

Suffolk Region



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Following up on a previously reported issue, Smart Schools Funding. There was a meeting of the Smart Schools Committee in December and another \$416 million in spending plans were approved. This was only the 11th committee meeting in 4yrs since the bond passed, but it accounted for almost 1/3 of the total spending plan approvals to date. The grand total of approved spending plans throughout NY State is now \$1,283,000 (approx. 64% of the total bond) Schools in Suffolk County that received approved plans in December were: Amityville (\$736K), Copiague (\$3,547,544), Hampton Bays (\$49K), Southold (\$188K), Three Village (\$657K), West Babylon (\$315K) and William Floyd (\$2,026,848). However, it should be noted that we still have some schools here in Suffolk which haven't received the first dollar.

On the Federal Level. The President's Federal Commission on School Safety issued its final report on December 18th, but there was really nothing of substance contained within the report. In fact, there was a rather controversial recommendation to remove a prior administration's policy aimed at curbing racial disparities in school discipline, arguing that it limits school administrators' ability to address students who pose a potential threat to their classmates. Another recommendation called for increased coordination between schools and local law enforcement agencies, which despite a recent incident here in the county, most of our Suffolk schools are making progress with.

On the State Level ... The Senate & Assembly will be going back into session later this week. As always, the first order of business will be the beginning of NY State's budget process. For this year (& next), one party (the Democrats) will control both houses of State government & the Governor's office, however this does not guarantee smooth sailing regarding the passing of proposed legislation. Among some of the more controversial issues that may be out for a vote will be the Dream Act (which would provide tuition assistance to illegal residents), Gun Control issues (such as extending the waiting period for background checks to buy a weapon from 3 to 10 days, banning bump stocks and enacting a "red flag" safety bill that would allow the courts to seize firearms from dangerous individuals) and the legalization of the adult use of recreational marijuana (which NYS PTA opposes).

On the County Level ... The special election to fill the 9th District seat vacated by Monica Martinez (when she was elected to the NYS Senate is now scheduled for March 19th ... the Legislature has unanimously approved a local law requiring water parks & amusement parks to immediately report to police any complaints of sexual misconduct or other criminal activity. It should be noted that most of the victims of sexual misconduct in these locations are minors ... the Health Committee of the County Legislature is considering sending a bill to the full legislature that would limit the sale of flavored e-cigarettes & liquid nicotine products to those that are flavorless, tobacco, mint or menthol flavored. This bill has the support of Suffolk Region PTA, as the vaping by High School students has doubled in the past year and the flavors not listed are primarily marketed to minors. Suffolk County has also increased the penalties on tobacco retailers that unlawfully sell vaping products to those under 21 years old.

In closing, a reminder that Suffolk Region PTA is a co-sponsor, along with Eastern Suffolk BOCES, of the Longwood School District's 15th Regional Legislative Breakfast being held on Saturday, February 2, 2019 from 8:30am to 12 Noon @ the Longwood Middle School.

