



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SENATOR SUE SERINO BRINGS LEGISLATIVE LEADER TO HUDSON VALLEY

SUSAN SERINO August 21, 2020

| ISSUE: **VETERANS; TOURISM; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; HEALTH**



HYDE PARK, NY –Senator Sue Serino this week welcomed the new NYS Senate Republican Conference Leader, Senator Rob Ortt, to the Hudson Valley. The legislators toured various local sites and facilities, including the Walkway Over the Hudson and the Dutchess County Stabilization Center. A highlight of the day's program included a roundtable event—'Spotlight on Local Veterans'—which gave Dutchess and Putnam county veterans and organizations who serve them the opportunity to speak in depth about their unique

needs with Senator Ortt.

“Senator Rob Ortt’s extensive visit highlights his commitment to all of our neighbors here in the Hudson Valley,” said Senator Sue Serino. “He left with a real sense of who we are, what we care about and a clear understanding of the way the pandemic has severely impacted everything from our healthcare system, to our government services, to our local economy. Given Senator Ortt’s own military experience, I was especially proud to have the opportunity to introduce him to so many of the Hudson Valley’s own heroes and facilitate a conversation about how we can work together to better meet their needs. Moving our community, and our state, forward takes committed partners at every level, and I know we have an invaluable partner in Senator Ortt.”

Senator Rob Ortt said, “I want to thank Sen. Serino for inviting me to join her in her district and thank her for introducing me to so many great individuals who continue to do incredible work for Putnam and Dutchess Counties. It was also an honor to join Sen. Serino and Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro for her veterans’ roundtable, where I was able to speak with a few individuals who have given so much to our nation. Sitting down with them allowed me to learn about some of the challenges they face daily and share some of the experiences of veterans living across New York State. The Hudson Valley is lucky to have such an incredible legislator fighting for them in the New York State Senate, and I am fortunate to call her my colleague and friend.”

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro said, “Senator Serino could have brought Leader Ortt to any number of locations in the Hudson Valley, but she chose to have him visit our veterans and mental health service providers at the Stabilization Center. It shows where her priorities are and it shows that she understands the critically important work we’re doing at the local level. I’m confident that Leader Ortt will take what he’s learned here, and share it with his colleagues in the legislature for the betterment of all New Yorkers.”

“Thank you Senator Serino, Senator Ortt, and Dutchess County Executive Molinaro for hosting the veterans luncheon today at Locust Grove in Poughkeepsie NY,” said Dutchess County Division of Veterans Services Director Adam Roche. “This event gave us the opportunity to address the issues that our veterans are facing during these trying times. It’s comforting to know that our leadership from our County and our State Senator truly care about the welfare of our veterans. A lot of important issues were brought to the table during this meeting, and I can assure with this leadership they will be addressed at the highest level.”

Karl Rohde, Director of the Putnam County Veterans Service Agency, said, “It was much appreciated that Senator Serino arranged for Veteran advocates in her district were invited to meet Senator Ortt. However, the nature of the meeting was the key. The two Senators sat and listened to the various advocates gathered. Often being listened to is most important for us to help our Veterans and their families. “

Senator Serino and Leader Ortt started the day by visiting the new patient pavilion prototype and building site at Vassar Hospital to learn more about their future healthcare and hospital transformation and to hear first-hand what they have learned from battling the pandemic. From there, they were joined by Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro to tour the Dutchess County Stabilization Center to hear more about the unique and hands-on approach that Dutchess County has taken to combat the opioid epidemic and address mental health needs. As the former Chair of the Senate’s Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee, Senator Ortt brought a unique perspective to this particular stop.

Recognizing the major role tourism plays in the local economy in the Hudson Valley, Serino and Ortt were also joined at the Walkway Over the Hudson by Dutchess Tourism, Inc. President & CEO Melaine Rottkamp, Walkway Over the Hudson Executive Director Elizabeth Waldstein-Hart, Mid-Hudson Children’s Museum Executive Director Lara

Litchfield-Kimber, Hyde Park Brewing Company Owner and Dutchess Tourism Board Vice Chair Angela Barone and Residence Inn Poughkeepsie General Manager Seif Fakhoury to discuss how their individual industries have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and what their visions for the future are.

“Dutchess Tourism is fighting hard to make sure the voices of our stakeholders are heard in Albany and Washington and I truly appreciate Senator Serino for giving us the opportunity to share our deep concerns for our industry with her and Senator Ortt,” said Dutchess Tourism President & CEO Melaine Rottkamp. “Our local small businesses and attractions who depend on tourism for their livelihoods have been the hardest hit in this pandemic and our community is feeling the impact of the loss of jobs supported by tourism and visitor spending, which tops half a billion dollars annually.”

“On behalf of the Friends of the Walkway, we were pleased to join Senator Sue Serino to welcome New York State Senate Minority Leader Robert Ortt to Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park for the first time,” said Elizabeth Waldstein-Hart, Executive Director, Friends of the Walkway. “The Walkway welcomes more than 600,000 visitors per year from across America, generating more than \$25 million dollars in economic impact and contributing to the tourism industry in the Hudson Valley. We are gratified that Senator Serino and Senator Ortt recognize the importance of this historic landmark and are supportive of our mission to add amenities to the park, host community events, undertake capital improvement projects, and keep the Walkway accessible for all.”

Serino concluded, “The Hudson Valley is unlike any other region in the state and this visit allowed Senator Ortt to see a small glimpse of the highlights that truly make it a great place to live and work. Our local industry leaders go above and beyond to showcase all that Dutchess and Putnam counties have to offer and now, we need to make it a priority to help revitalize and rebuild. I am confident that together we will be able to make that a reality.”

