

Suffolk Region

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Legislative Activity is relatively quiet on both the State & County levels, as the NYS Legislature is not in session and the County Legislators are concentrating on running for re-election. While the State Assembly and Senate are not running for re-election this year, we have at least one member of each from Suffolk running for a local office and should they prevail, we'll be looking at Special Elections later this school year.

Regarding the Suffolk County elections, Suffolk County District Attorney Tom Spota is not seeking re-election. Therefore, it may be in our best interest to ask the candidates running to replace him exactly where they stand on Drug Free School Zones. The current staff of the Suffolk DA's Office apparently is not taking advantages of the provisions of The Drug Free School Zone laws that allow for greater penalties to be sought in cases of drug violations on school grounds. A Freedom of Information request attempting to confirm this was met with no response other than the DA's Office does not keep records on this information. This may also be a question to ask of candidates for the County Legislature, as well.

On the Federal level, while there has been much talk about what actions the government may take to curtail gang activity here on Long Island, no concrete action plan has been brought forth yet. Regarding another federal matter, the President has stated that he is looking to do away with the DACA program, which protects minors (& those that are no longer minors) who entered this country illegally from deportation. He is giving the Legislative branch six months to come up with a legal remedy before implementing any plans. In the interim, unaccompanied minors from Central/South America continue to be placed on Long Island in large by the Federal Government. In 2016, 1472 were placed in Suffolk County, with an additional 993 so far in 2017. The two major concerns regarding these migrant children is that that a disproportionate amount of the MS-13 members here on Long Island were found to be UAC's and that these children are placing a burden on the school districts which have received them in large numbers. Unfortunately, efforts to provide financial relief to our local school districts with federal funding have stalled in Washington DC.

Regarding MS-13, Governor Cuomo has committed the resources of the NY State Police and will be placing Troopers in ten secondary schools in six Suffolk County Districts (Brentwood, Central Islip, Huntington, Longwood, South Country & Wyandanch). School officials in both the Huntington & Longwood districts say that they were not consulted in advance and were requesting more information about this program before agreeing to move forward with it.

Following up on the extremely long delays in getting Bond Issue & Smart School spending plans approved by the State Education Department, I recently heard from Governor Cuomo's representative here on Long Island (Vanessa Pino Lockel) and was informed that the Governor authorized the State Ed Department to fill all of their open positions. However, we may not see immediate improvement due to the heavy backlog of plans to be reviewed.

**** Respectfully submitted ... Gerry Bringmann