

IN THE NEWS

WEB BRIEFS

LI AT A GLANCE

NASSAU COMMITTEE EYES PD RESPONSES

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran signed a bill last month that addresses growing calls for reform of the response by law enforcement to people with mental health crises.

The bill, which was introduced by Legislators Siela Bynoe (D-Westbury) and Josh Lafazan (I-Syosset) in late June and passed unanimously by the county legislature in early August, calls for the creation of a committee that will study alternative approaches to law enforcement intervention in situations regarding mental health. Curran called the bill “another positive step” towards building trust between county residents and police officers.

The bill ultimately marks one of the legislature’s first concrete responses to an issue raised by the nationwide protests against racial injustice that have also played out nationwide and across Long Island since a Minneapolis police officer allegedly murdered George Floyd in late May.

-Alec Rich

ISLIP VOTING CASE ADVANCES

A lawsuit that aims to split the Town of Islip board members up into council districts is scheduled to go to trial this month at Central Islip federal court.

U.S. District Court Judge Gary Brown last week set a September trial date in the case in which residents of the town’s largely minority communities of Brentwood, Central Islip, and Bay Shore seek to reform the current at-large voting system.

“This is a matter of significance and the court will continue to expedite and prioritize this case,” Brown said in his court order, which Frederick Brewington, the Hempstead-based civil rights attorney representing the plaintiffs in the case, read aloud during a news conference outside Islip Town Hall.

Plaintiffs alleged that Islip, the town board, and Suffolk County Board of Elections are violating the Voting Rights Act in minority communities, which they say are getting ignored under the current system. The plaintiffs argue that if the five town council members were designated to represent specific communities instead of sharing responsibility for all 333,758 town residents, the local lawmakers would be more responsive to the constituents.

-Timothy Bolger

PSEG-LI OKS PAYBACK

PSEG Long Island has reversed course and now says it will reimburse customers for food and prescription medication that spoiled during power outages following Tropical Storm Isaias.

The electric company initially said customers would not be reimbursed for perishables following the storm, despite other utility providers in the New York Metro area offering a similar program. But the PSEG-LI reimbursements will apply only to those who lost power for 72 hours or longer.

The storm

knocked out power Aug. 4 to more than

420,000 of the utility’s 1.1 million customers

in Nassau and Suffolk counties and the Rockaways, some for more than a week. Residential customers can be reimbursed up to \$250 for food and up to \$300 for medicine. Businesses can be reimbursed up to \$5,000.

Customers can apply for reimbursement at psegliny.com/claims.

-TB

LI LAWYER TEASES TRUMP TELL-ALL

Michael Cohen, U.S. President Donald Trump’s former personal lawyer and fixer originally from Lawrence, promised to show how Trump cheated in the 2016 election with Russian help in an upcoming book titled *Disloyal: A Memoir*.

“Trump had cheated in the election, with Russian connivance, as you will discover in these pages, because doing anything — and I mean anything — to ‘win’ has always been his business model and way of life,” Cohen writes in the book’s foreword, which was published online last month.

The 3,700-word foreword does not reveal anything new about Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election, and it was not clear if the book would.

The book is due to be released Sept. 8.

-Reuters

LOTTO LAWYER SCAMS \$107M

The self-described “Lottery Lawyer” from Dix Hills was among three Long Islanders indicted for allegedly conspiring to scam lottery winners out of \$107 million to fund the suspects’ lavish lifestyles, federal authorities said.

Forty-six-year-old Jason Kurland,

Francis Smookler,

45, of Roslyn,

and Francesco Russo, 38, of Oyster Bay,

were arrested on charges of wire fraud, money laundering, and conspiracy in Brooklyn federal court. Also

charged was 52-year-old Christopher Chierchio of Staten Island.

“Kurland allegedly violated the law and his oath as a lawyer when he allowed co-conspirators to pillage his clients’ bank accounts for their own enrichment,” said Seth D. DuCharme, acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. “In addition, Russo and Smookler allegedly threatened to torture an individual’s wife and children.”

After gaining their trust, Kurland steered the victims to invest in entities controlled by Russo, Smookler, and Chierchio, who gave Kurland kickbacks in return, which the attorney did not disclose to the victims, authorities said. The suspects all pleaded not guilty.

-TB

GYMS, BOWLING ALLEYS REOPEN

Gyms and bowling alleys were approved to reopen from the coronavirus shutdown in August.

Both sectors were among businesses statewide closed to curb the spread of coronavirus when its spread peaked in New York in March. But gyms were among a handful of industries, including bowling alleys and movie theaters, that were left out of the fourth and final phase of the reopening plan.

Movie theaters were yet to get the green light to resume screenings as of press time.

-TB

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