

WRCR ISSUES/PROGRAMS

Q-3 2023

WRCR's regularly scheduled weekly and monthly public interest, community service programs all continued to be aired on the same schedule as in the previous months and years.

They covered variety of issues, such as:

- Organ donation (1 hour show every Wednesday),
- Health care (1 hour show every month hosted by different specialty doctors from our local hospitals),
- Mental health (monthly show hosted by Rockland Behavioral Health Response Team),
- Audiology and hearing loss (monthly 1 hour show hosted by Hudson Valley Audiology)
- Veteran Issues - "Thank you for Your Service" this monthly 1-hour program is our newest addition to the line up, hosted by a local veteran advocate (NEW PROGRAM)
- "Senior Moment" a monthly 1-hour show (hosted by a major local law firm and focusing on legal issues facing seniors), to name a few.

All Town Supervisors, County Executive, our State Senator and newly elected Congressman, Mike Lawler continued with their regularly scheduled interactive Q&A segments, keeping WRCR listeners updated on happenings in their local City Hall, State Capital, Albany and Washington, DC.

This time we highlight NY State Senator Bill Weber's program segments. Senator Weber is representing Rockland county. In each of his 15-minute weekly report over this 13 week period, one issue dominated - the adoption of the **2023-24 NY State Budget:**

Public Schools: The Budget fully funded Foundation Aid for public schools for the first time in history and provided \$34.5 billion in school aid and \$1.2 billion for Universal Pre-K. For SUNY and CUNY it halted planned tuition increases for in state students.

Support for Working People: State's minimum wage was increased to \$17.00 per hour over next 3 years. State Child Tax Credit to cover all children age zero to four and funded tax credits for businesses that provide new child care options for their employees.

Fighting Climate Change: Allocation of \$400 million for the Environmental Protection Fund and \$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure act. Also allocated were funds for Build Public Renewable act, which enables NY Power Authority to build and operate large-scale renewable power facilities and phase out its fossil fuel facilities by the end of 2030.

Supporting Public Transportation: Increasing the Payroll Mobility tax on large businesses to generate additional \$1.1 billion to MTA for public transportation, \$300 million to offset the impact of pandemic and implemented \$400 million in MTA operating efficiencies.

Healthcare System: The Budget included \$1 billion to increase inpatient and outpatient mental health services and \$1 billion in healthcare capital funding. Also included was \$500 million for financially distressed hospitals that might be the only providers for care in many communities. Additionally, Medicaid reimbursement rates were increased for the first time in many years for hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living providers.

Protecting Reproductive Healthcare Access: The Budget included language that requires private insurers to cover abortion medication when prescribed off-label for abortion and also provided additional \$100 million for providers of abortion and reproductive healthcare services.

Housing Support: Allocation of \$391 million in Emergency Rental Assistance Program to NYCHA residents with rent arrears, \$40 million for the Homeowner Protection Program \$25 million for First Time Homeowners Program.

Public Safety: \$347 million for evidence-based gun violence prevention programs, \$170 million for discovery reform process for prosecutors and defenders and \$31 million for alternatives to incarceration programs. Also it implemented changes to NY bail laws by giving judges greater discretion to set bail for serious crimes.

Personal Income Tax: The Budget continued the phase-in of the Lowest personal income tax rates for working and middle class families in over 70 years.

Arts and Cultural Institutions: Budget increased by \$49 million for a total of \$97 million for the NYS Council on the Arts and \$20 million in capital funding for the arts.

Those are just some of the topics discussed in the Senator's segment.

Our regularly scheduled 2-hour program, "**Tough Times with Lou Young**" continued to air every Saturday 1 PM - 3 PM.

Here is a brief synopsis of the Tough Times, show number 54, which aired live on September 9th:

At the end of the hottest Summer in human history consider that it may also be the coolest Summer of the rest of your life! In this latest episode of "Tough Times" host Lou Young worries that our fatal climate change tipping point may have already been reached. Peter McCartt, Westchester County's Director of Conservation and Sustainability, tries to offer Lou a measure of optimism and hope. Peter is joined in that effort by Alex Beauchamp, the Northeast Regional Director for Food & Water Watch, Environmental Activist Jackie Dreshler, and "Reverend" Bill Talen from the Brooklyn-based Church of Stop Shopping. Along with co-host George Potanovic, and producer Will Hennessey they all make plans to attend The March to End Fossil Fuels scheduled for September 17th in New York City near the United Nations. It's an informative moment as they talk Lou down from his grim fatalism. There is also a great half-hour service from the Church of Stop Shopping and a spirited debrief including a farewell to Jimmy Buffet and a new tune from The Rolling Stones. Yeah, that's encouraging, join us!

