



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

# **Legislators Reichlin-Melnick, Skoufis, Zebrowski Announce Legislation Requiring State-run Vaccination Centers to Open in Rockland, Orange**

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Clarkstown, NY - Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick, Senator James Skoufis, and Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski announced on Monday morning they have introduced new legislation that would require the state Department of Health to open state-run vaccine clinics in Rockland and Orange counties. Specifically, the bill would require the Department of Health to open vaccination centers in any county outside of New York City with a population of 300,000 or more within 30 days. At this time, Rockland and Orange are the only counties with populations over 300,000 that do not have state-run vaccination centers.

State Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick (D-Rockland/Westchester) said “For months I have been calling on the state to step up and provide equity of access to the residents of Rockland county who have been hit hard by COVID. We need a state-run vaccination site west of the Hudson River and we need it now. That is why I am proud to introduce this bill with my colleagues that will require the Department of Health to open a state-run vaccine clinic in Rockland within the next thirty days. Rockland County’s population is the 8th largest in the state, it is absurd that more than two months into the vaccination effort, there is still no state-run vaccination center serving Rockland residents.”

State Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) said “The lack of access to vaccines in Rockland and Orange Counties is beyond shameful. Hundreds of constituents, many of whom are seniors - the most vulnerable to this virus - are reaching out to my office every single day for help in navigating the system. I have been having productive conversations with the Department of Health in establishing a state-run vaccination site in Rockland and Orange counties and, alongside my colleagues Senator Reichlin-Melnick and Assemblymember Zebrowski, I won't stop fighting until our residents are prioritized.”

Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski (D-Rockland County) said “Rockland was one of the hardest hit areas by COVID in the State and now our residents continue to suffer through the vaccine distribution process. I have been calling for a state-run vaccination site since day one of the roll out, and today, enough is enough.

Scheduling an appointment for a life-saving vaccine shouldn't be left to luck or similar to attempting to buy a hot ticket on Broadway. Today, my colleagues and I demand vaccine equity in NYS and that starts with establishing state-run sites in Rockland and Orange Counties that will vastly improve the scheduling process for so many that have felt left in the dark.”

Residents of Rockland and Orange County who are only eligible for the vaccine at state-run facilities have had to travel long distances to get it - greatly decreasing equity of access as public transportation options are limited and pose a higher risk of COVID-19 infection. Senior citizens who cannot access state-run facilities have been left to navigate a procedural maze, calling up to a dozen or more pharmacies a day trying to find vaccine appointments.

On January 15, 2021, in response to vaccine shortages around the state and the creation of state-run vaccination clinics in New York City, Albany, and Westchester, Senator Reichlin-Melnick, Assemblyman Zebrowski, and Assemblyman Michael Lawler released a statement calling on the Department of Health to open a state-run vaccination clinic in Rockland County. Prior to and since the release of that statement, legislators Reichlin-Melnick, Skoufis, and Zebrowski have made continued calls for a state-run vaccination center west of the Hudson River to service Hudson Valley residents.

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