



**MARY BETH MAIO
MAJORITY LEADER
ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

MAJORITY LEADER'S ADDRESS

MARCH 22, 2017

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Kenneth J. Ronk, Jr., Chairman

Mary Wawro

Chairman Ronk, Minority Leader Rodriguez and Fellow Legislators,

This year is the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in New York State. In 1917, three years before the federal government passed the 19th amendment, New York State gave women the right to vote. And as far as we have come we still have a ways to go. It is hard to believe, but there are still places in the world today where women are forbidden a formal education and can be stoned to death for having their own opinion. We cannot take these rights and freedoms for granted.

I am proud to be the first woman majority leader of the Republicans and thank my caucus for their faith and trust. And I would like to take a moment with that. A generation ago, women faced force feedings, jail, asylums and worse, for the right to vote, own property and be viewed as equals. While we take for granted many of the rights and freedoms they only dreamt of. It deserves mention that even today women still face a lack of equality, equal pay and support for the value of traditional roles.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize the other women serving in the legislature, Mary Wawro, Tracey Bartels, Manna Jo Greene and Jennifer Schwartz Berky. I'd like to ask women watching, to remember and channel the courage of women like, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Together, let's encourage your daughters, sisters, mothers and friends to follow their dreams and never settle for less than we deserve. There are no limitations and anything is possible with hard work and determination.

That being said, my thoughts turn to our children. The overwhelming pressures that face the youth of today are truly daunting. Resolution No. 89 – prohibiting Cyber bullying is an example of the law catching up with technology. Chairman Ronk made the observation that a generation ago HOME was a safe place for a child who was bullied in school. Today nowhere is safe. We hope that this local law will protect our children from intimidation, harassment and fear. We also hope it will become a tool to identify bullies and break this damaging cycle.

Another scary problem facing our children – the easy availability of heroin, opioids and other cheap and addicting drugs. We have been working with the Ulster County Coalition Against Narcotics or “UCAN” to combat this serious problem. Several Legislators have sponsored NARCAN trainings and we are already receiving reports from people who have taken this training, that they are saving lives.

Understanding a problem is the first step to solving it. On April 26, the Legislature’s UCAN Committee is sponsoring an Opioid Awareness forum at Quimby Theater on the SUNY Ulster Campus. Chairman Ronk and staff are supporting this effort that will target local educators, elected officials, law enforcement, first responders and the general public. Speakers will explain the science, discuss the law and the programs to support recovery and offer hope to individuals and families struggling with addiction. I encourage everyone to attend. All of us need to keep up on this effort to keep our future generation safe.

Tonight we pay tribute to the dedicated service of the late Chief Anthony Cruise as we name the Sawkill Bridge to honor his memory. If Tony were here, he would probably tell us he was just doing job. How fortunate we are to have individuals like Tony who do the extraordinary so often, they think it is ordinary. He is a man who left this world a better place than he found it.

And in the spirit of Chief Cruise, the Republican Caucus wants to take a moment to recognize and pay tribute to our Ulster County Sheriff and all of the brave men and women in law enforcement throughout Ulster County. As we see these public servants in their uniforms we take for granted the risks they take on a daily basis on our behalf. Thank you.

One of those wearing a uniform is my son. Devin is following his dream and is now a member of the Town of Marlboro Police Force. My world has forever changed with him becoming a police officer and I stand proud everyday knowing that this is his passion and calling. But, like every police officer’s mother and family, I have mixed emotions and that pride has an underlying spike of fear.

Serving on the Law Enforcement committee for the past 7 years, I've been involved in the ins and outs of the Sheriff's office and the critical role they play in Ulster County.

Recently there were questions and concerns regarding the support of Ulster Regional Gang Enforcement Narcotics Team, better known as URGENT. While it's ok to ask questions, to be critical of a program that clearly keeps our children, our neighborhoods and our County safer makes me want to scream. Please know that I, personally, will make sure to speak louder and fight harder than those who cannot understand how important it is to stand behind our law enforcement and will continue to support these men and women.

It is also my pleasure to support Chief Cacozza and Chief Waage in the towns that I serve. They both play critical roles in keeping the community safe and involved. I have participated in 2 civilian academies offered to the public by Chief Waage. A third one is planned later this month. This program educates the community on the role of law enforcement and how they help and protect us in unseen ways every day. I was proud to recognize Chief Waage for this effort. He is bringing the public and law enforcement together and is changing the way the public sees and interacts with law enforcement.

For obvious reasons, Law Enforcement is near and dear to my heart - as it is to all the members of our caucus - but none more than Legislator Ron Lapp. Legislator Lapp has dedicated a lifetime to Law enforcement and continues to work to serve and protect. I want to thank Legislator Lapp for Resolution 92. It is beautifully written and clearly supports our police officers that are so deserving.

This past January there was a day to recognize law enforcement, and I fully support that, but I would ask you, the people of Ulster County, to recognize these brave men and women more than one day a year. Let Ulster County be the County where we stand respectfully for our officers and not fall prey to the media frenzy encouraging contempt and attacks just to sell a headline.

I also have the privilege each year of honoring the men and women of the Highland Fire District and the Milton Fire District. Again, we are so lucky to have these first responders who volunteer and sacrifice for us. No matter the day or the hour, they can't move fast enough when that call comes in. It makes me so proud to be their Legislator. I would like to take this moment to thank each and every one of them for volunteering.

As for my caucus.... last year, I recognized the members of the Republican caucus for their individual and collective wisdom. My caucus makes me proud to stand and speak for them. Their proven expertise and experience allows us to tackle any problem or issue together. I thank each and every one of you tonight for your efforts and I know going forward the possibilities are endless.

Last year, the Republican caucus called for the creation of a committee to monitor the future of the U&D Corridor and we were pleased to see the formation of the Trail and Rail Advisory Committee. The vision laid out in Resolution 488 of 2015 is becoming a reality. We have developed strong public/private partnerships and with the oversight of the TRAC Committee, we were able to maintain a section for the use of the ever popular event trains of the Catskill Mountain Railroad; we were able to attract an exciting new partner with Rail Explorers rail bikes that has become the talk of the Hudson Valley; and plans for the Ashokan Rail Trail are well underway. Tonight our caucus is ready to approve Resolution #119 regarding the DEC grant for work at Butternut Cove. It is the first step of many that will help secure outside funding for this project.

The improvements to the Hudson Valley Rail Trail in Highland are coming along nicely and we look forward to the day that trail joins the Walkway Over the Hudson to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail and beyond.

Overall, I am very pleased with the accomplishments of the last year and I am optimistic about many of the projects underway this year. Ulster County and many of our towns and villages have been recognized in various publications as one of the most scenic and friendly places to live and do business. Our environmental efforts were even recognized in the National Geographic magazine this year. As always, Ulster County leads by example.

At a time in our history, where other levels of government are at odds with each other, it is important that we remain focused on the values we share. We need to be the change we want to see in the world. Most of us have always looked beyond our differences and found ways we can work together. That has never been more important than it is today. The Republican caucus looks forward to working with the Democratic caucus, with the County Executive and with all of our neighbors and friends to ensure a bright future for all Ulster County residents.