



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## City and State: The 2024 Hudson Valley Power 100 Movers and shakers from Westchester County to Ulster County.

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The Hudson Valley is known for its quaint riverfront enclaves and leafy neighborhoods, its historic mansions and estates, its cultural and culinary attractions. But in the political world, it's first and foremost a crucial battleground in the war for control of Congress. Reps. Marc Molinaro and Mike Lawler are among the most vulnerable Republican incumbents seeking reelection this year, while another first-term lawmaker, Democratic Rep. Pat Ryan, is facing a tough reelection battle of his own.

Of course, the region's suburban and exurban communities have long played an outsized role in state and local politics. It's no coincidence that state Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins hails from Westchester, or that one of the country's most high-profile House primaries – in which Westchester County Executive George Latimer ousted Rep. Jamaal Bowman of “the Squad” – took place here. Local elected officials on both sides of the aisle were among the loudest opponents of congestion pricing, contributing to the governor's decision to pause it indefinitely.

City & State's inaugural Hudson Valley Power 100 identifies the region's most influential figures. While there is some debate of what exactly constitutes the Hudson Valley, this list covers seven counties: Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and

Westchester. Read on to meet the public officials, business owners, hospital executives, college and university presidents, and others shaping the future of the Hudson Valley.

## **4. Jamaal Bailey, Nathalia Fernandez, Pete Harckham, Michelle Hinchey, Shelley Mayer & James Skoufis**

### *State Senators*



*Jamaal Bailey, Nathalia Fernandez, Pete Harckham, Michelle Hinchey, Shelley Mayer & James Skoufis / Provided; New York State Senate; Senate Media Services; Katrina Hajagos*

As chair of the Education Committee, state Sen. Shelley Mayer has been in the thick of debates over everything from school funding to hate speech. Mayer opposed Gov. Kathy Hochul's budget proposal on the state's Foundation Aid formula and championed a study of the complicated school funding process that's been underway this year. Mayer has also served on the influential Senate Working Rules Group.

State Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Michelle Hinchey had an active year, with 29 of her bills passing both houses. This includes the state's short-term rental registry bill, a hotly debated measure, and her bill to make menstrual products free at SUNY and CUNY.

Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Pete Harckham is tackling urgent environmental issues, calling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to oversee a full clean-up of PCBs in the Hudson River. He has opposed efforts to reopen the Indian Point nuclear power plant.

State Sen. James Skoufis has been seen as a potential congressional contender, but this fall, he is focused on winning a competitive general election contest to keep his current seat. Skoufis, who chairs the Committee on Investigations and Government Operations, is facing a rematch against Republican Dorey Houle after a nail-biter in 2022.

Two other lawmakers straddle New York City and Westchester: Jamaal Bailey and Nathalia Fernandez. While best known for his work leading the Bronx Democrats, Bailey's state Senate district covers parts of the northernmost borough and the Hudson Valley's southernmost county. The chair of the powerful Senate Codes Committee, Bailey has prioritized making phone calls from state prisons free. In December he announced \$3.1 million in capital grants for Mount Vernon. He also has served on the powerful Senate Working Rules Group. Alcoholism and Substance Use Disorders Committee Chair Nathalia Fernandez, who also represents parts of the Bronx and Westchester, has made closing the

voluntary intoxication loophole in sexual assault cases a top priority. She is also focused on issues related to vaping and sponsored legislation to regulate third-party restaurant reservation apps.

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