

SUMMER/FALL 2020 HIGHLIGHTS AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

New York Senator Rachel May 53rd State Senate District



Dear Friends,

As I write this, fall weather is suddenly upon us. The first day of school, fall festivals, fall sports—everything is different this year, but there is still much to celebrate. Our colleges and schools have done fantastic work to keep learning happening while keeping students and staff safe. Businesses are reopening, and arts organizations like Symphoria, Syracuse Stage and Hamilton College Performing Arts are announcing innovative virtual seasons. Central New Yorkers are showing kindness to one another by wearing masks, practicing distancing, and supporting those in need. Just this week we got the good news about two changes for the better that I have been advocating for all summer: the Governor announced new rules making it easier to visit loved ones in nursing homes, and the Syracuse Industrial Development Agency announced over \$300,000 in emergency grants and loans to support more than 50 small businesses and nonprofits. These are anxious times, but please know your elected officials are here to help, and we want the very best for you and your family.

Rachel

COVID-19 Legislative Action

We had an extremely busy legislative session this summer, with much of our focus directed at issues emerging directly from the pandemic. Following are some of my key initiatives:

- **Jobs bill:** Introduced a Works Progress Administration bill to generate jobs for those who have lost employment due to the pandemic and drive economic recovery and expansion.
- **Nursing home needs:** Co-sponsored a bill that would prioritize nursing homes for receiving personal protective equipment; assure that families are informed of alternative-care options; and require that facilities enhance communication with families.
- **Facility inspections:** Introduced a bill that directs the Department of Health to publish findings of residential health care facility inspections during the COVID-19 emergency.
- **Disaster emergency loan program:** Sponsored and passed bill to provide support for small businesses and small not-for-profit corporations hurt by the pandemic.
- **Absentee voting:** Introduced bills authorizing local boards of elections to establish absentee ballot drop-off locations and empowering local clerks to collect absentee ballots.
- **Nursing home visitation:** Introduced a bill this fall to allow designated loved ones to continue providing essential care during emergency visitation bans and expand compassionate care visits.
- **Pandemic planning:** Co-sponsored and passed a bill requiring nursing homes to prepare annual pandemic emergency plans.
- **Essential worker support:** Sponsored a bill to provide student financial aid grants to persons who served as essential workers during the COVID state of emergency.

Other Legislative News

While much of the legislative session necessarily focused on pandemic-related challenges and needs, I also introduced several other bills that address issues of immediate importance to the 53rd Senate District and beyond. Among them:

- **Reimagining Long-Term Care:** Introduced and passed bill to create a task force to examine and propose solutions for systemic issues affecting our long-term care systems for seniors.
- **Long-term Care Ombudsman:** Introduced a bill to raise awareness, and enhance effectiveness, of the state Long-term Care Ombudsman Program that supports nursing home residents and their families. These ombudspersons serve as important advocates for the care and safety of nursing home residents.
- **SIGH Act:** Introduced the Schools Impacted by Gross Highways (SIGH) Act, preventing new schools from being built within 600 feet of major roadways.
- **Fracking waste:** Sponsored and passed a bill that protects our precious waterways by requiring imported fracking waste to be treated like all other potentially hazardous waste.
- **Liquor-infused ice cream:** Sponsored and passed a bill authorizing the manufacture and sale of ice cream and other frozen desserts made with liquor—a boon for New York’s dairy farmers, liquor and craft beverage producers, and others working to meet consumer demand for these new and innovative products.



 A close-up photograph showing several hands of different skin tones clasped together in a supportive grip.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Senator Rachel May Introduces Bill (S8958) to Expand Nursing Home Visitation in New York State

 The official seal of the New York State Senate, featuring a circular design with the text "NEW YORK STATE" and "SENATE" around a central emblem.

COVID-19 Hearings

In August I co-chaired two lengthy virtual hearings to address the impact of the pandemic on nursing homes, residents and their families, and how to better prepare for future crises. The witnesses included CNY family members, skilled-nursing and adult home administrators, advocates, and others from across New York State. The testimony spurred state legislators to formulate a number of sensible, achievable measures to assure our elders never face such risk again. One such bill that I introduced would allow a designated loved one to continue providing essential care even as general visitation is restricted.

Celebrating People and Places of Central New York



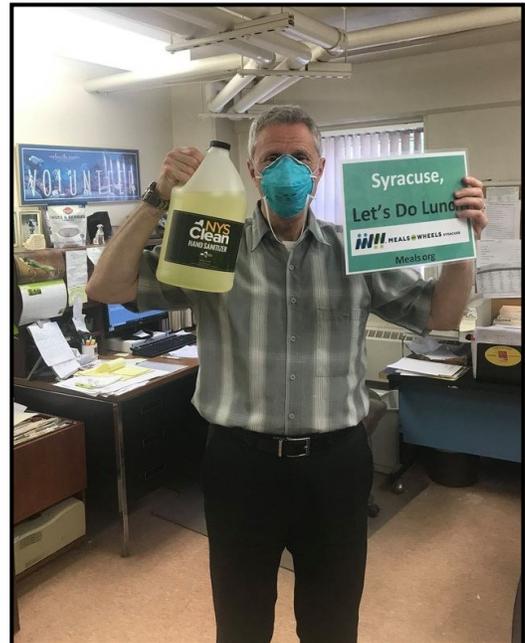
One of the great rewards of serving as your senator is the opportunity to visit and celebrate the many people and places that make our region so special. Among many other activities these last few months, I (clockwise from top left) joined Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul to highlight a new state Canal Corporation summer program and mark the opening of the newest portion of the Empire State Trail; helped with neighborhood cleanups, including one at Petit Branch Library; hosted several "ice cream and census" events; and visited Matthew 25 Farm to present a New York State Empire Award in honor of its good work.



Senator Rachel May Summer 2020 Highlights



(Top left) I joined in a moving 9/11 ceremony in Clinton, memorializing local native Edward Porter Felt, who died on Flight 93; (center left) dropped by Progressive Youth Ministry's Back-to-School Book Bag Drive; (bottom left) honored Madison County Solid Waste and Recycling for 30 years of service to the region; and distributed dozens of gallons of NYS-produced hand sanitizer to local businesses and nonprofits, including Meals on Wheels (below).



COVID Unemployment Issues?

We may be able to help! Over the last six months, my office has helped more than a thousand constituents claim the unemployment benefits to which they were entitled under COVID relief aid. If you are having difficulty with your own claim for COVID unemployment benefits, give my office a call at **315-478-8745** to see what we can do to help you resolve the problem.

Visit us online at may.nysenate.gov and on Facebook and Twitter at [RachelMayNY](https://www.facebook.com/RachelMayNY).