

EDITORIAL

Suffolk voters must turn ballot

Suffolk County residents: Flip your ballot.

It has two sides this year, whether you vote in person or by mail. Candidates for elected office are on the front page. But the reverse side of the ballot also is important, with three propositions that seek your vote. All Suffolk residents can vote on two of them; the third is only for those who live in Riverhead Town.

The issues are significant. Your vote will matter. Please turn the ballot over and make your voice heard.

Proposal One: This would lengthen the term of office for a Suffolk County legislator to four years from the current two years. A similar proposal put to voters in 2002 was defeated handily. County residents would be right to again reject this proposition. Continuity in county government is provided by a four-year term for the county executive, which is appropriate for that position. A two-year term for lawmakers gives the public a way to more frequently register disapproval and course-correct if it is dissatisfied with the direction of county government.

Newsday recommends voting no on Proposal One.

Proposal Two: You won't know it from the obtuse and misleading language in this proposal, but Suffolk County is asking to avoid repaying \$183 million of the money it took from a Drinking Water Protection Program reserve fund meant to stabilize sewer district taxes. The county was required to pay back the money by a court order and a settlement agreement that ended two lawsuits. County Executive Steve Bellone wants the money to help balance Suffolk's perennially stressed budget, in more trouble now because of coronavirus-related expenses and revenue shortfalls.

The first borrowing, of \$29.4 million, took place in 2011 under former County Executive Steve Levy to balance the budget. A state Supreme

Court justice and the Appellate Division have ruled that the county must repay the money. The second borrowing, of \$171.3 million, also to balance the budget, was part of a settlement between Bellone and environmental groups that let the county take the money from 2014 to 2017 and repay it through 2029, a proposal approved by Suffolk voters in 2014. Some \$154 million is still owed. This referendum also proposes to take another \$15 million from the fund for budget relief.

In other words, Suffolk wants voters to overrule a court order and to enter an agreement they previously voted to approve. That's wrong. And it's bad faith, and it might make voters distrust the entire referendum process.

Newsday recommends voting no on Proposal Two.

Proposal Three: This would lengthen the term of office for the Riverhead Town supervisor to four years from the current two years. Though Riverhead voters have rejected similar proposals, this is a good idea. Town supervisors, like other executive positions in government, need time to develop the plans they were elected to implement, and by the nature of their position must think of the long-term future of their towns.

Newsday recommends voting yes on Proposal Three.

— *The editorial board*

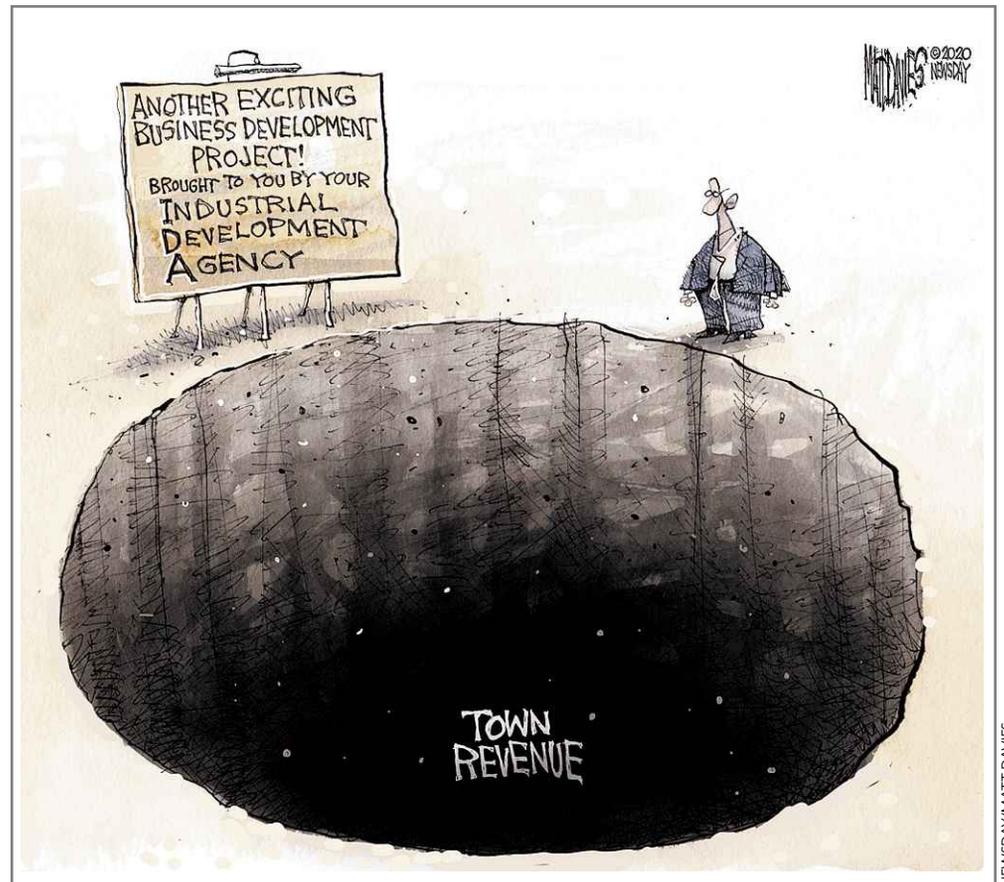
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LETTERS

Look out for deer this season

It is not surprising that the number of deer-vehicle crashes is increasing on Long Island at the same time hunting organizations are also on the rise ["Suffolk third in state for car-animal collisions," News, Oct. 11]. Pennsylvania-based Erie Insurance found that the opening day and opening Saturday of deer season are "two of the most dangerous days to drive." The Missouri Insurance Information Service reported that hunting is a "major factor" in the rise in deer-vehicle collisions in the last three months of the year. When hunters turn our suburbs into war zones, terrified deer run, often onto the road. Hunters justify their cruel hobby with sound bites about population control, but as both an anthrozoologist and a licensed nuisance

wildlife control operator, I know lethal wildlife management is not effective. Survivors simply start new families with renewed vigor and plentiful food and territory. Only nonlethal management methods, such as Strieter-Lite reflectors and immuncontraception, are truly humane and effective at managing deer long-term. And neither one results in fatalities to either deer or humans.

*John Di Leonardo,
Malverne*

Editor's note: The writer is president of Long Island Orchestrating for Nature (LION).

Focus on students' mental health

As a student from Long Island attending The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., I am experiencing firsthand how difficult it is to engage in remote

learning ["Teachers cope with new reality," News, Oct. 11]. I was delighted the article gives a voice to teachers, but I was saddened to discover it left out students' experiences. The abrupt classroom changes may result in added anxieties; stunt social, emotional and academic development; and highlight inequalities. Many changes have been implemented to protect physical health. I'm curious, as a psychology major, what is being done to protect mental health? My alma mater, Commack High School, engaged special education students from across the island. I felt your inclusion of their need for touch was something many have yet to consider, although I was disappointed the article failed to mention learning disabilities such as ADHD and dyslexia. The teachers' outlook on whether students will be successful in hybrid