



# Rockland County Legislator Aron B. Wieder

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## BREAKING: Budget Under 2% Tax Cap

2014 has been a busy legislative year, as my colleagues in the legislature and I worked together on several measures to further improve the finances of Rockland County.

Today, the financial condition of our county is far better than it was in the dark days of 2012 and 2013, when we struggled to meet our obligations and were fighting daily to get a \$96 million deficit bond approved.

Since that time, our revenues have increased, our \$100 million deficit is being paid off, and our budget has been slashed. It is only a matter of time before the improving economy, combined with

the decisive actions the legislature has taken over the past few years, will put Rockland's finances into the black once again.

The budget process began with the executive office issuing their proposed budget for 2015. The roughly \$770 million budget had a lot of problems, and the legislature met almost daily to discuss every aspect of it and make appropriate changes to protect public safety and services.

On December 4th, the legislature passed a budget that is fiscally sound, stays under the 2% tax cap, preserves public safety, and supports the general welfare of the good people of Rockland.

## Credit Rating Upgraded

As a result of the work done by the legislature on our finances, Rockland County's credit rating was upgraded by Moody's Investor Service. The upgrade moved Rockland from Baa3, which is right above junk status, to Baa2. Our outlook for the future was also upgraded to positive.

As we continue to take action to cut our expenses and pay our debts, I expect our credit rating to be upgraded more.

The most important effect of a credit rating upgrade is that a great deal of taxpayer money is saved. When it improves, it is a message to bondholders that we are more financially secure, which reduces the interest we pay on all our debt.

## Wieder Fights Rockland Bus Rate Hikes

I stood tall against proposals to increase the bus rates of Transport of Rockland (TOR) bus routes. People who utilize the county bus system are individuals who are conscious of the environment or cannot afford transportation options.

These increases will hurt many people across Rockland, especially in my district, which includes a large number of people who simply cannot afford it.

As part of the rate hikes, those who use the bus frequently and purchase groups of tickets known as SuperSaver tickets will see a tremendous hike. Before the increase, riders paid \$11 for 10 tickets, and now they will pay \$20 for



11 tickets. That amounts to a 65% increase when broken down by cost per ride - from \$1.10 to \$1.82.

Sadly, these increases were unilaterally approved by the County Transportation Department, and the county legislature was not involved in this process, and unfortunately had no input. I understand the need to come up with new methods of increasing revenues, but it should not be

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## Wieder The Keynote Speaker At Naturalization Ceremony

Earlier this year, I was honored to be the keynote speaker at a naturalization ceremony held at the Fire Training Center in Pomona. The event marked the moment immigrants from across the world became citizens of the United States.

It was a great sight to witness so many people who worked hard for years to become a citizen of this great nation— something too many are born with but take for granted.

It was inspiring to see people who belong to differ-

ent races, religions, ethnicities and cultures come together to be part of this great country of ours. I spoke to them about how we are not only indivisible when we come together, but how we are also invincible, and able to achieve incredible things as a community and as a country.

There were 150 new citizens from 46 different countries who were sworn in during the ceremony, which was presided over by Rockland County Clerk Paul Piperato and Judge Victor Alfieri.



Legislator Aron Wieder addressing 150 new American citizens and their families at the Fire Training Center in Pomona.

## Legislator Wieder Raises \$2,250 For Mero Family

After the devastating accidental death of a 20-month old child in a parking lot in Spring Valley, a small effort to raise money to help pay for the child's funeral expenses was started.

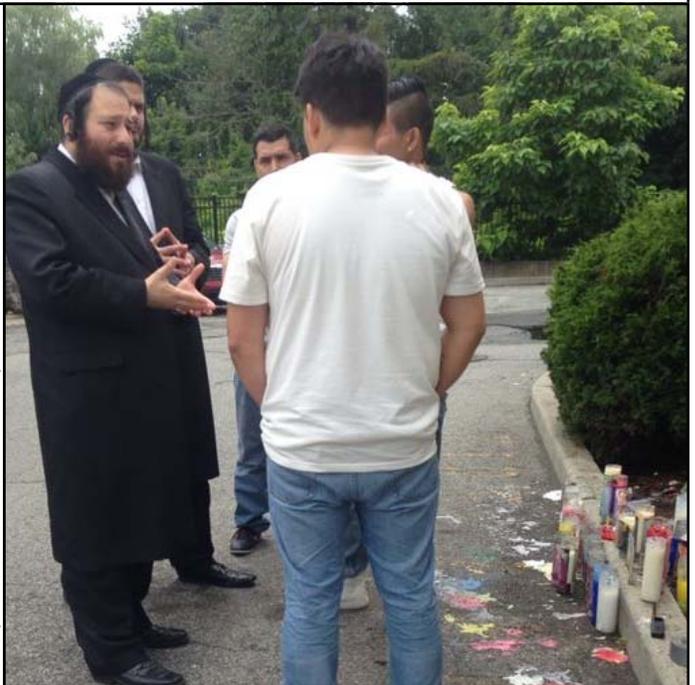
Sickeningly, a teenager stole a donation jar with about \$300 that had been raised from a deli. After this senseless crime, I joined forces with OJPAC - the Orthodox Jewish Public Affairs Council co-founded by Yossi Gestetner - to raise funds for the boy's funeral. Local business owner Benny Polatseck created the website to accept donations.

Thanks to an outpouring of support from so many individuals from diverse back-

grounds, the contributions that were raised far exceeded the group's wish to replace the stolen \$300.

Along with organizers from OJPAC, I presented a check for \$2,250 to the grieving Mero family. The check was made out to Maple Grove Cemetery, ensuring that all proceeds went directly to cover the cost of the child's funeral.

It is incredible that so many people came together to give funds to a grieving family. It is a testament to the incredible goodwill that exists in everyone - to donate to strangers in times of need. I am thankful to all those who participated in this effort.



Legislator Aron Wieder with members of the Mero family at the site of the tragic July car accident that killed a 20-month old.

## New Monsey Parking

Rockland County and the Town of Ramapo have made an agreement to create a parking lot on the Route 59 bypass property, located at the intersection of Routes 59 and 306.

The property, which has been vacant for many years, will now have 380 parking spaces for commuters

who use Monsey Trails and other bus services each day. The free parking lot will replace the existing one, which is located at the unused driveway in theater nearby on Route 59.

Creating this parking lot will cost roughly \$1.7 million, and will all be funded by non-county tax dollars. It is expected that the lot will be completed by August 2015.



A map showing the area of the new parking lot near the intersections of Routes 59 & 306.

## Legislate Aron Wieder Te Pran La Pawol Nam Ceremoni (Creole)

Nan komanseman ane a mwen te gen gran hone pou mwen te maitre ceremoni nan journee Naturalization ki te fe nan Fire Training Center nan Pomona.

Jou sa a te make date kote yon ba (yon pil ak yon paket) immigrant ki soti nan tout lakou peyi mondial vin Citizen American.

Se te yon bel konsta pou map kontenple kantite moun ki travay di pou you vin citizen yon gran nation tankou les Eta-Inis alos ke gen moun kifet nan peyi et ki pa pran sa pou anyen.

Mwen te santi mwen ins-

pire le map gade melange toute race, religion, group ethnique ak culturel ki mete ansam pou fe youn jou sa a.

Mwen te pran la parol pou mwen te explike nouvo gradue sa you ke si nou mete tet nou ensemble yo paka divize nou, nap vin invincible et nap ka akonpli anpil bagay.

Jou sa a peyi vin genyen 150 novo citizens ki soti nan 46 peyi et yo jire sou bib la nan gros ceremonie ki te organize par county clerk Paul Piperato Ak Juge Victor Alfieri.

Mesi, mesi anpil.



Legislate Aron Wieder kap pale ak 2 noune ki fek natiralize Ameriken.

## Legislador Wieder Recauda \$2,250 Para La Familia De Mero (Spanish)

Después de la devastadora muerte accidental de un niño de 20 meses de edad en un estacionamiento en Spring Valley, se inició un pequeño esfuerzo para recaudar fondos para ayudar a pagar los gastos funerarios de los niños.

Desafortunadamente, una adolescente robó un frasco de donación con unos 300 dólares que se habían planteado desde un delicatessen. Después de este crimen sin sentido, me uní a fuerzas con OJPAC - el Consejo asuntos públicos judía ortodoxa - para recaudar fondos para el funeral del chico.

Gracias a una manifestación de apoyo de tantas per-

sonas de diversos orígenes, las contribuciones que se han planteado hasta ahora superaron deseo del grupo para sustituir a los 300 dólares robados.

Junto con los organizadores de OJPAC, presenté un cheque por \$2,250 a la afligida familia de Mero. El cheque fue hecho al cementerio Maple Grove, asegurando que todo lo recaudado fue directamente para cubrir los gastos del entierro de la niña.

Es increíble que tanta gente se unieron para dar fondos a una familia afligida en un tiempo de necesidad. Estoy agradecido a todos aquellos que participaron en este esfuerzo.



Legislador Aron Wieder con miembros de la familia de Mero en el sitio del trágico accidente de julio que mató a 20 meses de edad.

ביז היינט האבן מענטשן וואס ארבעטן אין דער שטאט, און ניצן מאנטי טרעילס און אנדערע באס סערוויסעס אריינצופארן אין שטאט, געמוזט ניצן דעם פראוויזארישן פארק-ענד-רייד, וואס געפינט זיך אין אן אלטן צעלעכערטן פארקינג לאט. דער נייער פארקינג לאט וועט קאסטן ארום 1.7 מיליאן דאלאר און וועט פינאנצירט ווערן דורך די פעדעראלע רעגירונג אזוי אז ס'וועט נישט אפגעקטירן די קאונטי שטייערן. עס וועט זיין פארטיג אי"ה אום אויגוסט 2015.

## פארקינג פאר'ן ציבור (Yiddish)

קאונטי לעגיסלאטאר מאיאריטעט פירער ר' בנציון ווידער איז געווען אינסטרומענטאל צו העלפן אראנזשירן דעם אפמאך צווישן ראקלענד קאונטי און ראמאפא צו בויען א הערליכן נייעם פארקינג לאט מיט 380 פארקינג ערטער, ביים ווינקל פון רוט 59 און רוט 306 אויף א שטח וואס איז געשטאנען לידיג פאר פילע יארן.



א מאפע פון דעם פארקינג לאט ביים ווינקל פונעם רוט 59 און 306

# Fighting For Formula Change In East Ramapo

The East Ramapo Central School District faces a wide array of challenges, but a central part of addressing those issues relates to the funding the school district receives.

Every school district in the state receives funding from New York State based on a formula that calculates the number of public school students and the property value in the district.

In East Ramapo, where private school students outnumber public school students by more than 2-to-1, this formula hurts the district and all students—both those in private schools and public schools.

That is why a group of elected officials, and leaders of the many diverse communities in East Ramapo, came together as a coalition to lobby the state to change its funding formula for East Ramapo, so that the district can get more funding to benefit all of its students.

**For this newsletter, Legislator Aron Wieder sat down with Pastor Jean Dorcelly of the Rock Apostolic Church in Spring Valley to answer questions for the community about East Ramapo and the push for formula change.**

**Q: What is the biggest challenge facing East Ramapo?**

**Dorcelly:** There are many challenges in the school district, such as financial issues, important programs that have been cut, and more. The real underlying issue is the divided community of East Ramapo.

**Q: Why is it so important for the public school programs to be restored?**

**Wieder:** Education helps a community by giving its young people a future. It's been proven to help young people turn away from crime and turn themselves into individuals who can contribute to the community.

**Q: What are the issues with formula change?**

**Dorcelly:** The main issue is that this formula works for most other districts, which has almost all of its students in public schools. In East Ramapo, we receive tens of millions of dollars a year less in funding than we should because the current formula is based on real estate values instead of actual public school enrollment. As a result, East Ramapo is ranked as one of the wealthiest school districts in the state when in

reality, over 75% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.



Legislator Aron Wieder with representatives of the diverse communities in East Ramapo during a day spent meeting with leaders of the state legislature on the key issue of formula change for East Ramapo.

**Q: What has been done to change the funding formula?**

**Wieder:** Leaders from different religious backgrounds and cultures, as well as local officials, went to Albany united to push for a change in this formula. We all met with leaders of the state legislature, including Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, Senator David Carlucci, and Senator John Flanagan, who chairs the Senate's Education Committee. We also met with Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Assemblyman Dov Hikind, and others. We presented the legislators with a petition signed by hundreds calling for formula change.

**Q: What is next in the fight for formula change?**

**Dorcelly:** The community leaders will continue to work together and speak in one voice to change the formula that is holding East Ramapo back from being a more united and successful school district.



Legislator Wieder speaks at the State Capitol during a meeting with state legislative leaders.

**It continues to be a rewarding experience to serve as your Rockland County Legislator.**

**Thank you for your trust and confidence as we work to make Rockland a better place.**

**If you would like more information on these or any other issues, or need assistance:**

**Feel free to call my office to (845) 638-5754, or e-mail me at [WiederA@co.rockland.ny.us](mailto:WiederA@co.rockland.ny.us)**

**ARON B. WIEDER  
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