



# ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION  
OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
244 FAIR STREET, 6 FLOOR  
KINGSTON, NY 12401

PHONE: 845-340-3900

FAX: 845-340-3651

[Legislature.UlsterCountyNY.gov](http://Legislature.UlsterCountyNY.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Tracey Bartels Returns to Lead Ulster County Legislature**

### **Majority and Minority Leadership Appointments, Restructured Standing Committees, and the Establishment of American Rescue Plan Act Special Committee**



**TRACEY A. BARTELS**  
**Chair, Ulster County Legislature**  
**Towns of Gardiner and Shawangunk**  
**District 16**

Kingston, NY—Tracey A. Bartels was elected with unanimous support as chair of the Ulster County Legislature this evening at the annual organizational meeting.

Bartels, an eight-term legislator who represents Gardiner and Shawangunk, was chosen for the top leadership position for the second time.

In 2019, Bartels became the first woman from the Democratic caucus to serve as the chair of the Ulster County Legislature and only the second woman to lead in the body's 54-year history. She is also the first chair who is not enrolled in a political party.

Bartels was nominated to the chair position by Legislator Brian Cahill (Towns of Ulster and Kingston, Dist. 4) and seconded by Legislator Laura Petit (Town of Esopus, Dist. 8).

Democratic Majority Leader Jonathan R. Heppner (Towns of Woodstock and Hurley, Dist. 23) said, "I have served with Tracey

Bartels for over six years, and I'm excited for the sake of the Legislature, and all of Ulster County, for her to lead the Legislature. Chair Bartels is a dedicated, experienced, and fair leader, and that is why her colleagues gave her unanimous support. I look forward to continuing to work with her and this new Legislature."

Legislator Cahill states, "I have known Tracey Bartels for more than 15 years. She is open minded, fair, and willing to listen to all sides of a discussion—no matter what your political party affiliation. She has what it takes to lead."

Democrats re-elected Jonathan R. Heppner (Towns of Woodstock and Hurley, Dist. 23) as Majority Leader and Abe Uchitelle (City of Kingston, Dist. 5) as Deputy Majority Leader—the Deputy role was formerly titled Whip.



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Kenneth J. Ronk (Town of Shawangunk, Dist. 13), was re-elected as Minority Leader. The designation of Deputy Minority Leader is expected shortly.

Chair Bartels will lead a 23-member body, including six new members and two former legislators who retook their seats in the last election.

"I thank my colleagues for the honor and privilege to lead the Ulster County Legislature," said Chair Bartels. "These are unprecedented times. The continued and changing challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic require us to work together to respond to the urgent needs of our constituency. As a county and a nation, we face critical crises in housing, mental health, and climate."

Chair Bartels adds, "We are called upon to unite, to place the needs of the people first, and to serve. I commit to working together to deliver on our shared goals and a vision for an ever-stronger Ulster County. Together we will deliver transformative change and relief."

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This evening, at the annual organizational meeting, legislators supported substantial changes to the Legislative Standing Committees.

"The new committee structure will enable the Legislature to work more effectively," said Chair Bartels. "The needs of Ulster County residents have evolved, and so too must county government," says Deputy Majority Leader Abe Uchitelle.

"For the first time in over 20 years, Agriculture is included in the committee structure and recognized as a central economic driver in Ulster County. The addition of Agriculture to Economic Development puts farmers and agricultural-related businesses in clear policy focus. The Legislature understands what our farmers mean to our economy, our well-being, and health," said Chair Bartels.

Chair Bartels adds, "The inclusion of Education and Arts in the Economic Development Committee's responsibilities recognizes the critical role that our arts community plays in Ulster's economy, as well as the role that education plays in shaping Ulster County's economy now and in the future. These additions enable the Legislature to develop initiatives and policies to foster greater economic growth within these sectors."

One of the most significant changes made to the structure of the standing committees is the reconfiguration of the former Public Health and Social Services Committee to Health, Human Services, and Housing. The committee's focus has been expanded to allow the Legislature to take an all-encompassing view of health that includes human services and housing.

"The Legislature recognizes the longstanding relationship between public health and housing. Integrating Health, Human Services, and Housing allows the Legislature to take a wide view of the complex, interconnected forces which shape public health. It empowers the Legislature to develop holistic policies to address the immediate and emergent challenges and crises faced by families, businesses, and communities throughout Ulster County," said Chair Bartels.

Legislators also voted to establish the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Special Committee dedicated to the investment and allocation of \$34,491,474 American Rescue Plan Act federal funding.



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The new special committee will review and track all proposals related to the expenditure of federal ARPA funds before forwarding them to legislative Standing Committees of jurisdiction. The special committee will have a standing committee's same powers and duties. The ARPA Special Committee will be dissolved in three years, or after all ARPA funds are spent.

Chair Bartels states, "Ulster County will receive over \$34 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding over two years. The allocation of ARPA funds requires diligent and careful investigation, vetting, and oversight. The Special Committee will be a transparent vehicle for evaluating all proposed ARPA expenditures."

The Special Committee will work to ensure that ARPA funds are effectively used to provide immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses impacted by the pandemic, strengthen vital public services, and remedy systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic.

The Chair adds, "The Legislature will work in active partnership with the Executive branch to build a pathway to an equitable recovery with long-term benefits for health and the strongest possible economic outcome for the residents of Ulster County."

## 2022 Standing and Special Committees

### **Economic Development, Planning, Education, Employment, Arts and Agriculture**

To set legislative policy and review contracts for all aspects of Ulster County Department of Economic Development, Ulster County Department of Planning, Office of Employment and Training, Ulster County Community College, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District, Arts, Tourism and Libraries. Responsible for issues pertaining to: Ulster County Industrial Development Agency, Ulster County Planning Board, Revolving Loan Fund Committee, Shovel Ready Committee. To foster relations and communications with the Ulster County Economic Alliance and local Chambers of Commerce. To establish policy relating to agriculture and farmland preservation.

### **Energy, Environment, and Sustainability**

To set policy and review contracts pertaining to the Department of the Environment, Environmental Management Council, Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and Forest Practice Board, including the protection of waterways and the County's recycling efforts. To set policy and review contracts pertaining to but not limited to the activities of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency.

### **Health, Human Services, and Housing**

To set policy for and review contracts pertaining to the following County Departments and Divisions: Health, Mental Health, Social Services, Community Action, Office for the Aging, Youth Bureau, and Veterans Affairs. To set policy relating to housing issues including but not limited to temporary, emergency, affordable, workforce, and senior housing.

### **Law Enforcement and Public Safety**

To set policy and review contracts pertaining to the following County Departments and Divisions: Ulster County Sheriff and the Law Enforcement Center, Public Defender, District Attorney, Probation, Restorative Justice, Emergency Management/Emergency Communications, Arson Task Force, Fire



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Coordinator, EMS Coordinator, STOP DWI, Consumer Fraud Bureau, Weights and Measures, and Safety Office.

### **Laws, Rules, and Government Services**

To set policy and review contracts pertaining to the following County Departments and Divisions: Board of Elections, County Clerk, County Attorney, Human Rights, Insurance and Board of Ethics. To oversee legislative policy and legislative proposed revisions to the Ulster County Charter and the Administrative Code. To review and maintain the Rules of the Legislature and to review and approve all local laws for legal sufficiency only, unless Laws and Rules, Government Services is the committee of original jurisdiction. To approve all late resolutions, considering lateness and content prior to submittal to the full Legislature. To approve resolutions required to be referred to it under the Rules of the Legislature.

### **Public Works, Capital Projects, and Transportation**

To set policy for and review contracts pertaining to the following County Departments and Divisions: Public Works (including Parks, Highways, and Buildings and Grounds), Transportation (including Fleet Management and Ulster County Area Transit), the Electrical Licensing Board, and Capital Projects.

### **Ways and Means**

To recommend the Legislature's position on all budgetary and financial matters of the County. To review contracts pertaining to the following departments: Comptroller, Finance, Innovation Division, Personnel, Purchasing, Information Services and Real Property Tax Services. To approve all resolutions with financial impacts to the County, excluding those financial impacts limited solely to legislative advertising expenses.

### **American Rescue Plan Act Special Committee**

Dedicated to the investment and allocation of American Rescue Plan Act funds utilized to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery. To review all proposals related to the expenditure of ARPA funds prior to forwarding to any Standing Committees of jurisdiction.

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*Photo Attached*