

Suffolk Region

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Report of February 10, 2020

Updates & developments of interest to report:

- **Banning the Sale of Flavored Vaping Products** – while the Governor has stated that this was one of the items that he wanted addressed during this legislative session, there has been little progress to report at this time.
- **Bail Reform Law** – There has been a lot of talk of making major modifications, if not a complete repeal of Bail Reform. However, House Speaker Heastie is strongly resisting these efforts, saying that bail reform hasn't been in place long enough to make a proper evaluation. It would be my recommendation, as Legislative Chairman, that Suffolk Region PTA to go on record with our Legislators, opposing the current Bail Reform changes, as they relate to schools & children (for example "Unlawful possession of a weapon on school grounds")
- **NYS Budget** – The Governor has proposed an overall \$178 billion dollars budget, with closing the \$6.1 billion dollar deficit and the legalization of marijuana among his priorities. Including the legalization of cannabis in the budget, is an attempt to push this item through without having it be addressed by the Assembly & Senate as an individual issue. We must make it known to our State Senators & Assembly members that this "end run" is unacceptable. Financially, the proposed budget increases aid to local school districts (statewide) by \$826 million or 3%. The governor stated that he plans to funnel more state aid to the poorer school districts and to eliminate the a huge per-student funding gap between poor urban districts and wealthier suburban districts,
- **NYS Tax Cap** – the New York State Tax Cap for 2020 is 1.81%, after two straight years of getting the 2% maximum.

We also had a couple of items on the Suffolk County level:

- **CPS Procedures & Staffing** – the Suffolk County Legislature held hearings regarding this issue last week after the tragic death of a young boy that the current system failed miserably. What changes may come from this hearing, remain to be seen.
- **Special Election** – there will be a special election held on March 10th to fill Legislator DuWayne Gregory's seat in the 15th Legislative District.

Yesterday, I was up in Albany to attend the NYS PTA Legislative Summit and had to prepare my report for February prior to leaving, so I will be updating everyone at a future date. Unfortunately, I was unable to clear my work schedule to attend NYS PTA's annual Lobbying Efforts which took place earlier today in the State Capitol.

The Annual Legislative Breakfast sponsored by the Longwood School District, Eastern Suffolk BOCES & Suffolk Region PTA took place on Saturday, February 1st @ the Longwood Middle School in Middle Island. As always, it was a well-attended and very informative event with presentations by Mr. Charles Dedrick (Executive Director of the NYS Council of School Superintendents) & Ms. Julie Lutz (Chief Operating Officer of Eastern Suffolk BOCES). One of the major points made during the presentations was the need for additional funding for mental health issues in our schools. There was also a Question & Answer period with the following legislators in attendance: State Senators LaValle & Flanagan and Assemblymen Palumbo, Garbarino, Engelbright, Smith, DeStefano and Fitzpatrick. The question that I asked of them of behalf of Suffolk Region PTA was basically "What was their commitment to us that they

would do their due diligence, research and engage the stakeholders both pro & con before making any decisions on how to vote on any legislation that could negatively affect a child's safety health and well-being?" In follow up, I mentioned how the Bail Reform Legislation approved during the last legislative session affected our schools & children (citing specific examples) and expressed our objection to the Governor's attempt to legalize cannabis during this session, saying that we still considered it a "Gateway Drug" and not a "Gateway to Budget Deficit Reduction". Unfortunately, I couldn't work in the concerns about the new "3 hrs. off to vote" law and the possible detrimental effect it could have on our schools during election days.

Western Suffolk BOCES also held their Legislative Program (Jan. 17th) and copies of their booklet which contained some good information was provided to me by Margaret Barrett (West Babylon PTA Council) and was distributed to all our PTA Council Presidents.

As always, should anyone wish to get in contact with me regarding any Federal, State or County legislative issues, please know the best way to get in touch is via email. My email address is **gerardbringmann@gmail.com**

Respectfully submitted ... Gerry Bringmann