

Westchester County Board of Legislators



Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

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Thomas J. Abinanti

District 12 ~ Irvington, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson, Ardsley and Greenburgh

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Dear Neighbor,

YOU are the reason we have County government. Our community's needs cannot be met solely by a far-away federal or state government or very local municipal governments. So many of our needs must be met on a regional basis—a coordinated emergency response effort, a criminal justice system, sewers and sewage treatment plants, environmentally sound solid waste disposal, protection of drinking water, etc.

I write to update you on what we've been doing on these and other issues over the last year.

Your input is important: write, fax, call or e-mail. Go to my web page:

<http://www.westchesterlegislators.com/Legislators/D12/Bioindex.htm>

to sign up for District 12 e-news!



COUNTY SALES TAX SHARING HELPS HOLD DOWN LOCAL PROPERTY TAXES BY \$12,813,068

Thanks to state legislation allowing the County to share its sales tax revenue, Greenburgh municipalities and school districts received the following amounts this past year:

Ardsley Village	\$ 576,701
Ardsley School District	\$ 469,195
Dobbs Ferry Village	\$1,434,931
Dobbs Ferry School District	\$ 453,300
Edgemont School District	\$ 346,228
Town of Greenburgh	\$5,650,562
Greenburgh Central 7	\$1,056,725
Hastings Village	\$1,037,837
Hastings School District	\$ 408,274
Irvington Village	\$ 895,785
Irvington School District	\$ 483,530



Legislator Abinanti with Irvington Mayor Erin Malloy and Trustee Nicola Coddington.

PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT

I have dedicated my efforts to improving Westchester's environment.

Solar Energy Incentive

To encourage the use of environmentally friendly renewable energy, I proposed legislation approved by the County Board that exempts the purchase and installation of residential solar energy equipment from County sales tax. The exemption begins March 1, 2008.

Less Polluting Leaf Blowers

Using more environmentally friendly equipment will make a significant difference in reducing air pollution. So, I led the County Board to enact legislation to ban the use of high-polluting leaf blowers on county-owned land and by licensed home improvement contractors. By January 1, 2009, all county employees and private contractors on county-owned land and all other licensed businesses engaged in landscaping and gardening anywhere in the County may use only the latest EPA approved leaf blowers.

Free Vehicle Parking

To encourage the use of fuel efficient cars, I pushed legislation that expands the County's present policy of providing free commuter parking for hybrid vehicles. The new law waives the \$75 monthly parking fee at the county-owned commuter parking lots for all high mileage vehicles (EPA economy ratings of at least 35 miles per gallon), saving a commuter \$900 a year.

Septic Systems

As present practices are not sufficient to address the adverse impacts of leaking septic systems, I spear-headed passage of a new law to license and train the workers who pump out septic tanks. The new law also has reporting requirements to assist the Health Department to identify health hazards.

Drinking Water - Private Wells

I shepherded through legislation to ensure that the 20,000 Westchester households whose drinking water comes from private wells are not drinking contaminated water. The new law requires that private wells be tested for contaminants when the property is sold. The law also requires regular, ongoing testing of wells on rental properties, testing of new wells and testing of wells not used for five years. Test results must be sent to the County Health Department.



Legislator Abinanti with Executive Director William Lawyer and Board Member Miriam Windmann, at the annual breakfast at the Greenburgh Nature Center, for whom he again secured County funding.

ADVOCATING FOR THE ARTS



As a result of my efforts, this past year the County directed more monies to the arts in Westchester than ever before – including funding for Greenburgh and Rivertowns programs, such as Lyndhurst, Historic Hudson Valley (Sunnyside), the Rivertowns Arts Council, Greenburgh Arts and Culture Committee, Jazz Forum Arts, Red Monkey Theater Group (Dobbs Ferry), Aspire (Hastings), Hudson Valley Music Club (Irvington) and programs at several schools: Woodlands High and Middle Schools, Highview Elementary School (Greenburgh); Greenville and Seeley Place Schools (Edgemont); Main Street

School (Irvington); Solomon Schecter High School (Greenburgh); and at the Dobbs Ferry and Hastings Public Libraries.

Once again the County Board approved my request for a special appropriation for the Music Conservatory and Heartsong to bring music therapy programs for kids with disabilities into Westchester schools.



SAFER ROADS

It is vital that we keep our extensive County road network in good repair. We appropriated:

Bronx River Pkwy: \$2.2 million to repair two 1924-era bridges over the Bronx River and Metro-North Railroad at Crane Road near the Greenburgh/Scarsdale border.

Ardley Road: \$1.2 million to rehab/resurface from the Bronx River Parkway to Central Park Avenue.

Ashford Avenue Bridge: \$1.1 million to design the rehab of the bridge over the Thruway /Saw Mill River Parkway and to mitigate traffic congestion during construction.

Hastings-on-Hudson: \$1.6 million rehab of the 1890 Warburton Avenue Bridge over Factory Lane.

COUNTY VANS FOR LOCALS

The County Board donated 30 used vans and shuttle buses to municipalities so they can provide transportation for senior citizen, child care, public housing, social welfare and youth bureau programs.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKS

As the Chair of the Environment & Energy Committee, I am leading the charge to enhance Westchester's parks and open space.

Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act

I was instrumental in the County Board's approval of a home-rule resolution needed for state enactment of the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act. The new law authorizes towns and cities to collect real estate transfer fees for a fund to acquire or preserve open space and historical assets.

Hudson River Walk

As part of an effort to create a continuous 50 mile trailway from New York City to Putnam County along the Hudson River, we authorized \$3.5 million for construction along the Tarrytown waterfront and \$1.8 million for construction along the Croton-on-Hudson waterfront.

South County Trailway

As part of our effort to create a continuous trailway from New York City to Putnam County through the middle of the county we authorized \$600,000 to design Phase VI of the South County Trailway, from Tuckahoe Road to Dunwoodie Golf Course in Yonkers. The South County Trailway now extends from Yonkers to the Mount Pleasant border.

A FLOODING SOLUTION

Storm water flooding has become a County-wide menace to health and safety. Recognizing that communities can no longer go it alone, I introduced legislation to set up a County-wide storm water drainage district to deal with the recurrent flooding impacting all parts of our County. The proposed law will emphasize regional planning, create a County-wide plan, assess existing storm drain systems, and construct a coordinated regional system.

STATE AND FEDERAL

As a member of the health steering committee of the National Association of Counties (NACo), I have worked with county representatives from around the country to fashion policies to improve the federal government's response to our national health care crisis.

The County Board forwarded to our State representatives a package of proposed reforms to state programs of particular importance to our Westchester community. We want changes to the State's method of funding major social and education programs and funding for state mandates that cause local property taxes to increase. We want a limitation on county liability for Medicaid, Pre-K programs, school transportation, and detention of state prisoners.



Legislator Abinanti discusses federal legislation with Congressman Eliot Engel.

Westchester Community College

Every year, some 800 Greenburgh residents attend WCC, part of the State University System. The County Board approved WCC's \$94.3 million operating and \$8.9 million capital budgets for 2007-08, funded by tuition, state aid, and County monies.



Celebrating Italian Heritage and Culture Month, the County Board and the Coalition of Italian American Organizations, presented awards to outstanding Italian language students. Legislator Abinanti with Ardsley teacher Annamarie Forte and student Katia Vieira.

Legislative Day

Recognizing the importance of educating our students about government, the County Board has several programs to bring Westchester youth to the Board. In an annual "Legislative Day" sponsored by the League of Women Voters, students from all over the County learned the mechanics of the legislative process and debated issues.

Science Fair Winners

The County Board honored Westchester high school students who won awards at Westchester Science & Engineering Fair (WESEF) and represented Westchester at the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF).

Mock Legislature

Westchester elementary school students regularly participate in a "Mock Legislature" in the Board's chambers, debating issues and learning about the legislative process.



Legislator Abinanti with Edgemont students after a mock legislature.



The Child Care Council honored the County Board for its extraordinary efforts. Legislator Abinanti with former director Lottie Harris and current director Kathy Halas.



Legislator Abinanti and Mayor Jay Leon honor Ardsley Fire Chief Joe Cipilone and Assistant Fire Chief Rick Thompson.