

Long Island

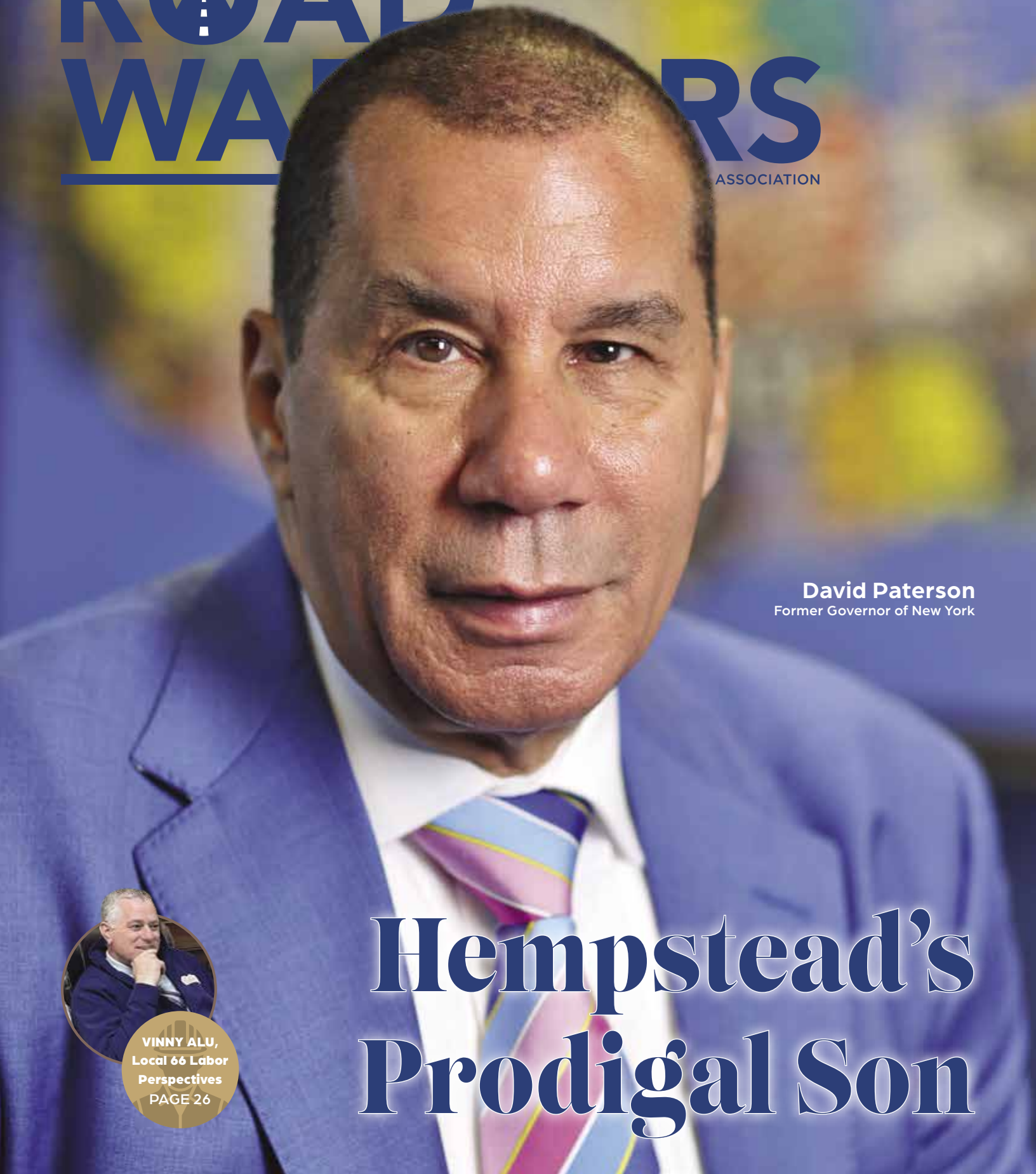
ROAD

WATERS

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ASSOCIATION

Summer 2024



David Paterson
Former Governor of New York

Hempstead's Prodigal Son



VINNY ALU,
Local 66 Labor
Perspectives
PAGE 26




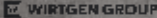
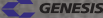






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Long Island ROAD WARRIORS

A PUBLICATION OF THE LONG ISLAND CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION

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Posillico, Inc. completes a resurfacing project on the Robert Moses Causeway.

Long Island ROAD WARRIORS is the official magazine of the Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc. (LICA). LICA represents the interests of the region's premier heavy construction general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and industry supporters. Focused primarily in the transportation infrastructure construction industry such as highways, bridges, rail, sewers and other public works, LICA's member companies play a significant role within Long Island's Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The economic impact of the industry contributes \$4 billion to the area's local gross regional product. © LICA 2024 Long Island ROAD WARRIORS is copyrighted but portions may be reprinted with permission of LICA.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the election edition of *Road Warriors!*

It's election season and no matter where you go, you cannot help but run into an ad, a political commentary on social media, a lawn sign or a text from party leadership begging for a "small" donation. As 2024 barrels toward November, those of us at LICA are keeping our eyes on the prize: infrastructure.



Our cover feature is none other than **David Paterson**, former governor of New York. Paterson is a treat to all who are lucky enough to get to know him, present company included. Having him sit in my office in Melville was surreal, especially after I'd done my homework and read his autobiography *Blind, Black and In Charge*. Learning that because he'd never learned to read braille, he would memorize hour-long speeches as part of his duties in the office of the governor was so impressive to me. His humor, his intellect, and his vast historical knowledge of New York State politics come through via his exceptional storytelling. In this story, we hear about his roots in Hempstead and how his work with Sands New York is like coming home again.

Keeping our eyes on the prize: infrastructure.

To continue along this election theme, we hear from **Jeremy Cooney**, New York State Senate Transportation Chair, about his vision for infrastructure and transportation investment across the regions; **Jerry Kremer**, Chairman of Empire Government Strategies and a 23 year veteran of the State Assembly (and the only official from Long Island to serve as the Chair of the Ways and Means Committee), who offers analysis of the upcoming election and its implications for Long Island; **Vinny Alu**, the newly elected Business Manager for Laborers Local 66; Long Island Political Party Leaders **Joe Cairo, Jesse Garcia, Jay Jacobs and Richie Schaffer** about

the how the upcoming election can affect our region's infrastructure needs, and finally LICA's own **Marc Herbst** who believes that the time for a Nassau/Suffolk Metropolitan Planning Organization has come.

If you have any suggestions (or praise!), drop me a line at Jfranchi@licanys.org.

As always, we thank you for the work you do to keep Long Island running. We look forward to a productive season and urge everyone to stay safe out there.

Thank you,

Jaime

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**Support
Assemblyman
Steve Stern's Bill:
Long Island Deserves
Its Own MPO**

This year marks thirty years since the first section of the Long Island Expressway's High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes opened. Since then, we have seen no significant highway construction projects in our region. Meanwhile, our transportation infrastructure continues to age, and congestion only worsens. It's time for a change.

Assemblyman Steve Stern is introducing a bill in the upcoming state legislative session that could be a game-changer for Long Island. His proposed legislation seeks to establish a Long Island Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), a move that would give our region the power to plan, prioritize, and secure federal funding for transportation projects tailored to our specific needs. This bill deserves the full support of our legislators.

Recognizing his outstanding efforts, the Long Island Contractors' Association (LICA) is proud to honor Assemblyman Steve Stern with its 2024 "LICA Leadership Award" as our Person of the Year. His commitment to advocating for Long Island's transportation needs has been unparalleled, and this award acknowledges his pivotal role in championing this crucial legislation.

Historically, Long Island benefited from a state budgeting policy that allocated transportation funds based on roadway lane miles and registered vehicles. With Suffolk and Nassau counties ranking first and third, respectively, in lane miles and both counties exceeding one million registered vehicles, our region received 23% of the state's transportation capital dollars. However, during the Spitzer Administration, this equitable formula was abandoned, and this year Long Island's share of funding plummeted to less than seven percent.. Despite maintaining the largest number of lane miles and contending with the highest concentration of vehicles, we have been left behind in state transportation investments.

Creating a Long Island MPO would allow us to reclaim our fair share of transportation funding. By directly controlling

our planning and funding priorities, we can address critical infrastructure needs that have been ignored for too long. These include the Oakdale Interchange, the continuation of Route 347 rehabilitation phases, widening the Sagitkos Parkway, the reconstruction of the Meadowbrook and Southern State Parkways interchange, and vital safety improvements along the Southern State Parkway—infamously known as "Blood Alley."

This is not just about transportation; it's about jobs and economic growth. The construction industry on Long Island stands to benefit enormously from these projects. They will create thousands of jobs, stimulate local economies, and improve the quality of life for residents across the region. However, without our own MPO, Long Island will continue to be overshadowed by the larger ten-county consortium that currently prioritizes projects in New York City and other areas.

Federal funding is out there, but we need a seat at the table to ensure Long Island's projects are not just considered but prioritized. Other communities in the state, like Elmira, have the advantage of directly petitioning the federal government with their own MPOs. Long Island deserves the same. We must seize this opportunity to control our destiny, and that starts with supporting Assemblyman Steve Stern's bill.

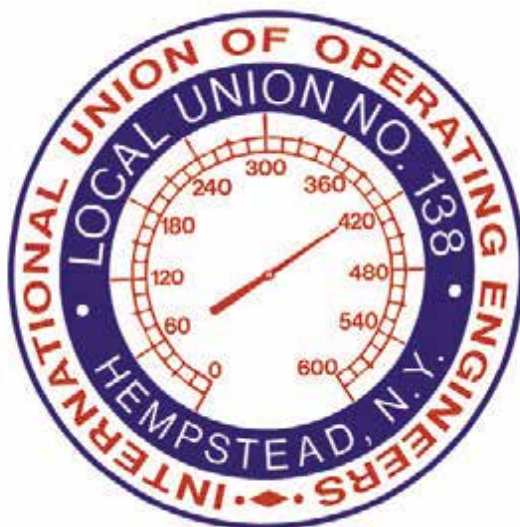
For the construction industry, this legislation is a vital step forward. It is a call to action for all stakeholders—contractors, labor unions, engineers, and business leaders—to rally behind this bill. Our legislators need to hear loud and clear that Long Island is ready to take control of its transportation future. The projects we need are not just about moving cars—they are about moving our economy forward.

As we celebrate Assemblyman Steve Stern as LICA's 2024 Person of the Year, let's also commit to supporting his vision. Let's ensure that thirty years from now, we can look back on this moment as the turning point when Long Island finally secured the transportation infrastructure it deserves. Support Assemblyman Steve Stern's bill to create the Long Island Metropolitan Planning Organization.



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Political Perspectives

Senator Jeremy Cooney, vision for transportation and infrastructure needs in the region.



Jeremy Cooney

My time as the Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee is just beginning, but the work to modernize and build new infrastructure across the state is already underway. The key is to secure state and federal dollars and then fast track building contracts to get New Yorkers to work. I

am committed to aggressively advancing a statewide infrastructure agenda, but also recognize that each region first needs to prioritize projects for their long term growth. I respect the regional diversity of our large state, and while I may represent an upstate city (Rochester), my wife is proudly from Long Island. So, here I am.

This summer, I made my first visit to Long Island as transportation chairman, an opportunity to see firsthand the services and infrastructure available to Long Islanders. I rented a car at the airport and jumped on the LIE to head to Suffolk County. I believe that navigating the roadways and driving through communities is the best way to fully understand the needs of the region.

I want to thank John Corrado for his insights and for inviting me to visit Suffolk Transportation Service. Throughout my entire career, I've been a dedicated supporter of public transit systems, which I believe are the key to connecting our communities and removing barriers to housing, employment and healthcare. During this visit, I not only witnessed John's commitment to safe and reliable transit, but I also caught a glimpse into the future of our transit systems statewide. STS' all-electric bus fleet is the model for other regions and



proof that the time to embrace cleaner, greener transportation technologies has arrived. But it's more than vehicles, it's also safe roadways, bridges, and contemporized designs for moving people across the Island.

As chairman, I will be a strong and vocal advocate for significant investments into our state's infrastructure and capital plans. Whether it's fully funding the next plan for MTA and NYSDOT projects, investing in the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), or increasing funds for state touring routes—we need to think bigger and bolder about how we establish New York as the standard for 21st century infrastructure. These investments are about safety, reliability, job growth, and creating a transportation system that improves New Yorkers' quality of life. In this year's state budget, when cuts were proposed to these programs, I joined my Long Island colleagues in the legislature to fight back and we reversed the cut.

This is the same energy I will bring to future budgets, and especially now as we work to fully fund the MTA's capital plans. I want to make it clear that as chairman, our top priority has to be fully funding these critical infrastructure projects. Long Island, and our entire state economy, depend on a strong MTA and it's our responsibility to make sure we're delivering the best possible system for those who rely on its services. Regardless of how anyone feels about congestion pricing, there should be no question that we can't ignore this funding issue and that we must find a solution that results in more jobs and increased passenger safety.

The time is now to invest in our road, rail and air infrastructure to create jobs. The road ahead is endless, as is the potential of transportation to better all of our daily lives. Jump in, let's go.



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Election years are never boring, especially during presidential years. Especially when Donald Trump is running. Yet this year, with a catastrophic debate performance by the incumbent president, an assassination attempt and a change in democratic nominee happening within weeks of each other with less than 100 days before Election Day, it's been particularly dramatic.

Luckily, things on our island have been a bit calmer. The jury is still out to see how the top of the ticket will affect down ballot

elections. It's unlikely there will be any seismic changes in power, but there are some key state races in play. These are the races that will help determine how infrastructure issues are handled in the region going forward.

There is no one more qualified to speak to the implications of the upcoming election than our esteemed party leaders: Suffolk County Republican and Democratic party chairs Jesse Garcia and Richie Schaffer and Nassau County Republican and Democratic party chairs Joe Cairo and Jay Jacobs, respectively.



**Jesse Garcia, Chairman
Suffolk County Republican Committee**

Q What are the most significant issues for Long Island at stake in this election?

A The Suffolk County Republican Party fights for what Suffolk County residents want. They want a safer Suffolk, which is why our elected officials, like Suffolk County Executive Ed Romaine, District Attorney Ray Tierney, the Republican supermajority at the county legislature, federal, state, and town Republican officials "Back the Blue" and OPPOSE all "defund the police" policies or proposals. It's why we fight for stricter penalties for criminals. While New York Democrats want more revolving door criminal justice policies like cashless bail laws, embrace lawlessness and illegal immigration, and promote anti-Semitism, Republicans here in the Suffolk County Republican party are fighting back. Through Ed Romaine, Ray Tierney, and the Republican Legislative Majority we are pushing for less red tape and giving our law enforcement the tools they need to keep us safe. These tools include but are not limited to hiring more cops, fully funding Suffolk police detective squads, funding the crime fighting tool held up for years by Democrats, like ShotSpotter, and preventing the placement of illegal migrants in the county just to name a few.

While Democrats nationwide are demonizing and encouraging Anti-Semitism, Suffolk Republicans, as a party and among our elected officials, support our Jewish population, and will not abandon one of America's closest allies.

Republican public officials want a more affordable Suffolk, which is why County Executive Romaine is working to fix our roads and not just improve, but expand, the county's infrastructure by putting forward the largest capital budget in County history. Additionally, the Republican-led Legislature finally brought an end to the administrative fee on Red Light Cameras which saved taxpayers more than \$14 million. Our elected officials are pursuing policies that work to make Suffolk County and New York more affordable, while preserving the environment and Long Island way of life so that we do not become like New York City.

Q How would the election affect public works/ infrastructure projects?

A The Republican Party is committed not only to infrastructure in a speculative matter, but in achieving real results for residents. As our County Executive, Ed Romaine, states every day, he is committed to receiving as much state and federal funds to improve our infrastructure. Further, he introduced a capital budget that doubles down on providing the infrastructure

that residents deserve. It is critical that taxpayer funding of infrastructure projects be directed to vital brick and mortar projects like roads, active parks, airports, marinas and shoreline protection as opposed to programs that have no role in improving and expanding the county's infrastructure.

The Republican Party achieves real results and that is why the Water Quality Referendum, which is projected to expand the county's sewer system, is within reach and providing thousands of residents with the ability to receive sewers. In 2023, the Democrats proposed a sewer referendum that simply put: didn't build sewers. An overwhelming majority of the funds to be collected were to be directed by more than two-thirds to IA systems and the bulk of the funds would have benefited individuals that did not need financial assistance with sewers/ IA systems. The new proposal successfully negotiated by Suffolk Executive Romaine and approved by the Republican-led county legislature will split that allocation along a 50% to 50% split and is designed to ensure that the areas that need the infrastructure will receive it.

Q What are your county's most critical infrastructure/construction projects?

A The responsibility on the decision and selection of the most critical infrastructure for the county sits with our locally elected officials, along with community leaders and stakeholders. They are the ground troops on hearing what our residents are seeking. One thing we hear at every door is the importance of funding our roads, parks, and transportation hubs. Critical projects in Suffolk County include an overpass at the intersection of Nicoll's Road and State Route 347, and electrification of Port Jefferson Railroad line, and the electrification of the Ronkonkoma line east of Ronkonkoma Station. All three infrastructure are vital to the Long Island economy. The potential impact of all three projects could result in vital jobs and quality of life increases for residents throughout Suffolk.

Q How high a priority should infrastructure be in this election? Why?

A Infrastructure goes hand in hand with creating a safer and more affordable Suffolk County. The County Republican Party and its elected officials make sure money goes directly to the municipalities that need road improvements, parks, airports, marina and shoreline protections, to name a few. It is wrong when governmental levels, like the State and Federal levels, include radical programs that have no role in improving and expanding the country's infrastructure in their laws. Infrastructure is important for all Suffolk residents not only in the direct impact of a smoother road or safer bridge, but also in indirect forms through jobs and putting more money in people's pockets to spend on our economy.

Q Who is a favorite political hero of yours from history?

A I am sure readers may be expecting a historical figure; but for me, my political here is my Dad, Jesus Garcia. My

Dad fled communist Cuba as the Castro regime began to form. He recognized the tyranny of communism and the failures of socialism. Just about 90 miles away, he was drawn to the freedom, liberty and prosperity that America represented and provides. He left his parents, brother, friends and his belongings. From the moment he legally set foot on American soil, my Dad became immediately involved in the political process. The Republican Party principles were in line with his own beliefs.

From my earliest remembrance, I can recall walking designating petitions with my Dad, now a member of the Brookhaven Town

Republican Party. We canvassed door to door and attend rallies and phone banks as a families. He instilled patriotism and a deep work ethic in me and my family.

Dad became a naturalized citizens in 1973, after earning employment, meeting my Mom, and raising a family. While I was an only child, my parents worked with Little Flower to help more than 30 foster children have better lives.

My Dad introduced me to politics and community service. He stressed the importance of being “involved” and “making a difference.” Organizations like the Republican Party provided avenues for this.

For this reasons and much more, my political hero is my Dad, Jesus Garcia. If you need a more ‘historical’ figure, then I would share Presidents Ronald Reagan and Abraham Lincoln.

Joe Cairo

Nassau County Republican Chairman

Q What are the most significant issues for Long Island at stake in this election?

A There are a host of important issues facing Long Islanders as we approach Election Day on November 5th. Taxes and the economy, crime, anti-Semitism and immigration are at the top of the list for many families on Long Island and throughout our nation.

Republican candidates and officials have been fiscally responsible, standing firmly against runaway spending and taxes at all levels of government. By contrast, Governor Hochul and New York City Democrats foisted a regressive \$1 billion commuter tax on us, which will disproportionately impact Long Island drivers without consideration for the ability of commuters to pay.

The safety of our families is also a matter of serious concern for neighbors across the country. Democrats in Albany and Washington have pursued an agenda of “cashless bail,” “discovery reform,” open borders, and sanctuary cities, which have made people less safe. “Cashless Bail” has freed killers, rapists, drug dealers and gang members. Discovery reform has disclosed the addresses of victims and witnesses to dangerous accused criminals. Immediately after its passage, the Democrats’ Bail Reform set free 3,000 dangerous inmates, according to the media.

On the topic of anti-Semitism, Republicans stand strongly with the Jewish community and the State of Israel. Meanwhile, extreme forces in the other major party have been openly hostile toward the Jewish State and indifferent to the violence against Jews on college campuses. Vice President Harris’ boycott of the Netanyahu speech before Congress and Chuck Schumer’s decision to turn his back on Israel’s Prime Minister tells you everything you need to know about the Democrat Party and their priorities. Finally, Alvin Bragg’s decision to drop charges against anti-Israel Columbia protestors underscores the fact that the Jewish community cannot count on some of the most prominent Democrat leaders.

Open borders and sanctuary city policies, which have been embraced by Joe Biden, Kamala Harris and Governor Hochul, as well as virtually every member of the Democrat Party, allowed unvetted migrants to flood into our cities, creating an economic crisis and resulting in unspeakable crimes that could have been prevented with sound and sensible immigration policies and practices. On the financial front, Governor Hochul’s Budget dumped \$2.4 billion into migrant services while she proposed education cuts for many school districts on Long Island.

Q How would the election affect public works/ infrastructure projects?

A Elections have consequences. Republicans who are elected will pursue an agenda that will prioritize spending and ensure the maintenance and enhancement of our infrastructure. Sadly, Governor Hochul and Gotham Mayor Eric Adams have prioritized spending on outrageous benefits for illegal migrants such as free cell phones, debit cards, luxury hotel accommodations and free college tuition. Republicans on Long Island have dedicated significant spending to roadway and infrastructure upgrades, which serve the interests and needs of hard-working people who call Long Island home.

Q What are your county's most critical infrastructure/construction projects?

A Some of the most critical infrastructure projects on Long Island include work surrounding Nassau Veterans Coliseum. The development of a resort, entertainment and casino at the site would be accompanied by upgrades to a massive roadway network, including Hempstead Turnpike, Stewart Avenue, Merrick Avenue, the Meadowbrook Parkway, James Doolittle Boulevard, Charles Lindbergh Boulevard and a host of interior roadways at the HUB.

At the same time, the construction of the proposed NYU Langone Hospital Project on the campus of Nassau County Community College is a critically important undertaking that will create significant construction jobs and serve the needs of the community in the future.

Q How high a priority should infrastructure be in this election? Why?

A Infrastructure should be a major priority in the upcoming election, and voters who care about prioritizing spending on our area's roadways and infrastructure have good reason to support Republican officials. Moreover, Republicans will continue to dedicate needed resources to our important construction projects. Extreme politicians in the other major party, on the other hand, will continue to prioritize initiatives which are out-of-touch with hard working families who want construction jobs and a well-maintained infrastructure.

Q Who is a favorite political hero of yours from history?

A As a Long Islander, my favorite political hero is, of course, Teddy Roosevelt. President Roosevelt is emblematic of LICA's priorities. In specific, he represented the conservation of natural resources at the same time as he supported the industrial blooming of our nation.

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Rich Schaffer
Suffolk County Democratic Chairman

Q What are the most significant issues for Long Island at stake in this election?

A Suffolk's Water Quality Referendum: It will provide funds for sewerage many parts of the county which will protect our environment and water quality as well as provide a blueprint for future generations.

Q How would the election affect public works/infrastructure projects?

A Hopefully in a positive way with continued support for the federal Infrastructure Bill that was passed by Congress and signed by President Biden.

Q What are your county's most critical infrastructure/construction projects?

A Sewer projects that will be created by approval of the Water Quality referendum, infrastructure funding that would be made available for MacArthur Airport improvements, Midway Crossing and Heartland

Q How high a priority should infrastructure be in this election? Why?

A It should be at the top of everyone's list. We have aging infrastructure that cannot wait anymore to be improved. In addition, the funding provided for these projects create good paying jobs for our residents.

Q Who is a favorite political hero of yours from history?

A James Madison and Lyndon Johnson



Jay Jacobs
Nassau County Democratic Chairman

Q What are the most significant issues for Long Island at stake in this election?

A In a presidential election year, most Long Island voters will be mainly focused on national issues such as protecting women's rights, defending Democracy, and restoring the SALT deductions that were cut by Donald Trump and his GOP allies.

Immigration will also be a major issue, and I anticipate our Democratic candidates will be highlighting how Congressional Republicans walked away from a bi-partisan border deal they advocated for, simply because they thought passing the bill would hurt Donald Trump's electoral chances.

Q How would the election affect public works/infrastructure projects?

A Under Donald Trump's administration, "Infrastructure Week" was a long running joke because he never followed through on his many grand pronouncements to rebuild the nation's road and bridges. In 2021, The Biden/Harris administration signed historic, bi-partisan infrastructure legislation into law. This significant legislation is investing nearly \$500 billion into rebuilding the nation's roads and bridges, which includes 56,000 individual projects across 4,500 communities in all 50 states.

Q What are your county's most critical infrastructure/construction projects?

A Off-shore wind and other renewable energy projects are Nassau County's most critical infrastructure projects. Thanks to Governor Hochul and the Biden/Harris administration, significant investments are being made to create a more resilient electrical grid system that can withstand the extreme weather events which are occurring more frequently, while also decreasing Nassau's reliance on fossil fuels that are harmful to our environment and quality of life.

Q How high a priority should infrastructure be in this election? Why?

A Infrastructure should be a top priority this election cycle to ensure the roads and bridges Americans drive on are safe, and that the water they drink and air they breathe are clean. This is why the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure legislation enacted into law by the Biden/Harris Administration is so imperative; while it makes historic investments to rebuild our nation's roads and bridges, it also will finance projects to protect our water supply and transition public transportation from fossil fuels to lower carbon emission standards.

Q Who is a favorite political hero of yours from history?

A Lyndon Johnson



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CONSEQUENTIAL ELECTION

By Jerry Kremer

Now that the two political parties have named their presidential candidates, I hear frequent questions about whether they will be a factor in races for Congress and the state legislature? Having successfully run for office 12 times, I have long since learned that there is not always a connection between the top of the ticket and the rest of the ballot.

Some local voters will go into the booth and vote straight down the line for all candidates. That's what my parents used to do along with many other older voters. But more and more voters have been deciding how to vote based on how they view the incumbents and their challengers. That means that no incumbent is safe unless they have a convincing story to tell and have the money to get their message out.

Over the past few months I have been told that certain candidates have a "lock" on their races and can't be beaten. I tell them that no incumbent is safe until they count the votes on Election Day. A good example of how quirky the voters are is the 1st Congressional District in Suffolk County. Over the years, the district has had three Democrats and three Republicans representing them in Congress.

Another factor in this year's elections are such hot button issues as reproductive rights, immigration, the economy, crime, health care, Social Security and climate change. No candidate for federal or state office will be able to avoid questions on these issues. In some cases, incumbents will have cast votes on these issues and they will be forced to defend their positions.

While many of the candidates will not be linked to the top of the ticket and be judged on their own positions, there is no way to avoid some last minute headache that the presidential candidate creates. This promises to be a very bitter and hard fought national contest and anything can happen in the closing days of the election that affects everyone from the top to the bottom of the ballot.



Jerry Kremer

I have witnessed many elections from as far back as the Kennedy-Nixon contest. But I believe that no election over all of those years will be as consequential as this one. Above all, pick your candidates after careful consideration and don't fail to vote on November 5th. That's what makes America great.



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GOVERNOR PATERSON:

Hempstead's Prodigal Son

By Jaime Franchi

The first thing you notice about David Paterson—or the third thing, after you take note of his blackness and his blindness (as noted in his autobiography *Black, Blind and In Charge*)—is that he is *funny*. He is generous with his time and attention so if you're lucky enough to be near him, you will get to experience the pure joy of listening to him tell stories. The tales will spare no detail (or boldfaced name) and will be told with the ease of a man who never has to run for office again.

I interviewed Governor Paterson in the days after President Biden's disastrous debate performance, when calls for him to step down as a candidate were just beginning to surface. The likelihood of Kamala Harris's ascendancy to presidential candidate was still slim, but the irony of the possibility of a black understudy who might suddenly rise to the highest job was lost on neither of us.

Governor Paterson came to his gubernatorial position in quite another unlikely, unexpected way. As Lieutenant Governor to then-Governor Eliot Spitzer, Paterson described his duties as such: "You wake up and call the governor. If he answers, your workday is over."

Until one day in March of 2008, it wasn't.

"I woke up one day and by noon, I was Governor," he said.

Paterson came into the top job amidst an unparalleled political sex scandal surrounding his predecessor, Eliot Spitzer. Paterson, who graduated from Hofstra Law School, entered Democratic politics and had a successful run as he was first elected to the State Senate and then became Minority Leader and subsequently Lt. Governor when Eliot Spitzer ran for Governor. Paterson comes from a prominent political pedigree. His father Basil Paterson, a longtime political powerhouse in Harlem, was on the gubernatorial ticket in 1970 as Arthur Goldberg's running mate. The Goldberg-Paterson team lost to the Republican incumbent Nelson Rockefeller.





In the short two-year term he served, he would be tasked with appointing Senator Kirsten Gillibrand to replace Hillary Clinton after President-elect Obama asked her to serve as Secretary of State, making major spending cuts to put

forth an on-time budget that included mandate relief, an inflation-indexed property tax cap and a school tax "circuit breaker," and finally with navigating New York through the worst financial crisis the country had seen since the stock market crash of 1929.

Today, he serves as senior vice president of Sands New York, overseeing a project that, if approved, would be transformational for Long Island. Las Vegas Sands is competing for one of three downstate New York gaming licenses to pursue the development of a multi-billion-dollar flagship hospitality, entertainment, and casino project on Long Island. Recently, the Nassau County Legislature voted overwhelmingly to allow a lease transfer of the remaining 42 years of a 99-year lease to Las Vegas Sands, giving them control of more than 80 acres of land that still houses the

Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum. Next steps include environmental review known as SEQRA, a development permitting process and gaming commission license approval.

The proposed integrated resort would serve as both a love letter and a thank you note from Governor Paterson to Long Island for embracing a blind kindergartner and giving him the foundation from which he rose to New York's highest office.

"Should we win the license," he told me, "I would see it as the final payment on what I feel I owe Long Island."

Hempstead Roots

David Paterson was born in Brooklyn. However, when he was school age, the NYC public school system did not integrate disabled students into mainstream classrooms. Paterson's mother, who was a third-grade teacher at PS 116 in Queens, was not having it. She went looking across the state for a public school that would accept a blind student and teach him among other fully abled children. Almost accidentally, her best friend moved to Hempstead. She told his mother, "I don't think the people in Hempstead would have much of a problem with it." After having conversations with the district, she discovered that they had been interested in assimilating students with disabilities.

"You bring your family to Hempstead," school officials reportedly told her. "And we will put David in the school." The family moved to Hempstead, where the new policy was thrust upon a teacher who was less than thrilled about the idea and nervous about how it would rile up the other young students. After some hiccups, Paterson settled into the school year as the first in a pilot program that would lead the way as rights began to expand for disabled children.

"I think in a lot of ways, my ability to get through that process opened the door for disabled students who came after me," Paterson told Road Warriors. "There were some extraordinary ways that they were able to help me adjust that I never forgot. They really saved me. If I had wound up in one of those special schools, the problem is that they're like you, but you're not meeting the rest of the people that you're inevitably going to socialize with and work with. So, I've always had this feeling for Long Island, but particularly Hempstead."

Now he's back in Hempstead, bringing economic opportunity and prosperity as part of his legacy.

Let's Talk Infrastructure

In 2007, Governor Spitzer amended the infrastructure funding formula from being based on highway miles and registered vehicles to focus on mega projects in distinct regions of the state. Long Island, which used to receive 23

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percent of the transportation funding in the state, has not seen a mega project the likes of which then-Governor Spitzer imagined since the 1990s, when we installed the HOV lanes that necessitated rebuilding overpasses.

Currently, less than seven percent of the state's current project lettings are allocated for Long Island even though Suffolk and Nassau Counties rank first and third, respectively, in lane miles out of New York's 62 counties. Additionally, these are the only counties in the state with over one million registered vehicles each. Along with Westchester County, the downstate suburban roadways are ranked among the poorest in pavement conditions.

"I don't recall him ever being a big fan of Long Island," Paterson said of Governor Spitzer. "I can't think of too many times he'd come here."

Without majority representation in the region, it's been a challenge to get those at the state-level to pay attention to this disparity, let alone commit to rectifying it.

"I think the governor and I think Spitzer did as well, they considered Long Island to be--just to be political for a moment---republican territory," Paterson opined. "And so, their thought was don't mess with it. Go where you're strong."

Political advantages aside, this thought process has left Long Island in a poor position.

"I'll never know why Andrew Cuomo didn't try to address this," Paterson continued. "Because he's never really had a hook to hang his hat on in any part of the state, per se. He had to have known that this was going on as well. I didn't realize what was going on until my last year in office and I had other distractions at the time, so I couldn't address it, but I knew what the result of it was by the time I came out."

The "distractions" count among them a concerted effort to ensure that Paterson would not seek the nomination for a full term in the Governor's seat, "free" Yankee tickets that ended up costing him \$62,000 in fines, and the dawning of the Great Recession. His political career ended after he'd served out the remainder of Governor's Spitzer's term, which was followed by the ascension of Andrew Cuomo from Attorney General to his own stunted gubernatorial service.

As for David Paterson, he is free from the confines of elected office to put his vast intellect, political acumen, and gift of good humor to work as he sees fit. Right now, he sees his work with Sands New York as a homecoming.

"When Sands came to talk to me, I was like the son who left home and came back to clean out all the things he'd left," he said. "Right now, the fact that the project exists is a tremendous opportunity for the governor, not only to give us the casino license to build up prosperity and support but to even out what was taken long ago. I think it's a real strong argument to be awarded the integrated resort."

The Sands project would bring more than 8,500 union construction jobs to the region for a sustained period of 18 months to two years. The company has worked to secure PLAs with local trades and labor organizations and is working with Nassau Community College to build out a hospitality and a variety of other degree programs to grow a workforce to support the resort's needs. This will keep younger Long Islanders on the island, feeding the economy and the tax base, and growing older together right here.

Not a bad legacy for a little blind child whose mom had to fight for him to have a fair shot in Hempstead not so long ago.





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As I write, I'm in my hotel room at a conference. A big conference. In a city far away from home. In the company of and counted amongst hundreds of labor leaders from across the country.



My name is Vinny Alu and I am the Business Manager /Secretary Treasurer of General Building Laborers Local 66 of the mighty Laborers International Union of North America or LIUNA. We are an organization of 530,000 members throughout North America working in construction and nonconstruction roles, contributing to our communities in counties ways. And the conference I am attending is the Annual LIUNA Leadership Conference, this year in Honolulu, Hawaii.

As is often the case with big organizational conferences like this, there are seminars and workshops and conversations over lunch. At this years Leadership Conference, one topic

has weaved together all of the great things we accomplished nationwide since last year. Things like our mobilization to disaster relief situations and volunteerism. Our partnership with government to modernize infrastructure and revolutionize our energy future and water management and the political activism working with labor-management for the development of Industry partners in Capitol and Management to partner with our trained workforce.

That one recurring topic is our LIUNA Apprenticeship programs within the Laborers Union and the incredible possibilities and potential value of this time tested approach to workforce development. Throughout our North American network of 72 training funds, we are training the workforce of the future. From remote pipelines to offshore wind rigs and from tunnel projects to massive beautiful new bridges, apprentices are earning as they learn next to the journeymen who will one day pass the torch to them to continue building into the future.



Apprenticeship candidates come from all walks of life at ages from 18 on up and are selected by committee to proceed with the program and begin a noble career in the building trades. As has been reiterated back to me time and time again, not all kids are going to go and succeed with a college career. I did not pursue a college degree but rather went to work with my hands. I eventually discovered the 66 apprenticeship and have built a skillset that has incredible value to me, my family and community. I continue on as a Local 66 instructor and love the mentorship aspect of preparing new workers for a busy industry.

On Long Island we are always in need of a highly trained construction workforce and I have committed to the vision of something that has begun to unfold in our public schools. Over the last couple of years we, Local 66, in partnership with the Roosevelt School District, have built out for the first time in New York State, a High School Pre-Apprenticeship program. At the end of last years school year, Roosevelt High School Instructor Steve Vargas had 34, 9-12 graders in a part classroom part hands on training program preparing them for the option of a career in construction. This puts Roosevelt on the leading edge of workforce development amongst the first school districts in the nation to take this big step.

And this is just the beginning. We are currently building high school programs in 2 other school districts and will be offering these career paths to more kids. My vision is for these programs to continue to grow and ready workers for our partner contractors to be successful contributing members of a highly trained local crew. We here on Long Island can build anything and as a labor leader I feel obligated to prepare the next generations of laborers to succeed on and off the job. When workers can pay their bills and support their families the entire community benefits. But when out of state unqualified and untrained crews come on island and work on the jobs we historically built, the quality, safety and ultimately our community wealth pay the price.

The future of workforce development is going to expand and root in our schools and honestly offer careers for our kids to realistically be able to afford to stay on the island and thus continue to build.





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