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Albany County Legislature Unveils Bipartisan Agenda for 2019 “LEAD Albany County”

Albany, NY – The Albany County Legislature unveiled its bipartisan policy agenda for 2019 that focuses on initiatives for working class families, economic development and environmental protection, transparent and open government and more.

Legislators gathered at the Labor Temple on Thursday, January 31, to announce their 2019 agenda, titled “LEAD Albany County”, which embodies the local laws, issues and policy initiatives the Legislature will be focusing on in 2019 and beyond.

“America, New York State, and Albany County need leaders to step up at this critical time in our history,” Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce said. “When so much of what we see, hear and experience is negative and destructive, this group of Albany County Legislators chooses to advance a positive reform agenda that addresses the plight of workers and working families; the catastrophic consequences of warming planet and the devastation that arises from extreme weather; the difficulty in accessing high quality services and accurate, reliable information; and the assault on democracy.”

LEAD stands for:

Labor
Economic Development, Environment and Equality
Accessibility
Democracy

Labor initiatives involve efforts to support workers, and working families. One bill currently before legislators is Local Law C which requires employers to offer paid sick days. This legislation, which was first introduced in 2018 and went through several revisions to accommodate concerns made by employers, is expected to be passed later this year.

Efforts are also being made to help seniors who may still have something to offer to the County. The Legislature is proposing the Seniors Serve Albany County initiative, which seeks to match seniors with a desire for community service with community-based organizations desiring help in addressing the needs of working families.

Economic initiatives have already been proposed by the County Executive. Legislators are looking forward to reviewing the economic development strategy the County Executive referenced in his State of the County address. They are also proposing ideas on how to attract investment in places being left behind. On Wednesday, the Legislature's Audit and Finance Committee approved a disposition plan which makes reinvestment in disadvantaged neighborhoods more likely. The Legislature will also seek to raise awareness about the new Opportunity Zones Program which incents investments in disadvantaged areas.

The Economy goes hand-in-hand with environmental stewardship and the Legislature is proposing several green initiatives in 2019 from plastic bag legislation called the "Reusable Shopping Bag Promotion Act" to working on a Net Zero Energy status for County Buildings. This is in addition to the implementation of the Food Service Waste Reduction Act, which was adopted in 2018.

"These green initiatives will have several economic benefits. Taxpayers will enjoy reduced operating costs for County buildings and vehicles. Solid waste disposal costs will be minimized. Private sector investment in the local green economy will grow. New green jobs will be drawn to the area. Albany County's actions will encourage other local governments to adopt green initiatives of their own, which will generate even more positive economic activity," Legislator William Reinhardt said.

Accessibility is another key part of the Legislature's 2019 agenda and includes collaborative efforts with other County departments. The Legislature is partnering with Sheriff Craig Apple to improve cell reception through the County, an issue that has become a public safety issue as it impacts emergency services. Through an analysis of the County's infrastructure, the Legislature is hoping to improve service and public safety.

The Legislature is also in discussions with the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) about establishing bus routes or stops near the Albany County Correctional Facility to make it easier for residents who visit loved ones at the jail as well as employees to get to and from work. The current CDTA route configuration and bus stop near the jail is challenging as residents have to take multiple transfers and have to navigate dangerous roadways.

Accessibility also extends to reliable and accurate public information. In collaboration with the County Clerk's Office, the Legislature has been working to make the administrative code available online to all who are interested.

“We are taking local laws, resolutions and codes that have been passed, and we are making them available to the public. We are putting them in year order and in chronological order and in every other way possible so that the Albany County Legislature can have the public see exactly what is going on with legislation that is passed, along with policies implemented by County Department Heads, Commissioners and Elected Officials,” County Clerk Bruce Hidley said. “We are currently in phase two of this project and I am proud to say that by October 2019 we will be completed with this phase. But that is not the end of it because as the Legislature continues to take action, we will keep an updated record of those items for the public.”

Democratic efforts to strengthen democracy and improve public confidence in county government include Local Law O, which creates a more independent reapportionment process; Local Law M, which seeks to downsize the County Legislature to 29 members; and a reform of the County’s Code of Ethics, which was adopted in 2011.

“I look forward to seeing that many of these initiatives being proposed are passed by the Legislature in 2019,” Majority Leader Dennis Feeney said. “I am especially hopeful that in 2019 the County will move forward with some of the solar projects that are being considered at many of the County-owned properties.”

To keep LEAD Albany County a priority this year, the body will be seeking an audience with every chief elected municipal official and members of their governing bodies to share its goals and hear feedback on how the agenda can be improved.

A [video of the press conference](#) can be viewed on the Albany County Legislature’s Facebook page.