

Empire State Opioid Epidemic Innovation Challenge

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Columbia University Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science



Life of Service

Kathy Hochul is the 77th Lieutenant Governor of New York. A lifelong New Yorker, she was born and raised in a blue-collar Irish Catholic family in Buffalo that instilled a deep passion for public service and activism. She continued that fighting spirit as a student organizer, as a young attorney and aide to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and then as a member of her Town Board, Erie County Clerk, and as a Member of Congress.

After the Tea Party wave in 2011, Kathy entered a special election in the most Republican congressional district in the state, and against all odds, won as a proud Democrat. Her election, and later – her victory, was viewed as a national referendum on Paul Ryan’s agenda to bankrupt Social Security and Medicare. Despite risking her reelection, Kathy always fought to protect the Affordable Care Act, a woman’s right to choose, and the rights of our LGBTQ community.

In Congress, Kathy proudly received the endorsement of various women’s groups like EMILY’s List and was often targeted by Conservative media for her defense of the contraception mandate under Obamacare. Kathy was also endorsed by the Human Rights Campaign and has been a lifelong champion for the LGBTQ community and the fight for equality.

Kathy maintained true to her labor roots and consistently voted to support the working men and women of America. She was a frequent critic of tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires and called for tax cuts for low and middle-income earners.

Fighting for Working Families

As Lieutenant Governor, she continues to fight for working families. Kathy was a strong voice in the successful fight for a \$15 minimum wage and Paid Family Leave. Every day, Kathy is working with the Governor and state legislature to prioritize making lives better for all New York families – because no one working full-time should live in poverty.

In the age of advanced technology, access to higher education has become increasingly more difficult. With the belief that education is a human right, Kathy and the Governor fought hard to make SUNY and CUNY schools tuition-free for every middle-class family.

As Chair of the Regional Economic Development Councils, Kathy has led efforts to lift up communities across this state and secured a record increase of workforce development funding, so all New Yorkers have an opportunity to find a good-paying job.

And as Chair of the Governor’s Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, Kathy has maintained a laser focus to pass commonsense policies to combat the widespread epidemic.

Champion for Women

Throughout Kathy's life, she has committed to empowering women. She joined her mother and aunt in establishing the Kathleen Mary House in 2006, a transitional home for victims of domestic violence. Kathy has consistently placed issues that are important to women on the top of her agenda. Traveling the state, she has leveraged her position as the highest ranking female official in state government to encourage women to be an active voice for change. Kathy wants women to dream big and take risks – and she believes in equal pay for equal work. Kathy supports banning salary history and the state's record high goal for MWBE's.

Kathy leads advocacy campaigns for many of the Governor's signature initiatives – from the "Enough is Enough" sexual assault prevention program to passing the strictest laws against sexual harassment in the nation – she prioritizes being a voice for all women as she visits all 62 counties every year.

In addition, she chairs the Women's Suffrage Commission and has celebrated the centennial of women's suffrage by highlighting the central role of New Yorkers in the fight – it is the legacy of these feminists that inspires Kathy in her role as Lieutenant Governor every day.

Personal Life

Kathy has always believed in giving a voice to the voiceless. Kathy credits her upbringing with progressive parents for the values she holds today. Her grandparents were immigrants who fled poverty in Ireland, and her grandfather started his American journey as a migrant worker in the wheat fields of South Dakota. They later became domestics in Chicago and were lured to Buffalo by the promise of good-paying jobs at Bethlehem Steel. Kathy's father, Jack, was also a steelworker and union organizer and began married life with her mother, Pat, in a tiny trailer in the shadow of the plant.

Kathy holds a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and a JD from Catholic University. She is married to her husband, Bill, and they have two children, Will and Katie.