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SPANO APPLAUDS NEW LAW PROTECTING CAMPERS
New law closes a loophole in camp monitoring

Westchester County Executive Andy Spano congratulated Gov. David Paterson and the State Legislature today for enacting a new law that will help the county protect thousands more summer day campers in Westchester.

The new law, which was proposed by the county in its 2009 legislative package, closes a loophole that kept the county's Health Department from inspecting day camps where more than half of the activities are indoors.

The bill was signed into law by the governor Wednesday night. It was sponsored by Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, D-Scarsdale, and State Sen. Suzi Oppenheimer, D-Mamaroneck, and will affect campers statewide.

"This new law should give parents some peace of mind because all camps in Westchester will be subjected to thorough inspections by our health department," Spano said. "We are very pleased the Governor and the Legislature recognized the importance of updating the existing law to reflect the diversity of camp programs that exist for children today, both indoor and out. And we are very grateful to our sponsoring legislators, Amy Paulin and Suzi Oppenheimer, who pushed long and hard for this bill right until the end."

"This new law appropriately defines a children's camp by the risk of its activities instead of whether it is set indoors or out," Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman said. "It will help us do our best to keep all Westchester campers safe each summer."

Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, D-Scarsdale, said: "This new law will ensure that when our children go off to camp each morning, they are in good hands in a safe environment. The counselors taking care of them

(More)

will have had background checks and the CPR training they will need to keep our children safe. It can help prevent needless and tragic injuries and deaths."

"I am proud to have sponsored this legislation," said Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck), "which will give Westchester County the authority it needs to protect the health and well-being of the thousands of summer day campers in our community. We are grateful to Westchester County Executive Andy Spano and the Westchester Department of Health for their tireless advocacy in support of this important safety measure."

Beginning April 1, 2011, the county Health Department will have the authority to inspect all multipurpose summer day camps, regardless of whether they occur indoors or outdoors. The comprehensive inspections cover everything from staff training and certifications to camp medical and fire safety.

The legislation also allows the county to increase its permit fee to \$200 to help offset the cost of these inspections. The fee had remained the same for at least two decades.

The county has worked with its partners in the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO), the New York State Camp Directors Association and state legislators to get the bill passed.

Doug Volan, the director of Mount Tom Day Camp in New Rochelle and the former president of the New York State Camp Director's Association, said the Camp Director's Association fully supports this bill and had worked toward its passage. "That's wonderful news," Volan said. "We're so happy that all children now have the same protection when they go to summer camp. All kids deserve that. This closes a dangerous loophole in the system and will require all camps to have appropriate supervision and properly trained, certified and vetted staff."