

# Suffolk Region

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## Report of January 13, 2020

The NYS Legislature went back into session last week with quite a bit already on their agenda.

Here are some updates & developments of interest to report:

- **Banning the Sale of Flavored Vaping Products** – Governor Cuomo mentioned in his State of the State Address that he was going to ask for legislation that would ban the sale of vaping products here in New York State. There is also the possibility that the Federal Government might act, as well. Nassau County recently enacted their ban on these products while Suffolk County has apparently decided to hold off on any local law until they see what happens on the State level.
- **Bail Reform Law** – Unfortunately, the bail reform law that went into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> was very poorly crafted and many legislators are making it their top priority this session to make necessary revisions to this law as soon as possible. There are several child and/or school related crimes included in this law that are a concern to many of our parents. I have brought these concerns to the NYS PTA level and have been informed by our Executive Director that these will be brought before the State PTA Executive Committee for discussion. These laws include the following: Criminal possession of a gun on school grounds, criminal sale of a firearm to a minor, promoting or possessing an obscene sexual performance by a child, criminal sale of a controlled substance in the first or second degree near/on school grounds, specified felony drug offenses involving the use of children including the use of a child to commit a controlled substance offense and criminal sale of a controlled substance to a child, patronizing a person for prostitution in a school zone and failure to register as a sex offender.
- **Cannabis Legalization** – Governor Cuomo stated in his State of the State Address that he was going to push hard to have marijuana legalized in New York State this legislative session. As most of you are aware, NYS PTA has taken a strong position against the legalization of this substance.
- **Budget Deficit** – one of the reasons that the Governor is pushing hard for the legalization of cannabis is that it will create a revenue stream that will help offset the budget deficit for this current fiscal year, which is currently estimated to be approximately six billion dollars.
- **Mandatory HPV vaccinations** – After the motion which memorialized our opposition of this mandate passed at our November meeting, emails were immediately sent to all New York State Senators & Assembly members representing Suffolk County, as well as Governor Cuomo's Suffolk County Representative, requesting them to oppose the bills regarding this issue currently introduced in the Senate & Assembly. The emails were followed up by a written letter sent to the representative's local offices. There was a rumor that the Governor was going to try and circumvent the legislative process by including this mandate as part of the proposed State Budget, but NYS PTA contacted the Governor's Office approximately two weeks ago and was informed that this wasn't the case (at that time). Just this past Wednesday (1/8), NYS PTA took a formal position against making this vaccination mandatory in New York State.
- **State of the State Address** – While some items were previously mentioned in this report, I couldn't possibly mention them all. I can provide an electronic copy to anyone who requests it.

We also had one major item on the Suffolk County level:

- **School Bus Cameras** – the Suffolk County Legislature has followed Nassau County's lead in establishing a school bus camera program. It is now up to our individual school districts to sign on to the program.

Still looking to hear back from some more School Districts that have a Legislative Committee. If possible, please report back to me on what issues your District views as their Legislative Priorities.

I attended the Eastern Suffolk BOCES Legislative Committee in December. The guest speaker was Senator Monica Martinez who enlightened us on how things really worked in Albany. Not what you'd learn in a class on Government.

Also attended a Patchogue-Medford Legislative Committee Meeting back in November and while many interesting topics were discussed, there was one that was rather disturbing ... and that was the effect of the new "3 hrs. paid leave for elections" law. Literally ½ of the school staff can come in 3 hours late and the other ½ can leave 3 hours early to vote, making proper classroom coverage virtually impossible. While no mention was made of how my district was going to handle this, it wouldn't surprise me to see some districts deciding to call "a snow day in May".

A reminder that the Annual Legislative Breakfast sponsored by the Longwood School District, Eastern Suffolk BOCES & Suffolk Region PTA is scheduled for Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup> @ the Longwood Middle School in Middle Island. This is always a very informative event and all PTA members are encouraged to attend, if possible.

As always, should anyone wish to get in contact 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