

Legislative Corner –January 2021

Greetings. On behalf of East Ramapo's School Board, we are pleased to launch a new monthly blog-like report on the various public affairs updates on a State and Federal level of interest to the community. The report will post the beginning of each month. Major announcements will be posted as they occur.

The 2021 Legislative Session officially launched in January of this year. Members of the State Senate, Assembly and US House are elected for two year terms. This is the beginning of the current two year term. In Albany, legislation is "live" only for this two year period. All bills "sine die" on December 31, of the last day of that term and must be re-introduced for consideration.

While we said farewell on the retirement of our influential icon, Congress member Nita Lowey last year (chair of the House Appropriations Committee), the district remains well represented on both the federal and state levels. Congress member Mondaire Jones is current the representative for the District in the House. Of course, the newly elected Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has already delivered significant funding to the state and our district. He is joined in that esteemed body by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, another strong advocate for education. It is also important to note, we have for the first time, a teacher as First Lady. One can not underestimate the significance of her experience as we embark on this presidential term of office.

On the State level, Assembly member Ken Zebrowski, who has a great deal of seniority in that house, continues to lead the State delegation. He is joined by new members Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick and Assembly member Michael Lawler. They have been a critical component of our advocacy on behalf of the children of this district to date. We are truly fortunate to have such dedicated partners in government.

On the Congressional front, re-apportionment, that procedure that adjusts the number of representatives to the population of the state is right around the corner. That is a very important fight for the residents of the Mid-Hudson region this year. Unfortunately, the state has lost a significant amount of population, so current census counts demonstrate the loss of at least one seat if not two in our nation's capital. It is a very internal political process that is then enacted by chapter. The State Legislature sets the boundaries of each member of Congress, State Senate and State Assembly. Technical staff working with a member-appointed task force advises on such, yet it is the leadership of each house and the governor that sets the tone and makes the final decisions. More on this in upcoming months.

Public advocacy for the past several months have focused on budgetary needs. Specifically, protecting the "re-appropriation" of last year's "below the line" \$2 million grant from being swiped in the midst of the State's current fiscal crises. If we are successful, that "below the line" project we created some years ago, will have brought a

total of \$17 million to date to the district. "Below the line" is a legislative term that describes separate direct grants on top of traditional foundation/formula/transportation aid. As critical is the ongoing efforts to protect Federal education monies shepherded and delivered by the Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer for our district from the executives need to back fill the general fund. Current calculations deem that federal support to land in the vicinity of \$58 to \$66 million. Important to note, this is a "one' shot" infusion of funds. We are working with a broad coalition of those in the education community as well as the local delegation on this project.

With kindest regards,

Patricia Lynch
on behalf of the East Ramapo School District.