses more difficult."

She supports increasing the maximum child care tax credit that is equal to half of the first \$6,000 for one child and the first \$12,000 for two children. Fine said record-low new birth rates reflect how expensive it is to have children.

Reforming the country's healthcare system has to begin with a public option, she said.

"Paying into a public option will put enormous pressure

on the insurance companies to lower rates, giving the federal government leverage they need to reduce costs of prescription medications," Fine said.

She envisions a public option as the pathway to a single-payer system where people would still have options to choose private insurance.

Fine wants to block state bans and restrictions on access to reproductive healthcare.

"Right now, Roe v. Wade is wobbly, and although it is unconstitutional for a state to ban abortion, states can put onerous restrictions on the architecture of the law," Fine said. "Women should be able to control their life and their bodies."

A deeply corrupt political system is to blame for widespread gun violence, according to Fine. Deregulation of the campaign finance law allowed the NRA to massively fund political campaigns of those supporting weak or ineffective gun laws, she said. Fine would work toward common-sense gun legislation, including a ban on assault weapons and large magazines.

Mandating universal background checks for all, eliminating sales to convicted domestic abusers and terrorists, having child

safety locks and responsible gun storage are also priorities.

Fine wants to create a pathway to citizenship for the 12 million undocumented people currently living in the United States along with repealing the Muslim ban. "These 12 million are left in the shadows and not eligible for any assistance," she said. "We need to close the detention centers and move immigrants and asylum seekers to community-based organizations."

Fine would fight for the Green New Deal while reducing reliance on fossil fuels. She favors subsidizing electric vehicle production. A goal should be any new vehicle bought or made in the U.S. by 2030 be completely electric.

Upgrading the power grid and burying power lines to make energy delivery more reliable is essential, while creating more jobs.

She criticized the absence of campaign finance reform, particularly candidates funding their own race.

"There should be a cap on self-funding a campaign," Fine said. "This race will be won by a candidate who has deep roots in the community. To parachute in and spend money on ads is not going to make a bit of difference."



ALLISON FINE

# Jones Emphasizes Progressive Policies in Campaign for Congress

By Martin Wilbur

There was no shortage of Democrats who declared their intention to vie for the nomination to succeed Rep. Nita Lowey in the 17th Congressional District. But Mondaire Jones was the first – on July 8, 2019 – three months before Lowey announced she would retire at the end of her term.

For Jones, this race is not about beating President Donald Trump or the chance at making history by becoming the first openly gay black member of Congress. The son of a single mother, Jones is concerned most about addressing the nuts-and-bolts issues families face every day and finding a way to improve their lives.

"We're in the midst of a once-in-a-century pandemic and one of my opponents is talking about Russia and the other is prosecuting Donald Trump when people are figuring out how to put food on the table for themselves and how to keep the lights on and how to pay for rent and mortgage," said Jones, 33, a South Nyack resident and Harvard Law School graduate who worked for a large New York City law firm and served as a litigator for the Westchester County Law Department.

"So my economic message, which has been consistent throughout the course of

this campaign has even more resonance than it did before."

Helping families would start by supporting a more robust stimulus package for those hurt by the economic crisis. Jones backs a proposal offered by California Rep. Maxine Waters that would provide \$2,000 a month to every adult and \$1,000 for each child for six months.

"Now is not the time to be talking about what we can't do as a government," Jones said. "Now is the time for the federal government to be more present than it has ever been to lift us out of this unprecedented economic crisis."

One step to help pay for stimulus initiatives is a wealth tax: 2 percent on every dollar in excess of \$50 million in assets and 3 percent on every dollar above \$1 billion, he said. Jones also wants to see a marginal tax rate of about 50 percent on income over \$10 million and to tax capital gains as ordinary income. Today, the top individual tax rate is about 35 percent.

Lifting the \$10,000 limit on state and local income tax is one of Jones' top priorities.

Jones is a strong supporter of Medicare

for All, but if the votes aren't there for that step, he said he would pragmatically back a public option in the interim.

"I think we've got to be fighting for it," said Jones, who would back legislation capping the cost of prescription medication to each consumer at \$200 annually.

Comprehensive immigration reform should include a pathway to citizenship for undocumented people, including support Dream Act and immediate protection for DACA recipients. Ending family separations, repealing the Muslim ban, restoring the Temporary Protected Status and acceptance of refugees at pre-Trump Administration level should also be in place, he said.

Jones is adamant about a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines and a mandatory buy-back program.

He strongly supports the Green New Deal, which outlines the goal of using 100 percent renewable energy.

"The cost of not doing it is risking the lives of our children and our children's children," Jones said.

A carbon tax, which some Democrats

back, is inadequate to discourage the use of emission-producing modes of transportation, he said. Jones also wants the United States to rejoin the Paris Agreement.

The Green New Deal figures prominently in improving the country's infrastructure, he said, by encouraging the development of more electric vehicles and high-speed rail. For example, there is no one-stop train from all parts of Rockland into the city, something that has been talked about for decades.

Jones said the first step toward having a more coherent foreign policy is electing Joe Biden the next president. It also requires capable leaders in an administration that value nuanced diplomacy over bellicose rhetoric.

He said that "one of the great scandals of our time" is China's theft of copyrights and intellectual property. Congress and the administration have to work on strategies that will hold China accountable.

While Jones is one of two candidates in this race based in Rockland, he said he has made inroads in Westchester by opening his campaign headquarters in Sleepy Hollow and having acquainted himself while working for Westchester County.

"I continue to believe that I am the only candidate who can get significant support in both Rockland and Westchester counties," Jones said.



MONDAIRE JONES

## 17th Congressional District

## Public Service Motivates Schleifer's Run for Congress

By Martin Wilbur

Since Adam Schleifer was in college, he's had the bug for public service. Schleifer interned for a judge during his undergraduate days at Cornell and clerked for two federal judges while attending Columbia Law School.

After five years at a large Manhattan law firm, he joined the state's newly-formed Financial Services Department in 2013 before snagging his "dream job" as a federal prosecutor in California, where he tried, among other cases, the college applications scandal.

But it was a trip home during last year's High Holy Days where he would abruptly seek another path. The day after Yom Kippur, 16-term Rep. Nita Lowey announced she was retiring at the end of 2020. He moved home to Chappaqua and soon embarked on his campaign.

"I thought I have something to offer," said Schleifer, 38, a product of the Chappaqua School District, who is expecting his first child this summer. "I have a background in government at the state level, I've done it at the state level and now my hometown congresswoman after 30 distinguished years is not seeking re-election. I thought I had something to offer to continue her legacy and to be a thoughtful and effective advocate here."

Schleifer said since about 80 percent of the country can't afford to miss multiple paychecks and 70 percent of the economy is consumer-driven, Congress needs to put more money in average Americans' hands. In a second payment, Schleifer would favor "a little more" than the \$1,200 to keep the economy moving. Schleifer also wouldn't oppose help for corporations.

"We've got to stimulate corporations but we need to condition aid to corporations on their agreement to not lay people off," he said.

Aid to states and municipalities is also essential not only to avoid layoffs but to help officials avoid regional or local crises such as the Flint, Mich. water contamination.

Schleifer called the 2017 Trump tax plan "unsustainable" and has pledged for its repeal, not just eliminating the state and local income tax deduction limit. He also supports two new tax brackets of 40 and 42 percent for those earning over \$1 million and \$2 million, respectively. He would also like to lower the tax burden, if possible, for families earning less than a few hundred thousand dollars.

"It wouldn't be crippling but it would be asking the wealthiest among us to pay a lit-

tle bit more and raised trillions of dollars over the next decade," Schleifer said of the wealth tax. "I think that's an important point because we'll make the tax code a little more fair and the safety net a little more robust."



ADAM SCHLEIFER

Schleifer favors a strong public option for healthcare coverage that can bring true competition to health help much of the more than 8 percent of Americans that are without coverage. Leaders must also make sure there is a Medicare option for those who need assistance, he said. However, a public option will also protect those with private insurance they like.

Schleifer has taken shots from some of his opponents and their supporters during the campaign that much of his multimillion-dollar campaign has been self-funded and that he would not fight hard enough on behalf of Americans to lower drug prices. Schleifer's father is Regeneron co-founder Leon Schleifer.

"I don't work for them, I never have," he said. "I'm firmly independent and I have nothing to do with the company, per se. I just want to point that out because I think there's a level of intellectual dishonesty."

He said his views on drug prices, including expanding Medicare's ability to negoti-

ate with drug companies, capping out-of-pocket drug costs for Medicare recipients and taking action against price gouging are in line with his Democratic opponents.

A path to citizenship for those who have been working and contributing to society for a certain number of years is critical as a first step toward reforming immigration, Schleifer said. That would include DACA recipients, although he said that is not a permanent solution.

He favors common-sense gun reform that includes an assault weapons ban, background checks and Red Flag laws. While not opposed to safe, legal gun ownership, Schleifer said extreme gerrymandering has kept the powerful gun lobby entrenched even though most Americans, including many gun owners, back these reforms.

Schleifer supports a carbon tax that will tax companies to the point where they will comply with greener initiatives because it would be more financially beneficial.

He would want to establish a Clean Green 21st Century Infrastructure Corps to encourage green infrastructure, including placing more solar panels on public properties and more trains from Rockland to Secaucus, N.J. so Rockland commuters have a more direct path into Manhattan.

"We have a lot to do here and I will take it as one of my biggest responsibilities to make sure we get that support from the federal government," Schleifer said.

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## 17th Congressional District

# Rockland Republican Looking to Win Nomination

By Martin Wilbur

**Y**ehudis Gottesfeld was intrigued by a discussion last year by the author of the Green New Deal at Columbia University, where she is working on her doctorate.

Gottesfeld, a chemical engineer specializing in energy and rare elements research, liked the goals of what was offered. But she had a simple and practical question.

"What we want with our energy is to reduce cost, increase reliability and we want a cleaner environment," said Gottesfeld, who has worked for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. "The technologies that the Green New Deal implements would do that. The question is at what cost do you do it?"

The absence of practicality makes the plan a non-starter for the 24-year-old Ramapo resident who is competing for the Republican nomination next week in the 17th Congressional District. Gottesfeld said over time there will be development of technologies that will reduce costs of energy to consumers.

While balancing the health and economic needs have been difficult since the emergence of COVID-19 in the region in March, there should have been greater consideration made for business owners and others who were most impacted, she

said.

"There's a whole population of special needs adults and children that haven't been getting their services in the proper way," Gottesfeld said. "I think New York State government should have listened to their constituents more and heard their problems, because at the end of the day if you shut down the economy, you need to come up with a way to not hurt your constituents."

Gottesfeld said she would be hesitant for the federal government to help states and municipalities with aid, instead using those resources to assist small businesses that create most of the jobs and families who are hurting.

"I don't think we should use this (crisis) as a crutch for them, to use this as an opportunity to blame someone else for their problems," Gottesfeld said. "This is their problem and they need to take responsibility for it."

She objects to pet projects and initiatives bundled into the same bill with emergency coronavirus funding.

While she would work to eliminate the limit on state and local tax deductions (SALT), Gottesfeld said all levels of gov-

ernment need to do a better job at keeping their taxes as low as possible. She is staunchly against raising taxes on anyone, even those at the highest income levels.

"I think as America we want to empower people to work and live the American Dream and empower people to get to those seven-figure (incomes)," Gottesfeld said. "We want to incentivize people to go from ashes to the gold crown. We want to incentivize people to do that."

Calling for the elimination of the Affordable Care Act, which she described as "horrible," Gottesfeld said

there are free-market solutions to lower healthcare costs. She supports the purchase of coverage across state lines along with price disclosures, fair billing and other consumer protections to hold prices down.

"When we're looking at coverage, each person should have the ability to choose the coverage they want that fits their needs and themselves," Gottesfeld said.

To reverse the spiraling cost of medication, Gottesfeld said she supports a most-favored nation clause, which would only allow companies to sell their drugs in the United States at the lowest prices they sell

it anywhere else in the world.

Gottesfeld said the country needs strong border security and enforce immigration laws that are on the books. To deal with legal immigration and refugees, she would support doing what is needed to streamline the process and make sure the people who want to come to America are good people.

She awaits the Supreme Court's decision on DACA to determine whether those people should remain in the country.

A strong supporter of the Second Amendment, Gottesfeld does not want to infringe on a citizen's ability to protect themselves. However, there must be measures taken to crack down on illegal firearms and to remove as many as possible.

Gottesfeld supports Sen. Tim Scott's proposal to conduct investigations into whether police departments exhibit bias based on race and to correct those problems with proper training and oversight.

Except for the limit on the SALT deduction, Gottesfeld said she supports most of President Donald Trump's policies, especially relating to foreign policy because he looks out for America's interests and its citizens.

"I think in his relationship with other countries, he really prioritized us in the world and helped set a good standard for our national security," she said.



YEHUDIS GOTTESFELD

## A Return to Traditional Values Sought By Yorktown Republican

By Rick Pezzullo

**Y**Schulman, 61, retired in 2003 from the New York City Fire Department after serving 21 years in East Harlem at Engine 35. She was one of the department's first female firefighters.

"I loved my job and I loved serving the underserved of the City of New York," she stated. "During my career I demonstrated honesty, reliability and extreme caring for the citizens of New York City."

Schulman said her main job was fire suppression, including responding to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center. She also taught probationary firefighters.

"I watched nearly 3,000 people die in front of me as the World Trade Center towers collapsed," said the grandmother of three. "I have had open heart surgery. I

am a cancer survivor. I have buried a child. These things did not destroy me, they truly made me stronger."

Making her first bid for elected office, Schulman stated she decided to throw her hat in the political ring as "a direct result out of love of family, and my love of my country."

"I am a proud American. I can no longer sit back in good conscience and watch what is happening to the country I love," she said. "Morale is low and the privileged get special consideration while the rest of us follow the rule of law. It is apparent we are becoming a nation

of haters, complainers and whiners. We blame each other, point fingers and gossip, because of our political views."

"I believe I cannot control every situation or its outcome, and I believe the most we can do is control our own attitudes," Schulman

continued. "I can only hope to be an inspiration to others, to be an example of courage and perseverance. I now live my life for what tomorrow has to offer and not what yesterday has taken from me."

A supporter of most of President Donald Trump's policies, Schulman said while she is in favor of a wall being built on the Mexican border, she is not against finding a way for some illegal immigrants to become U.S. citizens.

"We need more than anything else, to be willing to fight for freedom, free markets and traditional American values," she said. "I feel this is what the American people want to see this administration and the Republican Party return to. We have a task in encouraging our children and future generations to come, to return to those values. We must guide our future generations to a safe and prosperous future. A country that accepts one million legal immigrants with open arms a year, immigrants who strive to become part of the American dream. We welcome these legal immigrants with open arms."

"I believe we need a wall to keep drugs and illegal aliens out

of our country. Funding border security and a physical barrier, a wall to keep Americans safe should be our top priority," Schulman added. "Senators Obama, Schumer, Clinton and 23 other Democratic senators all voted for a physical barrier in 2006. Now the Democrats are playing with our security, because they do not want President Trump to have fulfilled another election promise."

Schulman is strongly pro-life and has great admiration for veterans.

"Our veterans can teach us a lot about heroism and sacrifice. Our veterans love our country and have great hopes for it," she

said. "So do I, and for that reason, I can speak candidly and critically about it."

She called the Democratic platform "hypocrisy in action."

"The Democratic platform has become 'not a single dollar' for a border wall, full-term abortions, to getting upset that a known terrorist was killed, Medicare for all, getting rid of private health insurance," Schulman said. Free college tuition, taxing earners at a very high rate to pay for these free programs," she stated.

Schulman has been endorsed by the Westchester Republican Committee.



MAUREEN MCCARDLE SCHULMAN

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## District Attorney Race

# Rocah Hopes to Move Westchester D.A.'s Office Forward

By Sherrie Dulworth

**B**ringing stakeholders together is something that Mimi Rocah found to be among her strengths during her almost 17 years as a federal prosecutor.

Now, as she campaigns to be the Democratic nominee for Westchester's district attorney, increasing collaboration is something she refers to often.

"I found that over the course of my career, I was able to bring together different groups that did not necessarily want to be in the same room together, let alone work together," Rocah said.

Until 2017, Rocah was an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of New York. In 2011, she was promoted to chief of the White Plains division for the Department of Justice, which investigates and prosecutes violations of federal law in Westchester and five other counties.

Rocah, 49, is challenging incumbent Anthony Scarpino in the upcoming Democratic primary. If elected, she has ambitious plans. That includes creating a dedicated unit within the D.A.'s office

to combat human trafficking. In 2012, one of her early initiatives was to work with multiple law enforcement and community agencies to form the Westchester Anti-Trafficking Task Force.

"New York State is actually fifth in the country in human trafficking rates, which I think surprises a lot of people," she said.

According to Rocah, the problem crosses economic, social, racial and geographic boundaries. It includes sex trafficking and domestic servitude, where a person's wages or passport may be withheld to coerce and control them.

"It's also very preventable and something where we can do a lot if we bring our efforts together," she said.

Addressing gun violence, Rocah said she supports working with law enforcement agencies to create a 24/7 gun buy-back program and wants to improve safe

storage laws. She said she would work with local representatives of Moms Demand Action.



MIMI ROCAH

"We need a comprehensive approach to gun violence that brings together stakeholders, elected officials, mental health providers, county service providers and faith-based groups to address underlying causes," said Rocah, a Scarsdale resident.

The candidate noted that strengthening gun safety also helps protect victims of domestic violence.

"We need to make sure that first responders are armed with information for victims, or potential victims, of domestic violence," she said. "Some of them never come into a D.A.'s office."

Rocah supports a mandatory requirement to inform victims of their rights under the state's Red Flag Law legislation that can help get firearms out of the house.

Rocah earned her law degree

from New York University School of Law and graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's in American History from Harvard University.

One of the cases that helped shaped Rocah's current vision was the 2016 shooting of 13-year-old Shamoya McKenzie, killed when caught in gang crossfire while seated in a car in Mount Vernon.

"It really impacted me as a mother and as a prosecutor that we need to do more to prevent this," Rocah said.

While it's the goal of law enforcement and prosecutors to react to urgent situations when there isn't a crisis, more can be done to prevent this type of tragedy, she noted.

Asked how the district attorney's office can ensure equal justice for everyone, including those in marginalized groups, Rocah said, "First of all, we have to acknowledge that it is a problem and say that out loud; and prosecutors, like me, acknowledging that racial disparities in the criminal justice system is a real issue, is important."

There is also a need for much better, regular, and rigorous training for law enforcement and for prosecutors, she said.

Among her plans to reduce disparities and ensure that innocent people are not convicted is establishing a Convictions Integrity Unit.

"Conviction integrity is about making sure that we have no innocent person in jail regardless of race," Rocah said. "It is about preventing wrongful convictions in the first place."

In the aftermath of George Floyd's death, the candidate released a "Right Side of Justice Agenda" to address police misconduct and build stronger relations between the police and the communities they serve. Her campaign website states that the agenda, "was developed after multiple conversations with community members, faith leaders, police officers, criminal justice reform advocates, and elected leaders" and lists 15 specific steps.

She said she has consulted with the New York State Innocence Project and the New York State Bar Association.

Since 2017, Rocah has been a Distinguished Fellow in Criminal Justice with the Pace University School of Law. She had been a legal analyst with MSNBC until last December.

# Scarpino Points to Record of Accomplishments in Re-election Bid

By Sherrie Dulworth

**W**"I came from a different background. When I was told, 'This is the way we've always done it,' I was able to say, let's see if that's the way we should continue to do it," Scarpino said.

Scarpino, 68, a North Castle resident, is looking to stave off a strong challenge from Mimi Rocah in next week's Democratic primary.

"In general, the most important responsibility of the D.A. is to make sure that Westchester remains a safe and secure community," Scarpino said.

His focus has been to remove violent offenders from the street and simultaneously reduce incoming new cases using progressive policies. Scarpino cites examples of both.

In 2018, a major undercover investigation led to arrests of 70 gang members around Westchester. This, and other initiatives targeting guns, gangs and narcotics, have led to a 20-plus percent decrease in violent crimes during his tenure, he said.

Among his progressive policies, Scarpino said ending prosecution of individuals for possessing up to two ounces of marijuana has preserved law enforcement resources to investigate more serious crimes and prevented branding hundreds of people with criminal records.

He also supported bail reform.

"I made a decision when I first came into the office that I would not have my assistant D.A.'s seek bail in any case where we would not be seeking jail time at the end of the case," he said.

Scarpino favors the state's recent bail amendments, which take effect in July, that reinstated requirements for some violent crimes. He would like to see minor arson and some other offenses, if repeated chronically, considered within future reforms.

Scarpino created the Heroin and Opioid Task Force to help identify and prosecute drug dealers. Treatment and prevention is also part of the equation to break the cycle of repeat incarceration.

Recalling his experience with the FBI's special narcotics department during the 1980s crack epidemic, Scarpino said jail is not always a solution.

"You can't prosecute yourself out of this problem," he said.

For example, during the 2018 gang investigation, instead of arresting them, Scarpino took a different tact.

"We gave them the opportunity to become part of a drug rehab program, or mental health program, all with the support

services that were available to them," he said. "They took advantage of it. It was a very successful and innovative approach."

After graduating from the Syracuse University School of Law, Scarpino's early career included four years as an FBI agent, serving in Kentucky and New York. The bulk of his professional life was on the bench, first as a city court judge in Mount Vernon. He subsequently served as a County Court Judge, a state Supreme Court Justice and a Westchester Surrogate Court Judge.

A "public school kid" and Mount Vernon native, Scarpino said part of his strength comes from growing up in a diverse community.

In 2017, Scarpino created the Westchester Office of Immigrant Affairs to assist immigrants who are crime victims.

"The national rhetoric just keeps sending the immigrant community further underground," he said. "We have to continue our outreach to those communities to make sure that victims of crime know that the D.A.'s office and law enforcement will help them."

Scarpino said that access to data is crucial to understanding how different populations are affected by crime and criminal

justice and help identify systemic issues of inequality.

He launched new initiatives to improve infrastructure and make the department less paper-reliant, increasing the speed of communication with police and defense attorneys and automate data analytics capabilities.

The department purchased laptops for assistant district attorneys. The new web-based case management system with a secure communications portal was launched last year. Both actions proved valuable when the pandemic struck. Scarpino implemented a new requirement to share discovery with defense attorneys within 15 days.

The system's more robust analytic capabilities are expected to go into effect later this year.

"We get inquiries all the time from advocacy groups asking about crime and demographic data. We feel it's important to provide information that the community asks for without it requiring thousands of hours to accomplish it," he said.

Scarpino issued a statement, "A Painful Moment in History," on his campaign website on the need to acknowledge systemic racism following George Floyd's killing, stating that "solving these structural problems requires collective commitment from all elements of society. This unequivocally includes the Office of the District Attorney as well as police, activists, community leaders, elected officials and so many others."



ANTHONY SCARPINO

## 93rd Assembly District

# Burdick Eyes Leap From Town Government to Assembly

By Martin Wilbur

**T**he only drawback for Chris Burdick during this year's primary campaign is that he hasn't been able to partake in his favorite activity when running for office – traveling door to door meeting voters.

With the COVID-19 pandemic having eliminated in-person contact, Burdick has been relegated to virtual debates and forums and other forms of electronic communication.

For someone who has won four consecutive elections as Bedford supervisor, the last two contests unopposed, immediately preceded by three terms as councilman, it's a very different way of doing things.

This year, Burdick, 68, is looking to make the jump to the state Assembly in a five-candidate Democratic primary in the 93rd Assembly District. He said his experience of having served for more than 12 years in strong economic times and bad has prepared him for the challenge.

"I would like to apply my experience working with all levels of government, and I'm passionate about working to tackle the same

financial blow that has hit working men and women who have lost jobs, many of which are not going to come back, businesses that are closed down, too many of which won't reopen," Burdick said of his motivation for running.

Burdick is optimistic that there will be some federal aid and that the state budget shortfall may be as low as \$8 billion, citing the state comptroller's latest figures last week. That's still a sizeable deficit. As a result, Burdick recommends postponing most capital improvements.

Evaluating each expenditure will be needed to balance the budget, but he said healthcare and education cuts should be off the table.

"The pandemic and the budget crisis and the economic blow is going to be prolonged, and so we'll have to take a look at it from a multiyear perspective," Burdick said.

Bedford has complied with the tax cap every year since it was instituted while delivering high levels of service and maintaining a Triple A bond rating and strong reserves. Whether at the town or state level, the principles or prioritizing the most important needs remain the same.



CHRIS BURDICK

Burdick pledged to work closely with state Sen. Shelley Mayer, who chairs the Senate's Education Committee, to fight for more equitable education funding for the Hudson Valley.

He backs the legalization of recreational marijuana, which would generate more revenue; however, implementation has to be done carefully. Burdick said he understands that a reliable breathalyzer-type test is being developed, which will be needed when police stop drivers under the influence.

"It has to be done so we are cognizant and have our eyes open

and we are providing for funding of drug abuse prevention programs," Burdick said.

Burdick favors additional funding for substance abuse education and to lessen peer pressure, particularly for young people.

He is also a strong supporter of the NY Health Act to guarantee all state residents have access to health coverage, although preferably a single-payer system should come from the federal government.

The series of police reforms signed into law last week was a necessary step for the state, Burdick said. Those included more transparency into officers' records, the banning of chokeholds by police and the state attorney general's office handling incidents of police shootings.

But state government should also fund de-escalation training and other courses that improve guidance for police, he said.

"You have to provide the funding so local governments can carry it out," Burdick said.

Last year's bail reform was needed, and Burdick said he is pleased that the state revised portions of it, adding certain offenses where judges have more latitude

and giving more time for prosecutors to turn over evidence to suspects' lawyers.

Burdick lauded the state's strict gun laws, but would like to add prohibition of 3D printed guns and buying kits over the internet.

Bedford has been a leader in the area and throughout the state in limiting greenhouse gas emissions, something that Burdick said he takes pride in. The town has reduced emissions 44 percent during his time in office. He also helped to form Sustainable Westchester that promotes the development of renewable energy and solar. Burdick supports the \$3 billion green initiatives referendum that will appear on the ballot in November.

"We need to get there," Burdick said. "We have a climate crisis and we need to treat it like a crisis."

He said he is well-prepared to represent the district.

"I think experience matters, and especially in a crisis, experience matters, and I think I can provide that experience should I be elected, on Day One," Burdick said. "I would be able to take on the problems that confront our state and district."

## Browde Looks to Take Her Advocacy to Albany to Fight for Residents

By Martin Wilbur

**W**hen Kristen Browde announced her candidacy for the 93rd Assembly District last December, fighting for women's rights, tax relief, stronger gun laws and protecting children were some of her priorities.

Those issues remain near and dear to Browde, but in the past three months the emphasis has shifted.

Regardless of which candidate wins next week's Democratic primary and becomes the heavy favorite to succeed David Buchwald in the Assembly, dealing with the economic damage wrought by the coronavirus will command much of the attention.

"The most important thing that the New York legislature is going to be focusing on in the coming year is going to be recovering from the pandemic and the economic chaos as well as the personal chaos it has caused," said Browde, 69, a Chappaqua resident and attorney.

Browde, whose previous candidacy was an unsuccessful bid in 2017 for New Castle supervisor, said that means managing through a financial crisis, something she has already done overseeing a large union benefit plan during the last financial calamity in 2008 and 2009. This time, prudent cuts will be required in Albany, now with an

estimated budget gap ranging between \$7 billion and \$13 billion.

If there is no financial assistance from Washington, it will be challenging.

"We're going to have to look for efficiencies that aren't going to be very pleasant but are going to require people who have their priorities in order and have an understanding of what needs to be delivered," Browde said. "What are the necessary things and what are the things we want?"

Her priority is to protect education and healthcare, two of the most fundamental services a government can provide. Browde recommends stretching out capital projects.

Browde applauded last week's passage of the police reform package. Other steps would be to limit military equipment for local police departments and impose mandatory discipline for police officers who are found to have intentionally disabled body cameras.

She is unenthusiastic about legalizing recreational marijuana unless a reliable sobriety test can be developed. A parent of a 20-year-old and a high school sophomore, Browde said she agreed with decriminali-

zation of marijuana last year, but has her doubts about legalization.

"I'm not convinced that full legalization is the way to go," Browde said. "I know there are states like Colorado that have done it. I want to see their data. I want to see what's happened out there. If it can be done safely, I don't have a real problem with it, but as a parent I have a real concern."

Browde is happy to see the state increase funding for opioid treatment. She said too often it had been treated as a drug problem rather than a health issue.

While New York has some of the stiffest gun laws in the nation, there's still room for improvement, Browde said. Closing any remaining gun show loopholes and banning ghost guns and the sale of kits that can be made with a 3D printer would be improvements to already robust firearms laws, she said.

The 2019 bail reform bill needed to be revised this year, Browde said, but the intent of the original legislation was sound – to ensure the defendant returns to court rather than using bail as preventative detention. She said the discovery requirements in the original bill were likely too

strict and the new legislation gives district attorneys a few extra days to turn over evidence.

For many Westchester legislators, achieving more equity in state school funding is an elusive task. Browde's familiarity with Albany, will help. She served on the governor's council that lobbied for and helped craft gestational surrogacy legislation.

"A first-year legislator typically doesn't have a whole lot of visibility or power," Browde said. "Well, I'm not your average first-year person. I've been up in Albany working with the governor and legislature."

Browde supports the \$3 billion environmental referendum this November that will continue to help wean the state off fossil fuels and create jobs.

When Browde ran for New Castle supervisor three years ago, she received much publicity as the first transgender candidate in the state to run for office. In this campaign, it's hardly been mentioned. That acceptance is one of the reasons why Browde moved to the area.

She also notes that being the only woman in the race won't hurt her chances.

"I'm a parent who's worked for a variety of organizations to make this a better place for us," she said. "This (campaign) is just taking it one step further for me."



KRISTEN BROWDE

## 93rd Assembly District

# Frei-Pearson Seeks Breakthrough in 93rd Assembly District

By Abby Luby

**D**emocrat Jeremiah Frei-Pearson said he was compelled to run for the state Assembly because he saw widespread, unfair treatment of everyday people.

"We live in a time where powerful forces target members of our community and the growing anti-immigration rhetoric from the Trump Administration has seen more violence," he said.

Frei-Pearson, 42, a graduate of John Jay High School in Katonah and a civil rights attorney, founded the White Plains law firm Finkelstein, Blankinship, Frei-Pearson & Garber in 2014. Last year, he and members of his firm traveled to the southern border to fight for detained immigrant children.

The state's multibillion-dollar budget gap caused by the coronavirus shutdown could mean drastic cuts unless there's federal assistance. For Frei-Pearson, the shortfall highlights the imbalance in federal funding.

"We need more funding from the feds because New York sends much more money to the federal government than we get back," he said. "We are subsidizing red states."

Funding cuts will dramatically impact the vulnerable communities in Westchester, said Frei-Pearson, who regularly volunteers for Meals on Wheels and Feeding Westchester.

He favors limiting the property tax bur-

den on hard-working families by increasing taxes on the wealthy.

"We should raise income tax on high earners as opposed to raising property tax," Frei-Pearson said. "What happens to folks if their house is all they own and they are on a fixed income versus someone earning a good income? I'm in big favor of shifting the taxing of millionaires and billionaires based on income."

The inequity in school district funding dictated by the state's Foundation Aid formula has routinely seen Westchester districts underfunded by more than \$2 million a year since 2008. Frei-Pearson said he would work on properly applying the formula.

Frei-Pearson supports universal healthcare, which should be guaranteed by the federal government.

"That guarantee can achieve greater efficiencies and economies of scale," he said. "But healthcare is too important to wait for Washington to become functional so it is time for New York to lead and I support the New York Health Act. Every New Yorker has a right to quality healthcare."

A top priority for Frei-Pearson is to support legislation guaranteeing proper staffing in nursing homes. There are about 250,000 residents in New York nursing

homes with a minimum requirement for staffing.

"Some homes do meet acceptable staffing levels but when there's not enough staffing it's impossible for staff to do their jobs," Frei-Pearson said. "That has to be fixed. It's a huge fight because increasing staffing costs the nursing home owners high out-of-pocket costs."

He's a proponent of legalizing recreational marijuana, which would pave the way for new, small businesses to open.

"We would be bringing in new revenue sources and not be spending money on police resources," Frei-Pearson said. "We should, however, train traffic police to recognize drivers who are high."

The measure would not impact the opioid epidemic. He would support the state

taking action to hold drug manufacturers and big pharma accountable, especially if there are questionable campaign contributions.

"The opioid epidemic is very serious and is caused by the greed of drug companies and the unscrupulous doctors prescribing medications," Frei-Pearson said.

Frei-Pearson said the inability of a suspect to leave jail because of lack of access to bail money is un-American.

"The original bail reform law was a little bit rushed and the legislature went too far," he said. "The law needs to be tweaked more by not requiring bail for misdemeanors or certain non-violent crimes and if the person is not a danger to society or a flight risk. Those people shouldn't be kept in jail."

Frei-Pearson supports legislation requiring better safety measures on gun locks and the ability to trace bullets.

Despite the forecasted deficit, he favors the \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act that requires voter approval in November. It would provide funds for local infrastructure and environmental restoration to help communities across New York prepare for flooding, rising seas and extreme heat.

"We know the climate crisis is going to get worse and we have to deal with it now," said Frei-Pearson, chair of the White Plains Sustainability Committee.

He favors investments in green energy and modernizing the electricity grid to reduce costs.

Frei-Pearson supports lawmakers who last week repealed Section 50-a as part of the Safer NY Act, which has allowed police departments to refuse to disclose an officer's personnel records for evaluation.

"There's been a culture of silence that has perpetuated violence," said Frei-Pearson. "That culture has to change. Most people choose to be police for good reasons and many are heroes. But now we have to do what's necessary to save lives and make our communities feel safe."



JEREMIAH FREI-PEARSON

# Jaffe Sets Sights on Serving in State Legislature

By Martin Wilbur

**T**he last time Harrison resident Mark Jaffe was spotted on the campaign trail was 10 years ago. He narrowly lost a Democratic primary to Tom Roach, now mayor of White Plains, in the old 89th Assembly District, covering nearly much of the same territory as the current 93rd Assembly District.

A decade later Jaffe has returned, motivated by a desire to help, but also to be a direct and sometimes blunt force in Albany to get the state and business community back on track.

"Tough times demand a true leader, not someone just going up there to play politics," said Jaffe, 62, an attorney. "Many of the reasons I ran last time are still issues. We're looking now at a potential tax increase because of two crises."

In his role as president of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce, Jaffe has worked with most of the state's business leaders and legislators across the state as well as Gov. Andrew Cu-

mo. He's been upset that Westchester pays in much more in taxes than it receives.

Right now, the main mission is how the state can raise more revenue to help offset the looming budget deficit that has been estimated anywhere from \$7 billion and \$14 billion, Jaffe said.

The first step is to pass a billionaires' tax, as much as a 10 percent levy on total worth of assets, which he called for 10 years ago, he said. As someone who led the calls for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage years ago, Jaffe said much of the angst in society is too much money is controlled by too few.

"Billionaires get over on the working families and the Main Street, hardworking people, members of our chamber, people I'd be representing in Albany, and enough is enough," Jaffe said.

He is a strong supporter of legalizing recreational marijuana. While Jaffe acknowledges there are anti-drug and substance abuse advocates and others who oppose legalization, he figures it would be beneficial for marijuana to be legal so the state can oversee its distribution and use and to reap

the revenues rather than having an underground economy.

That would accompany education about proper use versus habitual use of the substance.

"The fact that we can raise a lot of money by regulating illegal activities, and on that list, of course, would be marijuana," Jaffe said. "We need to regulate marijuana; it cannot be an illegal activity and we have to train our officers to stop people who attempt to drive while under the influence who are driving dangerously."

Another revenue source Jaffe would advocate for is the legalization of sports gambling at the state's casinos and race tracks.

Jaffe said he would support the NY Health Act provided that residents are allowed to have choices in selection of their healthcare coverage.

To help with education funding inequities, Jaffe supports a

statewide leveling of spending per pupil, so schools can provide the same quality of education regardless of a student's zip code.

"Public schools should be spending the same amount per pupil and we have to figure out a way to raise that money because in Westchester we've been very fortunate because I think we do spend a lot per person because it's funded by our property taxes," Jaffe said.

He also wants to propose a measure that would threaten banks with the loss of their state license if they charge exorbitant interest rates on student loans.

Jaffe was critical of the rushed legislation last year to reform bail. He would have preferred an approach that didn't allow suspected offenders to be released en masse.

Improved funding for what Jaffe calls criminal administra-

tion, the right to a speedy trial, is essential, he said. Rather than sending repeat offenders to prisons, Jaffe would like to explore alternate facilities, what he calls "camps" to help rehabilitate rather than punish.

"We need to speed up the administration process and the processing papers and put people in appropriate holding areas," Jaffe said. "But maybe if somebody is a three-time felon and they keep stealing TVs and stealing cars, they're not in a good environment. Maybe it's time to put them in another situation."

Jaffe applauded Cuomo and the legislature for enacting the NY SAFE Act in 2013, which has prevented many more weapons from flooding the streets.

He supports the \$3 billion bond act to protect the environment that is on the ballot in November. Despite the steep price tag, investment in green technology creates jobs which helps the economy, Jaffe said.

"I'm doing this because I'm the best voice for our people," Jaffe said. "I have the best experience."



MARK JAFFE

## 93rd Assembly District

# Roithmayr Ready to Take Next Step in 93rd Assembly District Race

By Abby Luby

**A**lex Roithmayr said his experience in public service is what inspired him to run for David Buchwald's Assembly seat.

Roithmayr, 30, worked as an intern in Rep. Nita Lowey's reelection campaign in 2010 and went on to help Justin Wagner in his 2012 bid for state Senate. Roithmayr was subsequently hired by Buchwald as community liaison.

"Because of my experience in Albany I know who the right connections are and who to go to on several issues," said the White Plains High School graduate. "I will hit the ground running from Day One."

Roithmayr attended Marist College where he was president of the school's College Democrats. In 2016, he was a founding member and vice president of the White Plains Lions Club and has served as vice president of the Westchester Young Democrats since 2017. A year ago, he married his wife, Megan, and they live in White Plains.

With a looming state budget deficit estimated at \$7 billion to

\$13 billion caused mainly by the coronavirus-induced economic shutdown, Roithmayr said the state must find fresh revenues to soften the blow.

"We have to look for new revenue sources such as taxing millionaires and billionaires as well as closing numerous cooperate tax loopholes," Roithmayr said. "We also have to implement smart legalization of cannabis as a new revenue source."

Easing the burden of property taxes means guiding municipalities to depend more on themselves rather than the state.

"We need to create incentives for municipalities to stay under the 2 percent tax cap, which could include special grants," he said. "We could apply home rule legislation specific to certain projects within the budget process."

Roithmayr said the lack of equity in state funding for school

districts has been difficult to address.

"It's a tough conversation to have. I've worked with David Buchwald and chair of the Senate Education Committee Shelley Mayer about raising state aid for school libraries," Roithmayr said. "Because of my connections, I feel I can have a real impact on this issue going forward."



ALEX ROITHMAYR

The NY Health Act has Roithmayr's support. He said its passage and a proper rollout would ensure all New Yorkers receive equal, quality care rather than the current system, which is often too expensive for many.

Roithmayr supports the legalization of recreational marijuana, which would be consistent with neighboring states.

"It's about time cannabis becomes legal; it's a social justice issue," Roithmayr said. "The war on drugs from the 1980s has so

negatively impacted communities of color and we have to start having the right conversation in the right way." Roithmayr said not enough is being done to address the opioid and substance abuse crisis. He's calling for more funding for treatment and to work with law enforcement and the communities most impacted by the scourge.

Using more judicial discretion when it comes to the revised bail reform legislation was the right step. Roithmayr said Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins did a good job revising the law.

As a child, Roithmayr grew up with the frightening backdrop of school shootings, starting with the 1999 Columbine High School shooting to the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in 2012.

"We've taken really good steps to strengthen our gun laws as far as controlling clip sizes, getting background checks and taking weapons away from dangerous individuals," he said. "But we need more cooperation from the federal government in terms of better and more data on gun owners. It's come down to New York's responsibility."

Roithmayr is passionate about tackling the climate crisis and supports the \$3 billion referendum this November to encourage green initiatives. Convincing voters to support the referendum means advocating for small but significant changes on the local level that could benefit everyone.

"I'm a big supporter of bike lanes, solar panels and wind farms to cut our carbon emissions," Roithmayr said. "Voters need to be educated on using our spaces differently, like the old Walmart in downtown White Plains, that could be developed into a hydroponic and container farm."

Limiting campaign contributions from vendors who hold government contracts is a bill Roithmayr wants to see signed into law.

"Contractors can make as many political donations as they want and can buy their way into the government decision-making process," he said. "It's about ethics and has to be taken on."

Another bill Roithmayr would push is requiring all female-designated bathrooms in New York to provide feminine hygiene products at no cost.



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## 92nd Assembly District

# Longtime Legislator Abinanti Sees Experience as Key in Time of Crisis

By Martin Wilbur

**P**ublic service has been a way of life for Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti.

Seeking a sixth term this year in Albany, Abinanti served in the 1980s and early '90s on the Greenburgh Town Board, then spent 18 years on the Board of Legislators. His years of working for the community and serving at three levels of government have given Abinanti a keen understanding of the 92nd Assembly District's needs and the challenges it faces.

"Our community is facing a significant crisis and I believe that my experience could be very helpful in facing these crises," said Abinanti, 73, an attorney, who has lived in Pleasantville for the past nine years. "It's my community, I care about it and I want to use my experience to help my community get through this time of crisis."

To help with the state's revenue shortfall caused largely by COVID-19, Abinanti backs a high-income tax with escalating rates. The additional levels – he did not identify specific rates – would start at \$2 million a year and would progressively increase for those who make \$5 million, \$10

million, \$25 million and \$100 million annually.

Meanwhile, many middle-class families are taxed beyond their means in Westchester.

"We need to increase taxes on multimillion-dollar earners because people in the middle class are already overtaxed, particularly with property taxes," Abinanti said.

Other measures that could increase revenues and bring greater tax equity would be to end New York's suspension of the stock transfer tax and to tax anyone in New York City who has a second residence worth at least \$2 million, he said.

"We're not trying to chase wealthy people out of New York, we just want them to pay their fair share," the assemblyman said.

Abinanti supports legalizing marijuana as another revenue-generator, but it would need stringent regulation, similar to tobacco and alcohol. It should also be le-

galized so the state can control the quality of product, he said.

Although long opposed to legalizing sports gambling, Abinanti said he would be willing to take a second look at the issue given the budget gap, but it must be confined to the state's race tracks and casinos.

Education for both the public and medical professionals is a key to tackling the opioid crisis, Abinanti said.

Having doctors better understand that there can be alternatives to pain management would help diminish the problem.

Abinanti is a supporter of the NY Health Act that would guarantee access to quality healthcare. Healthcare inequities have been spotlighted during the pandemic, he said, because the industry is run like a business designed to make money rather than function as a service to help people.

"Healthcare is a right," Abinanti

said. "We have to find the best way to deliver healthcare. The best method I have seen so far to pay for it is the NY Health Act, which I have voted for and will vote for again, which will provide universal healthcare in our state."

Last week, Abinanti voted for what he described as the long-overdue police reform package that makes officers' disciplinary records more transparent, bans chokeholds and brings cases involving police shootings to the state attorney general's office.

"We empower police forces to protect us, not to persecute people on the basis of their color or economic status," Abinanti said. "This is a real crisis that everyone has to confront."

Additional steps that should be considered are periodic mental health checks and mental health support for officers, improved training to deal with protestors, and for some departments, enhanced community policing strategies.

Last year's bail reform was an important step in making sure that those convicted of relatively minor offenses don't spend more time in jail than their sentences call for.

Abinanti, who supports the

\$3 billion environmental referendum in November, said New York needs a Green New Deal with emphasis on creating green jobs, reducing waste by re-use and recycling and transitioning to green energy.

He has drafted legislation to form a Department of Clean Drinking Water to ensure the quality and accessibility of the state's drinking water supply.

Abinanti also plans to introduce legislation to protect whistleblowers in the financial services industry, on women's issues and when people witness corruption.

A strong advocate for the special needs community and other vulnerable populations, Abinanti has worked to protect those with disabilities, seniors in nursing homes and people with mental health issues. He called the policy to prevent nursing home and group home residents from receiving any visitors for three months during the pandemic "cruel."

"I applaud the governor's leadership and stewardship of the New York community, but can't ignore his failure to pay attention to people with special needs," Abinanti said.



THOMAS ABINANTI

# Political Newcomer Seeks to Buck Establishment in Assembly Race

By Martin Wilbur

**J**ennifer Williams believes it's time to have new voices fighting for the issues that are important to New Yorkers and the 92nd Assembly District.

That's one of the reasons why Williams, 48, who until recently was a partner and marketing director in a Tarrytown-based energy consulting startup, decided to challenge 10-year Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti. Last year, she sold the business after coping with her father's unsuccessful battle with brain cancer.

She remained on the ballot following a protracted legal battle despite the Westchester County Board of Elections having initially ruled that her nominating petition was invalid based on a technicality. After winning each of the court, decisions, Williams has been critical of Abinanti for fighting to keep her off the June 23 primary ballot.

Despite that hurdle, Williams is ready to take on the 10-year assemblyman and hopes to be the fresh voice in the area. In addition, her passion is helping small businesses, which are jobs creators and the backbone of communities, and the public health crisis.

"I'm ready to roll up my sleeves to get to work," said Williams, an Irvington resident. "I know how to build organizations with im-

pact and I've run a small local business for 10 years around sustainability. I have the new vision and I understand what empathetic leadership is."

One area where she can help the district and state flourish is in promoting renewable energy as well as building weatherization and efficiency. Williams said she supports tax initiatives to get businesses greener and penalize those that are the biggest polluters.

"These are the places where we can get jobs, and you know what, we are all committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050," Williams said. "This is what I'm committed to and dedicated to."

She also supports a requirement to teach climate education in the schools, similar to what New Jersey now requires.

She would help small businesses by delivering grants to get more cash into their coffers, extending businesses interruption insurance and waiving or delaying rents.

Although the state is facing a difficult financial situation unless there is help from the federal government, Williams would object to education or Medicare cuts. Putting more pressure on Washington through the

state's delegation will be a must.

"It's really hard to plan when you don't know what kind of state aid you're going to get," Williams said. "This shows how we

really need more collaboration, more pushing on Washington. We need more funding for New York because we cannot let our schools down."

Williams advocates for the legalization of recreational marijuana, which is as much a criminal justice issue as it is a potential revenue source, Williams said.

Having all New Yorker obtain access to affordable quality healthcare is of paramount importance, she said.

With so many layoffs once the coronavirus pandemic hit in March and a large contingent of the population either losing coverage or needing to pay exorbitant rates, the state must address the issue.

"Healthcare is a human right," Williams said. "I will work to expand things like New York healthcare coverage. I want to advocate for clear, more understandable healthcare options, whether it's your employee or the state providing the insurance."

New York must also show a greater commitment to provide resources for men-

tal health services, women's health in prisons and sex education in school, she said.

Myriad issues are now intertwined and fall under what would be social justice issues, including healthcare, women's issues and racial justice, Williams said.

In 2008, Williams founded Women of the Congo, an organization that has dedicated itself to ending violence against women in Africa.

While political newcomers who haven't made their way up the political ranks are often shunned, Williams said she is running because she believes there is support for many of her priority issues and that she demands a seat at the table.

"We need change," she said. "We're living in a historic time and the events last week tell us that (people) are tired of the way things are, and as we emerge from this pandemic, we need representatives who you can be sure will make practical decisions based on what's actually happening and what our community absolutely needs."



JENNIFER WILLIAMS

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