

# Nothing is impossible to her who will:

*Senator Daphne Jordan embodies Upstate's fearless ambition*

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In 2018, when Republican Senator Kathy Marchione announced that she would not seek re-election in Senate District 43, the news immediately raised the collective temperature on a seat suddenly in play for a traditionally competitive district. But for Marchione's eventual successor Daphne Jordan — competition is in her DNA. As a competitive swimmer, softball and college lacrosse player, Senator Jordan has become accustomed to taking more than a few lumps throughout her life, coming back after each challenge and delivering a few of her own.

Jordan traveled upstate to the town of Halfmoon, NY, in 1997, a divorced mother of a four-year-old and, as has become her famous nature, got to work within her community in a relentlessly resolute manner. Before her election to the New York State Senate, Jordan served as a member of the Halfmoon Town Board. As town councilwoman, she ensured the growth of the Town's General Fund balance from \$70,000 to almost \$4 million, attracted new businesses, expanded recreational trails, and open spaces, and was part of the team effort to create a Veteran's Memorial.

Following in her family's tradition of volunteerism, Jordan served as a trustee, member of the Executive Committee, and treasurer for the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library managing a \$3 million operating budget and \$15 million construction budget for the new library. Today, as Senator of New York's 43rd District, Jordan serves as the Ranking Republican Member on the Senate's Racing, Gaming and Wagering Committee, the State-Native American Relations Committee, the Libraries Committee, and the Women's Issues Committee. The Senator also serves on the Senate Agriculture Committee,

the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, the Procurements and Contracts Committee, and is a member of the Legislative Women's Caucus.

As she sits down to discuss her life's journey toward the New York State Senate, her fervor for communal preservation holds true with each indomitable sentiment. Staunch, defiant and firm, underpinned by her genuinely ambitious nature and undeniable sense for self-sufficient, rural life. In recounting her life story, Senator Jordan effuses will and as families and small businesses across New York have come to know in the last year — where there is will, there is a way.

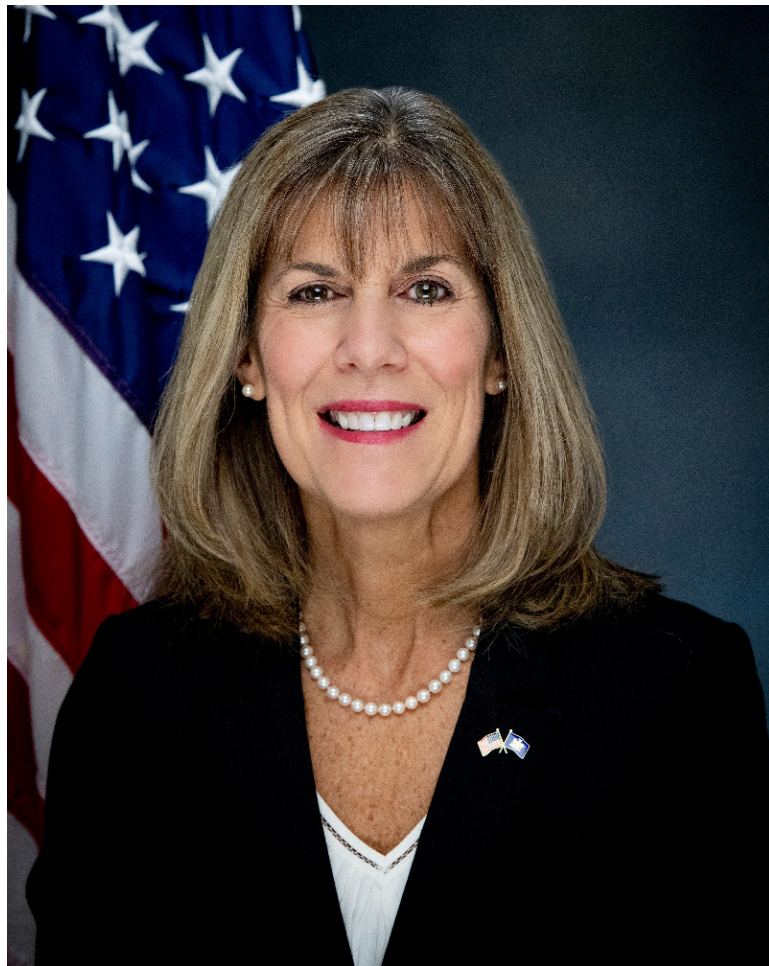
**Can you describe your time in Halfmoon? Did you grow up in the area? What was the driving force behind your desire to get involved locally?**

I was born in Philadelphia and in my very early years lived in suburban Philly. From kindergarten through fourth grade, we lived right in the Village of Stony Brook, Long Island, within walking distance of the Village Green and the small yacht club and beach. I recall that as the most fun place we lived.

With my dad's horrible commute to work on the Long Island Expressway (way back then, in the 1960s), we moved to my dad's home area in Northeastern Pennsylvania where I spent the rest of my formative years until I graduated from law school and got married and settled in my former husband's home town of West Chester, PA.

I moved to Halfmoon in 1997 after being separated and divorced for two years, to marry my husband, Phil. He lived in Clifton Park at the time. I laugh now because I

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Above: New York State Senator for the 43rd District, Daphne Jordan. All images with this article are courtesy of Daphne Jordan.

didn't even realize that the house we picked was in Halfmoon since the mailing address was Clifton Park. Nevertheless, Halfmoon reminded me of the Back Mountain in Pennsylvania where I spent those formative years. It was primarily agricultural and even more rural than Halfmoon at the time, but similar. Of course, the topography was different as well, because we were in the mountains. Like Halfmoon, the Back Mountain has grown immensely over the years.

Halfmoon is a great place, full of wonderful families that have been here for generations. Getting involved was not always easy because I was considered a "newbie." When referred to in that way, I would remind people that I lived in Halfmoon because I chose to live there because I liked it so much. Therefore, I had a vested interest in it and cared just as much as they did. There are plenty of new residents now, as it has become one of the fastest-growing towns in the state.

I grew up in a family where volunteerism was a way of life, local and national politics was important, a thriving economy was to be shepherded, and patriotism and family values mattered and so, throughout my life – wherever I lived – I always participated accordingly.

**Was it specifically your time at university that propelled you into government or is this something you have wanted to pursue for a majority of your life?**

When I went to Lehigh University, I wasn't sure which path I was going to take. I was divided between marine biology and going down the path that would take me to law school. My passion was really the marine biology route. I always had a large aquarium in my bedroom and read the whole set of Jacques Cousteau books that I wanted for

Christmas one year. I think all of this goes back to my young life in Stony Brook. The ocean is still my favorite place; being so busy the last several years, I've not been able to visit it.

During the first year of college, my courses were split between my two career choices. My dad was instrumental in helping me to make the law school decision. At the time, it seemed to me that studying government and english were good disciplines to study as an entrée to law school. Only in the last ten years have I come to really appreciate that decision.

**Given your time serving as a trustee, member of the Executive Committee, and treasurer for the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library – have those experiences carried over into your methods or philosophy as State Senator?**

My time serving the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library opened my eyes to the realities of the many nuts-and-bolts of actually getting a project done in government. Studying something in books and lectures versus actually going through the many processes are two very different things. Experience is the best teacher.

Lessons learned from my library experience that are relevant to what I've carried through to my Senate experience can be broadly summarized as follows:

- Having all stakeholders at the table in decision-making is a must. The Library Board was successful on this front especially in building our new library. The New York State Legislature has not been successful on that front during my time as Senator.
- Every single vote counts! The referendum to bring Halfmoon into the Library District passed by only one vote!
- Taxpayer money is precious. Spend it carefully and wisely and always with the taxpayer and the future in mind. The New York State government does not cherish how

hard taxpayers work for the money they have to pay in taxes; hence, we unfortunately, are the number one state in outmigration!

- Libraries are important community centers. Libraries are welcoming community spaces of learning and literacy, special places where people can visit to grow and gather as individuals and a community. Libraries also fill the technological void for many people especially when broadband is now a necessity and so many areas across our state lack adequate broadband.
- If you want to know something, ask a librarian. Librarians are the original "search engines" and trusted resources for honest, accurate, unbiased information.

I look back fondly at my time as a trustee of the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library, with the mission of building a new library, as a key learning experience that has been extremely useful to me in my job as Legislative Director for my predecessor and now as the State Senator serving and representing the 43rd Senate District.

I'm especially pleased to serve as Ranking Republican Member of the Senate's Standing Committee on Libraries, as I truly understand and



Above: Senator Daphne Jordan speaking.

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appreciate their vital role. I remain a proud, passionate advocate of libraries, literacy, and lifelong learning!

**Is there a specific issue that has taken precedent in your mind or within the state's GOP?**

While bread-and-butter issues such as the need for tax relief, reforming government, protecting the Second Amendment, and growing our economy remain major concerns for Republicans, the issue of public safety – ensuring the safety and security of all New Yorkers – has taken precedence not only in the Republican Party but also among all voters, regardless of political affiliation. This is, sadly, a logical progression given laws like the so-called bail “reform” that releases dangerous criminals back into communities to re-offend, reckless efforts aimed at defunding the police, and violent assaults on law enforcement. Public safety has emerged as a leading issue that’s above partisan politics, and rightly so. I’m proud to stand with the men and women of law enforcement and I’ll always back the blue.

**How important is the reform for changing the way New York draws its legislative and congressional district maps for voters in the state?**

Reform is absolutely a vital part of the redistricting process! The creation of an Independent Redistricting Commission took power away from politicians and put it in the hands of citizens to help ensure that no region of the state, special interest, or political party gains an unfair advantage, and create balanced government and representation for the next ten years.

This historic reform, overwhelmingly approved by voter referendum, creates a redistricting process that’s more open and transparent. While these reforms are welcome, they only work if citizens stand

up and make their voices heard as the Commission begins redrawing district lines. As part of its charge to revise district lines, the Independent Redistricting Commission must consider impacts on existing neighborhoods and communities, based on the information it gathers from its public hearings and written testimony. I’ve urged my constituents to join with friends, neighbors, community groups, and others to make their voices heard and be an important part of this process.

**How have you seen the nature of state politics change in the last three years?**

One of the most notable changes in state politics is how Democrats in the state legislature have become even more radical and extreme, being completely dominated by New York City special interests and left-wing political agendas. Both the Senate and Assembly Democratic Conferences are led by downstate Democrats and have been captured by radical activists that want higher taxes, more government red tape, less freedom, and for our police to be defunded and dismantled. This is the wrong agenda for our state and our hard-working, law-abiding taxpayers. The Democratic Party now entirely does the bidding of New York City political bosses, and that is a shame.

**What do you see for the future of politics in New York? Is there a transformation or evolution taking place?**

There is a transformation taking place in New York State politics where the “silent majority” are making their voices heard and speaking out on the need for real change. Whether it’s the rise in violent crime, the growing upstate-downstate divide, Albany’s broken, bloated bureaucracy that penalizes job creators, stifles innovation and drives up our cost of living, hard-working, law-abiding taxpayers are fed up and frustrated with one-party rule and Democrats in the state legislature being dominated by New York City special interests. I



Above: Senator Jordan is a supporter of the police.

believe we’ll see this transformation take root during the elections next fall as voters can have their say and demand that our state government change course and begin serving their needs.

**Are there any lessons to be learned from your athletic background as a swimmer?**

Athletics and music have taught me many lessons. I’ve played piano since the age of eight. I played violin in orchestras and small ensembles up through the end of college (the violin now hangs on the wall in the piano room because, without regular practice, the sound is not so nice). I swam, and was a first baseman in softball in high school, and through college played lacrosse and was a cheerleader. I was always available to play touch football as well (I can still throw a bullet pass).

In my adult life, I trained hard and raced in triathlons for over ten years when women were just getting into the sport. All of this experience has been a teacher in life’s lessons. Here’s some of what I’ve learned:

– Some people have natural talents that really help them to succeed; however, they need to hone their skills and practice. This is two-fold,

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accept that you may not always be the best, but know that hard work can overcome anyone else's natural talent!

— Great results don't come easy! Do your best, not only to be the best you can be, but to help your team as a whole.

— Cooperation, communication, and teamwork are key for any kind of success.

— Budgeting time smartly and concisely is necessary when you have a full schedule. It also allows you to do more.

— Something my triathlon coach used to say to me when it was raining and cold outside and I didn't want to ride my 25-mile bike loop (but did) has really stuck with me: When you don't win the race, the excuse that it was raining and you didn't train because of it, doesn't matter, because you've lost. Think about that, it can apply to any excuse!

### **Has your time as a small business owner emphasized the importance of the small business economy especially now?**

Entrepreneurship, personal finances, the local and broader economy have always interested me. It's all about the American Dream and what it takes to make that dream a reality. My grandparents were champions of that dream, having come over each by themselves at the ages of 12 and 13.

The best story I can share is of my Papou (grandfather) Jimmy who came from Mytilene, Greece on a boat and ended up in Dunmore (Scranton), PA. He lived in a room with a cot above the candy store where he was hired to work. By the age of 16, he saved enough money to purchase that store, the Dunmore Candy Kitchen. He married, had four children who worked in the store (it was also an ice cream—

soda fountain hangout after football games back in the day). He was so successful that during the Depression, he purchased land and built the Greek Orthodox Church in Scranton, PA.

My dad's pursuit of the American Dream was a great influence to me. My dad, an electrical engineer with patents involving the early development of vacuum power interrupters now used by utilities throughout the world, left corporate America to pursue his American Dream. He ultimately had a variety of businesses with the most successful being his construction company where he built the finest custom-built homes in our area.

Other businesses included an aluminum window and door factory, a business that brought Broadway shows to Northeastern Pennsylvania, a realty company, car washes, and a couple of shopping centers. I used to sit in his office with him to keep him company while I did my homework and listen to his phone conversations. I learned a lot about the struggles and successes of businesses and the economy. It also spurred me into my own business.

There is nothing like being your own boss, but like anything else, it is also a risk and wise decisions and hard work are essential for success. I opened my first retail store at the age of 25 with a hefty bank loan and guidance from my dad. The store was successful and within two years, I opened up a second location. I had 14 part-time employees and traveled to each location, usually splitting up my time. With a divorce and a two-year-old, I sold out after 11 years to move back to my home area temporarily. I left the businesses I loved with all loans paid and enough left over.

Having a business is like having a child. You put your resources and whole self into it to grow it and to make it thrive. There are no guarantees even when you do the right thing because you can't always control outside forces, like economic recessions or the pandemic that has shut down so many businesses.



Today, I like to celebrate businesses that are having their grand openings and offer encouragement and my help. I keep a close eye on legislation and policies that will affect businesses, both large and small, and do all I can to weigh in on whether a policy is good or bad for business. There have been too many anti-business policies and laws advanced by the majorities in the past few years. As a minority member, what ultimately happens is not always in my control, but I always do everything in my power as Senator to advocate, speak out, and work toward a positive outcome. I have, and always will stand up for taxpayers and small businesses across my district. •

*To learn more about New York State Senator Daphne Jordan, visit [www.nysenate.gov/senators/daphne-jordan](http://www.nysenate.gov/senators/daphne-jordan)*



Above, top to bottom: Senator Jordan supports veterans, and is depicted here with one. Senator Jordan meeting with- and listening to fellow New Yorkers.