

Library Advocacy Day – February 27, 2019

This year 8 trustees and staff from Westchester Library System joined up with 2 other member library staff at New York Library Association's (NYLA) Library Advocacy Day in Albany on Wednesday, February 27th. The following libraries were represented:

Bedford Free Library	Mamaroneck Public Library	Scarsdale Public Library
Bedford Hills Free Library	Mount Kisco Public Library	Somers Library
Briarcliff Manor Public Library	Mount Pleasant Public Library	The Warner Library (Tarrytown)
Chappaqua Library	New Rochelle Public Library	White Plains Public Library
Dobbs Ferry Public Library	North Castle Public Library	Yonkers Public Library
Irvington Public Library	Ossining Public Library	Westchester Library System (WLS)
Katonah Village Library	Pound Ridge Library	
Larchmont Public Library	Ruth Keeler Memorial Library (North Salem)	
Lewisboro Library		

We visited **13** offices of the legislators who represent Westchester County as follows:

Assemblyman Steven Otis [91st District]—PICTURED

Assemblyman Gary Pretlow [89th District]

Senator Shelley Mayer [37th District]

Assemblywoman Amy Paulin [88th District]

Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti [92nd District]

Senator Alessandra Biaggi [34th District]

Senator Jamaal Bailey [36th District]

Assemblyman Kevin Byrne [94th District]

Assemblyman David Buchwald [93rd District]

Assemblywoman Sandy Galef [95th District]

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins [35th District]

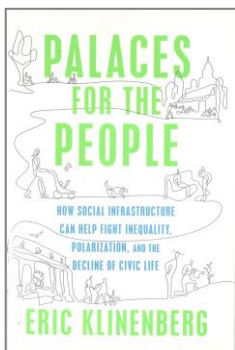
Senator David Carlucci [38th District]

Senator Peter Harckham [40th District]



Pictured (l-r front row): Elise Burke, Executive Assistant, Westchester Library System (WLS); Maureen LeBlanc, WLS Trustee; Board Member, Friends of the Larchmont Public Library, Inc.; NYS Assemblyman Steven Otis (91st District)

The proposed Executive Budget for FY2019-2020 included **\$91.6 Million in Library Aid**. This amount represents a **4% decrease** over the final Library Aid amounts included in the FY2018-19 enacted budget and is **12% less** than what is required by Education Law [**\$102.6 Million**] as well as **31% less** than what it would be if it kept up with inflation [**\$132.7 Million**]. Our main talking points focused on increasing Library Aid at least to the full extent of Education Law.



Sociologist Eric Klinenberg in his recent book, *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*, states: "...social infrastructure provides the setting and context for social participation, and the library is among the most critical forms of social infrastructure that we have." Each legislative office received a [packet of Advocacy materials](#), which included items highlighting this year's theme of the important role of libraries as part of their community's social infrastructure with statistics from Westchester libraries.

Also included in the proposed 2019-20 Executive Budget was a total of **\$14 Million for Public Library Construction Aid**. This amount represents a **59% decrease** over the \$34 Million included in the FY2018-19 enacted budget. To date close to \$8.5 Million has been awarded to 147 projects for 34 libraries in Westchester with a total project cost of over \$38 Million. These funds are often the only means that allow a library to move forward on vital projects that they might not otherwise be able to afford. Information regarding the projects that these funds have supported was also included in the Legislator packets.

We thank our small but mighty group who joined us in Albany and expressively shared their stories showcasing the creative ways that libraries are meeting the needs of their communities. We also thank everyone who contacted their State representatives in other ways—especially the Friends of the Larchmont Public Library for their [thoughtful letter](#) to Governor Cuomo! Your voices strengthen our message that libraries are a worthy and beneficial investment!

Elise Burke, *Executive Assistant, Westchester Library System*
