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NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

RICHARD NICOLELLO  
PRESIDING OFFICER

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

County Executive and Legislative Building  
1550 Franklin Avenue  
Mineola, New York

Monday, April 12, 2021  
1:10 P.M.

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2 A P P E A R A N C E S:

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4 LEGISLATOR RICHARD J. NICOLELLO

5 Presiding Officer

6 9th Legislative District

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8 LEGISLATOR HOWARD KOPEL

9 Deputy Presiding Officer

10 7th Legislative District

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12 LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD

13 Alternate Presiding Officer

14 4th Legislative District

15

16 LEGISLATOR KEVAN ABRAHAMS

17 Minority Leader

18 1st Legislative District

19

20 LEGISLATOR SIELA BYNOE

21 2nd Legislative District

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23 LEGISLATOR CARRIE SOLAGES

24 3rd Legislative District

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2       LEGISLATOR DEBRA MULE  
3               5th Legislative District  
4  
5       LEGISLATOR C. WILLIAM GAYLOR III  
6               6th Legislative District  
7  
8       LEGISLATOR VINCENT T. MUSCARELLA  
9               8th Legislative District  
10  
11       LEGISLATOR ELLEN BIRNBAUM  
12              10th Legislative District  
13  
14       LEGISLATOR DELIA DERIGGI-WHITTON  
15              11th Legislative District  
16  
17       LEGISLATOR JAMES KENNEDY  
18              12th Legislative District  
19  
20       LEGISLATOR THOMAS MCKEVITT  
21              13th Legislative District  
22  
23       LEGISLATOR LAURA SCHAEFER  
24              14th Legislative District  
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2     LEGISLATOR JOHN FERRETTI, JR.

3             15th Legislative District

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5     LEGISLATOR ANDREW DRUCKER

6             16th Legislative District

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8     LEGISLATOR ROSE WALKER

9             17th Legislative District

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11     LEGISLATOR JOSHUA LAFAZAN

12             18th Legislative District

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14     LEGISLATOR STEVEN RHOADS

15             19th Legislative District

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17     MICHAEL PULITZER

18             Clerk of the Legislature

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2 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Call the  
3 meeting of the legislature to order and we'll  
4 do the Pledge of Allegiance and ask you to  
5 just remain standing for a moment after the  
6 pledge. I would ask Legislator Arnie Drucker  
7 to lead us in the pledge.

8 Can we have a moment of silence for  
9 Judge Feuerstein who lost her life in a tragic  
10 accident this past weekend. United States  
11 District Court judge, former Nassau County  
12 Supreme Court judge, accomplished jurist and  
13 just a fine person. Thank you.

14 Mike, could you call the roll  
15 please?

16 MR. PULITZER: Yes, sir. Will  
17 do. Roll call. Deputy Presiding Officer  
18 Howard Kopel.

19 LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Here.

20 MR. PULITZER: Alternate Deputy  
21 Presiding Officer Denise Ford.

22 LEGISLATOR FORD: Here.

23 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Siela  
24 Bynoe.

25 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Here.

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2 MR. PULITZER: Thank you.

3 Legislator Carrie Solages.

4 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Here.

5 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Debra

6 Mule.

7 LEGISLATOR MULE: Here.

8 MR. PULITZER: Legislator C.

9 William Gaylor the third.

10 LEGISLATOR GAYLOR: Present.

11 MR. PULITZER: Thank you.

12 Legislator Vincent Muscarella.

13 LEGISLATOR MUSCARELLA: Here.

14 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Ellen

15 Birnbaum.

16 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Here.

17 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Delia

18 DeRiggi-Whitton.

19 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:

20 Here.

21 MR. PULITZER: Legislator James

22 Kennedy.

23 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Here.

24 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Thomas

25 McKevitt.

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2 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Here.

3 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Laura  
4 Schaefer.

5 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Here.

6 MR. PULITZER: Legislator John  
7 Ferretti.

8 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: Here.

9 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Arnold  
10 Drucker.

11 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Here.

12 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Rose  
13 Marie Walker.

14 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Here.

15 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Joshua  
16 Lafazan.

17 LEGISLATOR LAFAZAN: Here.

18 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Steven  
19 Rhoads.

20 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Present.

21 MR. PULITZER: Minority Leader  
22 Kevan Abrahams.

23 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Here.

24 MR. PULITZER: Presiding Officer  
25 Richard Nicoletto.

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2 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Here.

3 MR. PULITZER: We have a quorum  
4 sir.

5 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Thank  
6 you. The only item on the calendar is  
7 Resolution 40 of 2021. It's a resolution  
8 pursuant to Section 153 of the county  
9 government law of Nassau County to reconsider  
10 and approve a local law disapproved by the  
11 county executive in relation to the  
12 establishment of an independently elected  
13 assessor.

14 That item is moved by Legislator  
15 Rhoads. Seconded by Deputy Presiding Officer  
16 Kopel. That puts the item before us.

17 I would like to make a few remarks  
18 and then open it up to anyone else who would  
19 like to speak. And then we have a couple of  
20 slips of public comment.

21 First off, let's be clear about  
22 what this does and does not do. What it does  
23 not do is establish an office of elected  
24 assessor. What it does do is establish a  
25 referendum whereby the people would decide



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2 whether or not there would be an elected  
3 assessor. The referendum would be this  
4 November on Election Day. The actual election  
5 for the assessor would be the following June  
6 during primary day. Again, it establishes a  
7 referendum and then the people will decide  
8 whether or not Nassau County will return to  
9 having an elected assessor.

10 This is all about trusting the  
11 people to make the right determination. The  
12 county provides many important services to our  
13 residents, who are all aware of most of them,  
14 police, sewage, roads, etcetera. But the  
15 assessment function is one of the most  
16 important functions that a government can do.  
17 Quite simply, if you get it wrong you can --  
18 not only do you have a lack of fairness in  
19 someone paying an unfair amount of taxes, you  
20 can literally cause people to lose their  
21 homes. So, assessment has to be accurate. It  
22 has to be fair and it has to be an open,  
23 transparent process. That's the last  
24 component I would like to focus on.

25 This administration has done a

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2 miserable job in terms of transparency in this  
3 assessment process. From the very get-go when  
4 reassessment was moving forward it was the  
5 legislators and not the Department of  
6 Assessment that went out throughout all our  
7 communities, held town halls, answered  
8 questions and provided information that the  
9 people needed. It was the legislature that  
10 had to force the county to send out a tax  
11 impact mailing to our residents.

12 Obviously, when your assessment  
13 changes, especially when you change the ratio,  
14 the numbers, when you get them in your home,  
15 really don't tell you much. So, we had to  
16 force the county to tell people what the  
17 effect would be on their taxes.

18 A resident, Mr. Duffy in Lynbrook,  
19 had to sue the county because the county  
20 refused to provide him with the formula to  
21 determine his assessment. Other residents,  
22 led by Mr. Berliner, had to sue the county  
23 because of the confusing nature of the  
24 information that the county was putting out  
25 with respect to assessment. That lawsuit was

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2 settled six months ago. A settlement  
3 agreement was entered into by the county to  
4 provide various information, to remove the  
5 ladder report, to provide the factors that the  
6 county uses to determine assessment, to  
7 provide a narrative description of what the  
8 assessment process is.

9 Six months went by without no  
10 action by the county. We have filed, and  
11 later on it's going to be considered in  
12 committees, a resolution that will force the  
13 county to finally do what they agreed to do  
14 six months ago.

15 Most surprising of all, I guess  
16 that's one way of putting it, is that  
17 legislators from this body had to sue the  
18 county to ensure that they put up on the  
19 website the tax impacts over the course of the  
20 phase-in.

21 After a resolution that we passed  
22 five months ago and the county failed to do  
23 it, legislators had to actually sue the county  
24 to force the county to do what they were  
25 required to do by law.

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2 I'm not blaming the staff of the  
3 Department of Assessment. I think they're all  
4 hard working, dedicated people. But I am  
5 blaming the leadership of this administration  
6 because it has failed completely in its duty  
7 to be open, to provide the information that  
8 people need about assessment. It has been  
9 secretive, it has been arrogant in many ways  
10 and it has deliberately withheld information  
11 that the public could use about this process.

12 Most recently, the county executive  
13 put out a mailer to this entire county which  
14 deliberately misled the public into what's  
15 responsible for the increases in their taxes.  
16 She blamed our school districts for tax  
17 increases. Whereas, as Newsday reported, some  
18 65 percent of Nassau's residents are going to  
19 feel tax increases as a result of assessment.

20 It's obvious, anyone who  
21 understands this, it's obvious that  
22 assessment, especially when it's done wrong,  
23 can lead to a tax increase. But to attempt to  
24 divert attention and point the finger to our  
25 school districts is just a terrible misuse of

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2 public funds and of our ability to communicate  
3 to the public.

4 So, again, I'm going back to the  
5 beginning. We have had this experiment with  
6 an appointed assessor for the last dozen or so  
7 years. It has failed. Not just with this  
8 assessor but going back over the last few  
9 years as well. It has not worked. We need to  
10 have an assessor that is not responsible to  
11 the county executive or the deputy county  
12 executive but an assessor who is responsible  
13 to the people. And ultimately, whether you  
14 agree with us or not, we believe it's up to  
15 the people to choose whether that position is  
16 going to be elected or appointed.

17 Would anyone like to say anything  
18 else? Mr. Rhoads.

19 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Presiding  
20 Officer, I would like to say something. I  
21 don't know if anyone from the dais.

22 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Sure.

23 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you.  
24 Can I go Rich or you have somebody else?

25 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Yes.

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2 Definitely. Can you hear me?

3 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: I can hear  
4 you but I couldn't make out if you were  
5 allowing me to go or want me to wait.

6 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Go ahead.

7 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Thank you.  
8 So, just a few things and comments in regards  
9 to the item that's before us today.

10 First and foremost, I think we kind  
11 of know where this vote's going to go. The  
12 Minority delegation has voted against this  
13 measure before. Obviously we are here for an  
14 override today which is the prerogative of the  
15 Majority. So, I totally understand. But I  
16 don't envision this vote going any  
17 differently. I've already requested my  
18 delegation to vote against and I envision this  
19 will be 11-8 against.

20 Let's go a little bit further. And  
21 Presiding Officer, when I was hearing your  
22 comments you talked about that accountability  
23 is necessary for this process. And I'll say  
24 this, though mistakes have been made with the  
25 administration and there have been technical

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2 aspects of assessment as it's been rolled out  
3 that needed to be addressed, I don't think the  
4 county executive has ever run away from the  
5 fact that her responsibility, as it pertains  
6 to any mistakes or errors, are not subject to  
7 being at fault of her administration. I don't  
8 think she's ever said that. I think every  
9 single taxpayer in this county understands  
10 that if they want to hold somebody  
11 accountability they can hold the county  
12 executive accountable.

13 What this items does more than  
14 anything else, and this is why we have a  
15 strong issue with why it's being presented  
16 today and not over the last seven or eight  
17 years prior, is because it's political. The  
18 fact is the county executive, the previous  
19 administration, froze assessments for  
20 countless years. Which every person in the  
21 sector will tell that you frozen assessments  
22 are not the way to go. They froze assessments  
23 for countless years and from that standpoint  
24 wrecked havoc on our assessment system. Not  
25 once did the Majority, yourselves, come

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2 forward to say we want to be able to have an  
3 elected assessor. We want to be able to have  
4 a say, an elected voice in this process.

5 We've talked about lawsuits that  
6 the legislative majority as well as folks in  
7 the public have to sue the appointed assessor  
8 versus an elected assessor. If memory serves  
9 me correctly, I know there's only a handful of  
10 us that was there, Mr. O'Shea was sued. He  
11 was an elected assessor. And, quite frankly,  
12 the court, by consent decree, determined that  
13 he had to basically comply with doing a  
14 full-blown reassessment.

15 So, lawsuits to me are part of the  
16 process. Whether you're appointed or you're  
17 elected lawsuits are part of the process. So,  
18 I wouldn't go to stretch of the imagination  
19 and say that she needs to be more  
20 accountable. We had to sue to be able to get  
21 her to do stuff. We had to sue or people  
22 from the public had to sue, and I remember the  
23 Coleman case, had to sue an elected assessor  
24 in Mr. O'Shea. So, lawsuits are, to me,  
25 really not the issue.



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2 But most importantly, more than  
3 anything, because I've heard this argument  
4 from several of my colleagues before, well,  
5 what do you have to lose? What do you have to  
6 lose that is critical to the people? You know  
7 what? I would have more credibility for that  
8 argument if we applied that to everything.  
9 So, when this legislature wanted to take the  
10 action to have an independent inspector  
11 general that was my argument. What do we have  
12 to lose? Just going to put it up for a  
13 referendum. The people will decide whether or  
14 not we want an inspector general. It went  
15 nowhere. No one from the Majority wanted to  
16 push that item forward. Not one soul.

17 Forgive me, and I have tremendous  
18 amount of respect for my 11 colleagues on the  
19 other side, however, the action today, a  
20 couple of months before an election, just  
21 comes off as a little bit disingenuous. I  
22 would have loved to have seen this level of  
23 effort in the previous administration or maybe  
24 even a year into the current administration.  
25 But now to do it in an election year it looks

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2 like we are just spiking for her because we  
3 know it's an election year and we think the  
4 county executive may be vulnerable on this  
5 issue. But we're not focused on really trying  
6 to fix the issue at hand as it pertains to  
7 assessment. Because if we were focused on  
8 that issue we would have done something four,  
9 five years ago when the previous  
10 administration froze the assessments.

11 That being said, I'm going to ask  
12 my colleagues to stay with their votes. I'm  
13 sorry. I'm going to ask my Minority  
14 delegation to stay with their vote and vote  
15 against the override today. Thank you.

16 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Thank you  
17 Minority Leader. Just going to make a couple  
18 of points before turning it over just in  
19 response.

20 In terms of this being  
21 disingenuous, yes, we actually put up this  
22 idea, we floated this idea two years ago. It  
23 was defeated. But at the time the rationale  
24 given by the county executive and my  
25 colleagues in the Minority was that you needed

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2 a certified assessor. Someone who had the  
3 appropriate certifications. You needed  
4 someone with assessing background.

5 So, we understood at the time it  
6 was defeated it was unlikely to go forward.  
7 But when the county executive turned around  
8 when our assessor decided to step aside and  
9 nominated somebody with zero assessing  
10 experience and zero certifications we figured  
11 well, all right, you've bought onto the line,  
12 you're with us now. That's why this came up  
13 again. It was because of a change in the  
14 approach by the county executive, again, to  
15 appoint someone without certification when she  
16 insisted that you have to have  
17 certifications. To appoint somebody who has  
18 no assessing experience, which she insisted  
19 that you needed someone with assessing  
20 experience, led us to believe yes, the elected  
21 assessor was the way to go.

22 Just one other point.

23 We have actually gone back to the  
24 future here. There were complaints about the  
25 prior administration with the frozen

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2 assessment rolls. We have a frozen assessment  
3 roll now. There's complaints about the prior  
4 administration with their mass settlement  
5 program because it shifted the burden from one  
6 part of the population to the other. We have  
7 a mass settlement program now. We have a  
8 combination of what led us into the problem to  
9 begin with. A frozen assessment roll, a mass  
10 settlement program, some 100,000 grievances  
11 were settled at an average of seven percent.  
12 So, yes, the exact same thing is happening on  
13 the prior appointed official as is happening  
14 now with the appointed assessor.

15 Legislator Rhoads.

16 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you  
17 Mr. Presiding Officer. First of all, I just  
18 want to say I'm happy that the minority leader  
19 made the comments that he made. And I  
20 certainly agree that the faults or the  
21 numerous errors that have taken place, whether  
22 it's the hundreds of thousands of mistakes  
23 with respect to valuation, whether it's the  
24 mistakes that we continue to see now that the  
25 tax bills have actually gone out with respect

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2 to the Seasons in Seaford, with respect to our  
3 veterans exemptions, with respect to, on the  
4 flip side, the inappropriate application of  
5 certain exemptions that have impacted every  
6 county resident. The mistakes with respect to  
7 tax impact notices.

8 I agree with the minority leader  
9 that it should be, the blame for that should  
10 be squarely put at the feet of County  
11 Executive Laura Curran.

12 But the issue with respect to the  
13 elected assessor is greater than that. The  
14 issue is with respect to independence and with  
15 respect to simple honesty. If you've taken a  
16 look since 2018 when this process started this  
17 process started with a lie. The county  
18 executive agreed when she came to this  
19 legislature that she was going to abide by  
20 state law. Assessment caps. That she wasn't  
21 going to manipulate or change the level of  
22 assessment to bypass taxpayer protections that  
23 were in the Real Property Tax Law in 485U.  
24 Six months later that's exactly what she did.

25 Based upon her promise, this

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2 legislature voted to move ahead and continue  
3 the process of reassessment that started back  
4 in 2015. But six months later she dropped the  
5 level of assessment by 60 percent. Deflating  
6 assessed values. Then, as a result of that,  
7 remove taxpayer protections from 95 percent of  
8 Nassau County homeowners.

9 There was a strategic  
10 communications plan that was put out by the  
11 administration. In May of 2018 that strategic  
12 communication plan was basically how the  
13 administration was going to explain to the  
14 public and make sure that the public was fully  
15 informed about how the reassessment was going  
16 to take place. That included mailings. That  
17 included press releases. That included news  
18 conferences and interviews. It also included  
19 over 30 public information sessions with  
20 scheduled dates, times and locations.  
21 Actually calendared for when those meetings  
22 were going to take place and those were going  
23 to be through the fall of 2018.

24 Not a single one of those over 30  
25 meetings actually ever happened. For whatever

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2 reason, the shift changed from having a fair,  
3 open and transparent process to one of  
4 opacity. How can we make it as opaque as  
5 possible? How can we make it as difficult as  
6 possible for the public to understand?

7 We've spent the last two years now  
8 fighting to try and open up that process so  
9 that people could understand. Whether it was  
10 tax impact notices. Whether it's the lawsuit  
11 that we had to bring in order to restore the  
12 five year phase-in information back to the  
13 county's website. Which magically now all of  
14 a sudden has been put back. Whether it's our  
15 legislation today to try and force the county  
16 executive to comply with the Berliner  
17 settlement, which magically, once this  
18 legislation was introduced, now all of a  
19 sudden the information is out.

20 It seems to be throughout the  
21 course of this entire process that if it  
22 wasn't for us fighting to shed light on it  
23 homeowners would still be kept in the dark.

24 The presiding officer mentioned a  
25 great point. To actually send out a taxpayer

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2 funded mailing to tell homeowners that the  
3 reasons that their taxes went up in some cases  
4 10, 20, 30, 40, if you happen to be new  
5 construction your taxes went up 100, 200  
6 percent, was because of school districts. The  
7 average school taxes went up, average budgets  
8 went up 1.8 percent. How can you with a  
9 straight face tell somebody that received a 20  
10 percent, 30 percent, 40 percent tax increase  
11 that it's the school district's fault?  
12 Especially when you got the same percentage  
13 increase on your general taxes which had  
14 nothing to do with schools.

15 So, part of the issue with an  
16 elected assessor is the fact that if you have  
17 somebody who is independent, if you have an  
18 administration that is looking to keep  
19 information from the public, it is in that  
20 elected assessor's best interest to provide  
21 full explanations, full disclosure and conduct  
22 the accurate assessment that we thought we  
23 were going to get and the taxpayers obviously  
24 didn't with respect to the reassessment that  
25 was conducted by this administration.



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2 Because ultimately with an elected  
3 assessor it's his or her rear end on the line  
4 and they're going to make sure they're doing  
5 the job that obviously the administration has  
6 not done with respect to this reassessment.

7 And we all have criticisms about --  
8 I became a legislator in 2015. One of the  
9 first votes that we actually took was starting  
10 the process of reassessment. Having a frozen  
11 roll is a bad idea. But frozen roll happened  
12 under an appointed assessor. These mistakes  
13 with respect to assessment happened under an  
14 appointed assessor. This lack of transparency  
15 happened under an appointed assessor.

16 Yes, to Minority Leader Abrahams  
17 point, there have been lawsuits in the past.  
18 But I don't recall there ever having to be  
19 lawsuits to actually force an administration  
20 to be transparent. There may be technical  
21 lawsuits on how an assessment is supposed to  
22 be conducted. But to actually have homeowners  
23 sue to force the administration to disclose  
24 the formula that taxpayers paid for in order  
25 to be able to understand their assessment I

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2 think is probably unprecedented. And for us  
3 to have to get the administration to sue --  
4 for us to sue to get the administration to  
5 comply with the law that this administration  
6 signed and then delayed five months to me  
7 speaks volumes about the lack of  
8 transparency.

9 So, this is not about whose  
10 assessor this is. This isn't about whose  
11 mistakes these are. And this process has  
12 demonstrated the need for separation between  
13 the administration and how this assessment is  
14 conducted. And all this override vote is  
15 today is to allow the voters, the people of  
16 Nassau County, the people who pay the bills  
17 and keep the lights on in this place, gives  
18 them the ability to actually have a voice in  
19 how their government is run.

20 We've tried this experiment. We've  
21 had three assessors I think since 2008.  
22 Clearly this experiment has failed, and it's  
23 time to give the people an opportunity to be  
24 able to be heard with respect to this and  
25 decide on their own whether they want to

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2 continue with the system or whether they want  
3 to move back to an elected assessor as we had  
4 for 65 some odd years since the Department of  
5 Assessment -- since the county essentially --  
6 county executive was founded in 1938.

7 So, I would urge my colleagues on  
8 the other side to do the right thing by the  
9 people of Nassau County and to allow them a  
10 voice in their government and to vote to  
11 override the county executive's veto. Again,  
12 it doesn't means we're going to have an  
13 elected assessor tomorrow. It simply means  
14 that we as a legislature and we as a county  
15 government are putting power back in the hands  
16 of the people that send us here to make  
17 decisions as to how their government is going  
18 to be run. So I would urge you all to support  
19 the override. Thank you.

20 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Would any  
21 other legislators like to be heard?

22 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: I would  
23 Rich.

24 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Sure. Is  
25 that you Minority Leader or someone else?

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2 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: John

3 Ferretti.

4 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: John, your  
5 connection is a little bit difficult.

6 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: How is  
7 that? A lot better?

8 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: We can  
9 hear you but go ahead.

10 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: Sorry about  
11 that.

12 You know, look, I think at the end  
13 of the day we've been through this vote  
14 before. It seems like it's deja vu all over  
15 again to take a quote from the late, great  
16 Yogi Berra. But here's the reality. For sale  
17 signs are going up everywhere in my  
18 community. I'm sure you're seeing it all my  
19 colleagues on the legislature. And the  
20 question that I get all the time from  
21 residents is, what can I do to stop this?  
22 What can I could? How can you help me?

23 Well, today, the Minority has been  
24 given a second chance, a second bite at the  
25 apple to fix the mistake that they made two

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2 years ago when they prohibited their  
3 constituents from having a voice in the  
4 reassessment process. I think what we all can  
5 agree on, at least based on the minority  
6 leader's comment, is that there have been  
7 errors in this process. There have been  
8 mistakes. This has cost taxpayers money.

9 What we seem to have a little bit  
10 of disagreement on is whether or not the  
11 county executive has taken responsibility for  
12 that. I would argue that she has not. That  
13 she's tried to shift the blame. But put that  
14 aside. We all agree that there have been  
15 errors. We all agree that this has been a  
16 flawed process.

17 I think we also agree that this  
18 vote may be political. I just think it's the  
19 other way around. I think it's a political  
20 vote for the Minority, because I think we all  
21 know that they don't want to run on the  
22 reassessment issue because it's been a  
23 disaster. There's no other conceivable reason  
24 that they would vote no. You look at every  
25 single reason that they gave for voting no two

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2 years ago to the override and every one was  
3 wiped away when the county executive nominated  
4 a completely unqualified assessor.

5 There's simply no excuse or no  
6 justification for not giving the residents  
7 their voice at this juncture. Every one of  
8 the reasons given to not have that referendum  
9 two years ago is now moot because the county  
10 executive nominated a completely unqualified  
11 assessor.

12 So, the reality is, what are you  
13 afraid of? What is the fear here in giving  
14 the residents a voice, a seat at the table?  
15 Because I can tell you right now, when every  
16 one of them contemplating putting a for sale  
17 sign on their front lawn comes to me and says  
18 what can I do? I want to be able to tell them  
19 you can go out and have your voice heard. You  
20 can go out and vote whether you want to  
21 continue down this path or not.

22 Those residents deserve that  
23 opportunity, and I would strongly urge the  
24 Minority to reconsider their position. Do the  
25 right thing by the residents of Nassau

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2 County. Give them a vote. Give them a  
3 choice. Let their voices be heard. Because I  
4 can tell you right now, it's not hurting the  
5 Department of Assessment. They don't even  
6 answer the phone. Let's do the right thing  
7 and let's get this done today. Thank you.

8 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Thank you  
9 Legislator Ferretti. Just one other point  
10 from me. Legislator Rhoads reminds me that  
11 one of the reasons for an elected assessor  
12 would be that they would ensure that their  
13 office was properly staffed. There's been  
14 budget for additional staff for the assessor  
15 for over a year now. Those positions have  
16 been unfilled. If that was an elected  
17 assessor every one of those positions would be  
18 filled. They'd be better able to answer the  
19 phone. Better able to do all the different  
20 functions of the department. That's another  
21 reason in favor.

22 Any other legislators have any  
23 other comments? Hearing none, I have two  
24 slips of public comment. First one is Jeanine  
25 Driscoll, the receiver of taxes at the Town of

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2 Hempstead.

3 MS. DRISCOLL: Thank you  
4 Presiding Officer Nicoletto and members of the  
5 legislature. I appreciate the opportunity to  
6 be here today to speak to this very important  
7 issue. And I do agree that the residents of  
8 Nassau County should be the ones to decide  
9 whether or not the county assessor is an  
10 elected official or someone appointed by the  
11 Nassau County executive.

12 I can tell you one very obvious  
13 reason that I support that is, as you all  
14 know, you are all elected officials like  
15 myself, I listen to what the residents are  
16 saying, my constituents. I get emails. I  
17 answer them or someone at my staff answers  
18 them. This is the biggest complaint that I'm  
19 hearing about the Department of Assessment.  
20 There's no accountability. There's zero  
21 transparency. They're not answering the  
22 phone.

23 Every resident that calls us says  
24 the same thing. We've tried to call over  
25 there. Can you help us? There are certain



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2 things that we can do in our office and we try  
3 to do them to assist the residents. However,  
4 again, the biggest problem is that we don't  
5 have the capability to assist each resident.  
6 We've had a lot of problems with this  
7 assessment.

8 I'm here today to urge you to  
9 reverse your decision. To allow the residents  
10 to make this determination in the fall. The  
11 critical role of the assessor has always been  
12 to assess the properties. That is going to  
13 have a direct effect on every single property  
14 owner in the county. It's also going to  
15 affect who stays in our county.

16 Time and time again we deal with  
17 seniors who have raised their families here  
18 who are now being forced out because they  
19 can't foot the bill. We've seen increases  
20 anywhere in the area of five percent up to 187  
21 percent due to this assessment. It's  
22 obviously not working the way it should have  
23 worked.

24 During the most recent bill cycle,  
25 which was the first generated off the 2019

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2 reassessment, we've seen a 58 percent increase  
3 in delinquencies on the school tax bill and a  
4 25 percent increase in delinquencies on the  
5 general bill.

6 Now, again, we are coming out of a  
7 tough year with COVID. But a lot of that also  
8 has to do with the fact that people had  
9 unexpected stark tax hikes. I have done over  
10 50 tax seminars since October, and I would say  
11 at each one we have approximately seven  
12 residents that show up with their file. They  
13 are absolutely in a state of despair because  
14 of the amount of the hike and it all stems  
15 directly from that reassessment.

16 School tax roll this year was  
17 delivered to us a little bit late.  
18 Immediately prior to that we received a  
19 telephone call from the county assessor's  
20 office alerting us that 12,000 properties were  
21 still pending with the SCAR petition process,  
22 which is the Small Claims Assessment Review.  
23 That's the level after the grievance level.  
24 Since then we have been able to correct most  
25 of them. We still have 2200 bills that we

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2 sent out last November that we're still  
3 waiting on corrections for.

4 The problem is most of the  
5 residents that did pay, because they did not  
6 want to get hit with late fees, are now going  
7 to have a problem. We're not sure how that's  
8 going to be refunded. We tell them the county  
9 is going to refund it. Again, that takes  
10 several months.

11 Other problems that we've had.  
12 November we had a couple of issues with the  
13 veterans exemptions that came up. Some of the  
14 veterans were receiving too much of an  
15 exemption. \$13 million had to be parlayed out  
16 among the other residents of Nassau County.  
17 We still don't have direction from the county  
18 on how that's going to be corrected.

19 Of course we had the clergy, slash,  
20 veterans issue where certain bills were not --  
21 the TPP wasn't applied in the correct way. We  
22 had other issues with the taxpayer protection  
23 plan not being part of the tax roll and we've  
24 been sending out corrected bills for that. As  
25 of today we've sent out 12,934 corrected

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2 bills. It has cost our office \$27,800 in  
3 materials and labor costs.

4 This is no fault of the receivers.  
5 I know there has been some effort on the part  
6 of the county executive to blame the townships  
7 but certainly we were handed a tax roll that  
8 we had to deal with and when these errors were  
9 coming up we were trying to deal with them.  
10 Again, we're working on still getting the rest  
11 of those bills out.

12 As of today, basically, what we  
13 would like to see is some kind of  
14 reimbursement for us because, again, all of  
15 those costs are coming out of our budget. I  
16 would ask you to consider what the effect of  
17 the assessment has been on our residents.

18 Several weeks ago, I along with  
19 Supervisor Don Clavin, met with residents in  
20 Valley Stream. It was a family. They had  
21 three children. They had recently done a  
22 renovation of their home. Not a major  
23 renovation but they did do the renovation.  
24 They did not get the benefit of the TPP.  
25 Their taxes went up from \$9,700 to \$26,400.

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2 Two weeks ago I did hear from the mom, the  
3 mother, who was a nurse actually at a local  
4 hospital, a frontline worker throughout COVID,  
5 she said I don't think we're going to be able  
6 to pay this bill. She's just one of many. I  
7 know I've worked with some of the legislators  
8 on trying to rectify some of these problems.

9 What I am asking you is to allow  
10 the residents of Nassau to advocate for  
11 themselves. Just like they can file  
12 grievances, just like they can file for  
13 exemptions, they should have the right to  
14 decide whether or not that county assessor is  
15 appointed or is somebody that is elected. Who  
16 I think would be more accountable and more  
17 reactive to the needs of the residents.

18 Again, I appreciate you giving me  
19 the time today. I don't think that clock was  
20 running so I do appreciate that too. I do  
21 urge you though to really consider what the  
22 residents want. I would think that  
23 wholeheartedly they would want somebody that's  
24 going to be more accountable to them. Someone  
25 they can reach out to and actually get an

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2 answer from. Thanks you very much.

3 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Thank you  
4 Jeanine. Legislator Ford.

5 LEGISLATOR FORD: Jeanine, thank  
6 you very much for your statement, your  
7 testimony. And I have to say when you talked  
8 about like the residents over in Valley  
9 Stream, as you know, we have the Marine Point  
10 condos that were built over in Oceanside and  
11 they also fell victim because it was new  
12 construction and they found out that their  
13 taxes were supposed to be a certain amount of  
14 money. But then because of the assessment  
15 something wasn't included. They're new  
16 construction, whatever. So their tax bills  
17 went up by a great amount of money.

18 I think that Legislator Drucker was  
19 the one who I guess from your area was able to  
20 reach out to state senators and it was  
21 actually because the state interceded and they  
22 made some changes so that these residents were  
23 not going to be hit with such a large increase  
24 in their taxes and it will be gradually  
25 increased over a certain amount of years.

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2 I would think that for me that  
3 maybe it would be better if we had an elected  
4 assessor who would have been -- that person  
5 would have been able to make that  
6 determination. Maybe they'd have caught it in  
7 time.

8 I keep going back to when we had  
9 Harvey Levinson as our elected assessor and we  
10 had an issue similar with condos and co-ops  
11 down in the City of Long Beach and there was  
12 an error in something. He came out. He faced  
13 a group of very angry residents and listened  
14 to their complaints and everything. And just  
15 in a matter of weeks, we didn't have to go to  
16 anywhere else except but to his office and he  
17 was the one who was able to correct it and to  
18 be able to help these people stay in their  
19 condos and their co-ops.

20 I just even think about  
21 transparency. I have a resident who was not  
22 aware. She grieved her assessment and she  
23 thought that we were still using the ladder  
24 report, which she did, and she did all  
25 research first on that. She went for a

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2 hearing and they told her no, we don't use the  
3 ladder report anymore. They're just using the  
4 comp sales and whatever. We find out now that  
5 there's different valuations that they're  
6 using. So, residents who actually grieved  
7 their assessments may have been at a  
8 disadvantage because of this. Because the  
9 information is not getting to them in a timely  
10 manner. She doesn't know if she's going to  
11 win or not. It really is a very frustrating  
12 experience for so many people. But thank you  
13 very much for highlighting this.

14 MS. DRISCOLL: It is very  
15 frustrating. We have just finished collection  
16 a few weeks ago and so many people had come in  
17 and we're really only open to the public  
18 during very limited hours now. People waiting  
19 in the parking lot for us to come into the  
20 office with their files. Unable to pay. And  
21 again, it does go back to having nobody else  
22 to go to. So they're coming to the receiver  
23 of taxes.

24 And I'm more than happy to talk to  
25 everybody. I know my counterpoint in Oyster



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2 Bay is. And I appreciate and I know a lot of  
3 county legislators have reached out. We work  
4 together. Work together with a lot of the  
5 assemblymen and women.

6 But I do that think it's almost  
7 like nobody really knows what's happening in  
8 the Department of Assessment. They do have a  
9 lot of roles and I'm cognizant of that.  
10 Between exemptions, assessment, grievance  
11 there's a lot going on there. I think at some  
12 point maybe that needs to be broken up.  
13 People have different roles to do different  
14 things. I don't even have a name for someone  
15 that I can call and say look, a resident  
16 called me. We had a combat veteran call last  
17 week and she messaged me on Facebook and was  
18 in complete despair. She said I thought I was  
19 getting this exemption. It was just a glitch  
20 in the application. But she could not get  
21 through to the assessor's office. So, she  
22 came to me. We ended up getting it figured  
23 out. But it shouldn't be that difficult for  
24 people. People who are struggling right now.  
25 That's why I really do think that

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2 the residents should have the opportunity to  
3 say this is my representative. This is who I  
4 voted for. This is who is going to represent  
5 my interests. And listen to what these people  
6 say when they're running. Listen to what's  
7 important to them. What's their background?  
8 Do they live here? Do they struggle like  
9 you? Do they struggle like me? I do think it  
10 gives more of a personality to that office and  
11 I think it makes the residents feel that  
12 someone is advocating on their behalf.

13 LEGISLATOR FORD: And somebody  
14 who's like hearing about that. Because these  
15 people who work in the assessment department  
16 they are dedicated employees. They respond.  
17 They try to help as best as they can. But if  
18 you don't have enough people and being  
19 stretched to the limit at times you get a  
20 little tired. We all know what it's like. I  
21 think I agree with the presiding officer that  
22 I think we need to hire more people. If we  
23 had that person in charge of that department  
24 then I think that we would have the number of  
25 people and that people would be able to get

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2 through. I think we owe it to the employees  
3 that are there already. They're dedicated.  
4 They're hardworking. Let's give them a break  
5 as well.

6 MS. DRISCOLL: Thank you so  
7 much. I totally agree with you.

8 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Presiding  
9 Officer, may I make a comment?

10 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Sure.  
11 Legislator Drucker.

12 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: I just  
13 wanted to make a comment regarding what  
14 Legislator Ford just said. I don't know if  
15 the receiver of taxes is still here.

16 Just last week the New York State  
17 Legislature passed an amendment to the Real  
18 Property Tax Law amending Section 421F to now  
19 include new construction and substantially  
20 renovated homes giving them a \$750,000  
21 exemption that didn't exist before. This was  
22 a flaw in the existing law. An elected county  
23 assessor or an appointed county assessor would  
24 have had no bearing on that law. It had to be  
25 changed legislatively by the state.

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2 Nassau County, the county  
3 attorney's office, my office and some others,  
4 we were very instrumental in getting that  
5 legislation drafted, presenting it to our  
6 counterparts at the state legislature to get  
7 it passed up in Albany. Thank goodness it  
8 did. That's going to fix this problem.  
9 That's going to make things fairer for new  
10 construction and they're going to be paying  
11 taxes that they were expecting to pay. I  
12 don't know if you're aware of that change in  
13 the law.

14 MS. DRISCOLL: The problem is  
15 that information should be sent out to the  
16 residents so that they are aware of it.

17 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: It just  
18 happened last week.

19 MS. DRISCOLL: There's a lot of  
20 information that they don't know about that we  
21 try to get out to them.

22 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: It was all  
23 over Newsday last week.

24 MS. DRISCOLL: Excuse me?

25 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: That law was

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2 in Newsday last week.

3 MS. DRISCOLL: I'm going back to  
4 October, November when people were first  
5 getting their bills and people with new  
6 construction, I think everybody up here knows,  
7 that the new construction has been a  
8 continuing issue. We had issues with condos  
9 out east, and right now I think that a lot of  
10 people are just seeing huge tax hikes.

11 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: That's  
12 because of the law. It didn't allow for new  
13 construction to share in that exemption that  
14 homeowners did. That regular homeowners did.  
15 And to substantially renovated homes. We  
16 aimed for more than a year to fix this law and  
17 it took some time with having it get to be  
18 done up in Albany and we finally got it done  
19 last week.

20 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: I think  
21 Legislator Ferretti would like to comment.

22 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: This idea  
23 that the new construction issue just arose  
24 over the last week or even the last year, I  
25 mean, this was a flaw in the county

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2 executive's proposal from the beginning.  
3 Beginning when she first proposed it new  
4 construction was left out. It was brought out  
5 as an issue with her proposed phase-in and we  
6 worked, we being the Majority, worked with the  
7 New York State assembly members to propose a  
8 bill that would have made the phase-in more  
9 fair.

10 But similar to today, the Minority  
11 and the county executive played it off as,  
12 quote, playing politics. Trying to fix  
13 obvious errors in the system from day one  
14 isn't playing politics. It's good  
15 government.

16 And you know what? It's wonderful  
17 that the state is now, after people have laid  
18 out all this money erroneously, now  
19 everybody's awake because it's an election  
20 year and they want to try to fix things. You  
21 know what? We tried from the beginning. Now  
22 people are out tens of thousands of dollars  
23 because of a flawed phase-in, a flawed  
24 reassessment. It's unacceptable. And quite  
25 frankly, it's too little too late. The for

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2 sale signs are out.

3 So, again, let's stop making these  
4 mistakes. Let's do right by the residents.  
5 Let's override this ridiculous veto and give  
6 the residents a voice. Thank you.

7 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Thanks.

8 We have Mr. Jeff Pravato from the Town of  
9 Oyster Bay here as well. Let's have him come  
10 up to hear his comments.

11 MR. PRAVATO: I concur with  
12 everything receiver Driscoll has said in her  
13 statement.

14 Good afternoon Presiding Officer  
15 Nicoletto, Minority Leader Abrahams and  
16 members of the Nassau County Legislature.  
17 Thank you for allowing me to address you today  
18 with this important information prior to your  
19 vote on having the elected assessor.

20 As the elected receiver of taxes in  
21 the Town of Oyster Bay it's my job not only to  
22 collect the payments from the residents and  
23 the commercial property owners but also to  
24 protect their wallets. As an elected official  
25 the buck stops with me and the taxpayers have

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2 someone to hold accountable for the process of  
3 their tax bills and the payments.

4 While I collect taxes on behalf of  
5 schools, local governments, special districts,  
6 I do not determine the amount of taxes  
7 individuals pay nor do I assess the value of  
8 their property. I want to repeat that. While  
9 I collect taxes on behalf of schools and local  
10 governments and special districts, I, my  
11 office, does not determine the amount of taxes  
12 individuals pay nor do I assess the value of  
13 their property. That is the job of the  
14 Department of Assessment, which falls under  
15 the jurisdiction of the county executive.

16 Unfortunately, this Department of  
17 Assessment continues to fail taxpayers by  
18 distributing error-ridden data and no one has  
19 been held accountable for the costly  
20 mistakes. The Nassau County Department of  
21 Assessment lacks any accountability as it  
22 continually attempts to pass the buck rather  
23 than own up to their errors. I have not and  
24 will never tolerate this incompetence and  
25 neither should you when it comes to this



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2 department.

3 In January and the months that  
4 followed I received thousands of calls from  
5 outraged residents who were unable to get  
6 answers at the Department of Assessment. In  
7 fact, they couldn't even get someone to answer  
8 the phone at the Department of Assessment.  
9 Those that did were redirected from the  
10 Department of Assessment to my office. As of  
11 Friday, we were still getting calls after  
12 being told the assessor's staff was told not  
13 to. In fact, when Legislator Ferretti was  
14 holding hearings here, the deputy assessor  
15 said we've taken care of it and the receiver  
16 was happy. And I texted Mr. Ferretti,  
17 Legislator Ferretti, as we speak we're still  
18 getting calls. So we're still getting calls.

19 I notified the county government,  
20 specifically the county assessor and the  
21 deputy county assessor, on multiple occasions  
22 they have provided the town with late and  
23 incorrect information on thousands of property  
24 tax bills.

25 This is emails, just emails of the

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2 communication that's gone back and forth  
3 between our office, the county assessor's  
4 office, not including telephone calls. Also  
5 requested that they address residents'  
6 concerns rather than shuffle them off to my  
7 office. Which has no jurisdiction over these  
8 errors and assessment shifts that could cause  
9 sticker shock for homeowners.

10 As you know, Nassau Department of  
11 Assessment errors resulted in many property  
12 tax owners being forced to overpay their  
13 property taxes. In fact, this legislative  
14 body approved legislation to fix these  
15 errors. Sadly, in the midst of an economic  
16 crisis brought on by the pandemic, many  
17 property owners are still forced to overpay  
18 and now await refunds. Which, as you know,  
19 can take up to a year. These costly mistakes  
20 by the Department of Assessment only add to  
21 the burden already placed on 65 percent of the  
22 homeowners whose property taxes increased  
23 under County Executive Curran's reassessment  
24 plan and tax hike.

25 For those dealing with the problems

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2 the customer service provided by the  
3 department deserves a grade F for failure to  
4 respond to taxpayers. And fiasco when it  
5 comes to producing correct and legal  
6 sufficient data and tax warrants.

7 It started with the beginning of  
8 this year when we received tax warrants on  
9 which the county assessor improperly notarized  
10 his own signature. And then it continued with  
11 my office reporting thousands of errors  
12 related to missing veterans exemptions, clergy  
13 exemptions, absent class one phase-in  
14 exemptions and the overbilling of homeowners  
15 due to unsettled SCAR petitions.

16 In an effort to help property  
17 owners, we were able to issue new tax bills to  
18 many residents but that came at heavy  
19 administrative costs. 3,500 employee work  
20 hours. Nearly \$140,000 in additional costs  
21 and processing costs, which I know receiver  
22 Driscoll is going to dig deeper. I'm a  
23 numbers guy. I dug deep into everything. I  
24 have everything right here on the sheet.

25 Nearly 6800 hours, actually 6,793

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2 to be exact, have been identified within the  
3 Town of Oyster Bay alone and these county  
4 produced errors have cost taxpayers \$8.1  
5 million in overpayments. Last year guess how  
6 many errors we had? 90. 90 adjustments  
7 only.

8 Next year this \$8.1 million will be  
9 thrown on the backs of already overburden  
10 homeowners as refunds are paid out. The  
11 general tax -- and the general tax go up  
12 beyond what they did this year under the  
13 reassessment. Meaning the \$8.1 million that  
14 guys are all refunding this year is going to  
15 get thrown on the back of the homeowners that  
16 are being taxed now. Whatever assessment  
17 raised up it's going to go up even more.

18 With all that said, I ask that  
19 restore accountability to the Department of  
20 Assessment. The county executive will not  
21 take responsibility and provide proper  
22 oversight. It is incumbent on you to do so.  
23 Let taxpayers hold an elected assessor  
24 accountable. Let that official be responsible  
25 for fixing the department that has gone

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2 completely off the rails due to the competence  
3 and mismanagement. Thank you.

4 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Thank you  
5 Jeff. Legislator Walker I know had a  
6 comment.

7 LEGISLATOR WALKER: I just really  
8 wanted to -- I know we thanked receiver  
9 Driscoll and I want to thank receiver  
10 Pravato. I know we have spoken back and forth  
11 many, many times. I felt so terrible when  
12 your office was receiving phone calls,  
13 especially when people were being told to call  
14 your office and basically it being supposedly  
15 your fault, something happened in the Town of  
16 Oyster Bay or something happened in the Town  
17 of Hempstead that caused them to have a wrong  
18 bill.

19 I also think it's very important  
20 for everyone to realize that an elected  
21 assessor would live in Nassau County. He  
22 would feel the same pain that our residents  
23 are feeling. He would understand that pain.  
24 The present assessor lives in Queens. This  
25 really doesn't affect him at all.

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2 Again, I apologize for the phone  
3 calls you had to receive. And for us as  
4 legislators, that goes for both sides of the  
5 table, but when people were possible able to  
6 reach upstairs they were told, and I  
7 understand that constituent services doesn't  
8 really have an answer, but they were told to  
9 call their legislator who they know we don't  
10 really have that answer either.

11 Again, I thank you for being here  
12 this morning and sharing that information with  
13 us, and I hope everybody thinks strongly  
14 before they take the vote and supports having  
15 an elected assessor as a referendum.

16 MR. PRAVATO: Thank you  
17 Legislator Walker. As Legislator Drucker said  
18 before, getting that legislation done up in  
19 the state to have the eight year phase-in, an  
20 elected assessor could have been even more of  
21 a voice to have that than an appointed  
22 assessor. Thank you.

23 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Any other  
24 legislators? Legislator Rhoads.

25 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank you

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2 receiver Pravato and I too want to echo my  
3 thanks to you and to receiver Driscoll for all  
4 the hard work that you've done. It's not just  
5 the \$8.1 million that you've identified  
6 collectively between the Town of Hempstead and  
7 the Town of Oyster Bay.

8 MR. PRAVATO: That's just Oyster  
9 Bay. That's times two.

10 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: I said  
11 collectively. I was about to say collectively  
12 between the Town of Hempstead and the Town of  
13 Oyster Bay I think you have identified close  
14 to \$30 million in errors after the bills had  
15 went out. We're not even talking about errors  
16 that were identified before. These are after  
17 the bills have gone out. Every single county  
18 taxpayer is going to have to reach in their  
19 pocket and pay because we couldn't get this  
20 right. I want to thank you for identifying  
21 that.

22 I also want to thank you for taking  
23 on the additional burden, which you shouldn't  
24 have to take, of trying to clean up the county  
25 assessor's mess and this administration's

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2 mess. The fact that our administration,  
3 whether it's the county executive's office or  
4 the assessor's office, would ever say to call  
5 the receiver of taxes for an explanation as to  
6 why their assessment is incorrect, or a  
7 legislator for that matter, as to why their  
8 assessment is incorrect is inconceivable to  
9 me.

10 So I want to thank you for taking  
11 on that responsibility because it's not your  
12 job. Just like it's not the state's job to  
13 try and fix the mess that was created by this  
14 administration. And I'm happy that they have  
15 taken that up.

16 By the way, when we talk about new  
17 construction, this Majority sent a letter to  
18 the state senate, to the state assembly, to  
19 the governor notifying them what we told the  
20 county executive back in March of last year  
21 that new exemptions were going to be  
22 disproportionately impacted, including Super  
23 Storm Sandy homes, were going to be  
24 disproportionately impacted as a result of the  
25 exclusion of new construction from the



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2 phase-in.

3 I had a gentleman call my office  
4 from Wantagh whom I've mentioned before. His  
5 taxes went from \$10,000 to \$31,500 as a result  
6 of not being included in that phase-in. While  
7 I'm happy that it seems to be getting fixed  
8 now, that's money that they've already had to  
9 pull out of their pocket and pay this year  
10 that they're not going to get back in all  
11 likelihood because I don't think that phase-in  
12 is retroactive. I could be wrong. Hopefully  
13 it is.

14 But the bottom line is we're  
15 causing a lot of people a lot of pain because  
16 we didn't think things through and act  
17 proactively. And that's solely, the blame for  
18 that in my opinion, lies solely at the foot of  
19 the county executive and her handpicked  
20 assessor. I just wanted to thank you for your  
21 efforts and for all the hard work that you and  
22 your staff have done along with receiver  
23 Driscoll and her staff.

24 MR. PRAVATO: Thank you  
25 Legislator Rhoads. Just keeping stats on

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2 everything. 24,000 calls since we've taken  
3 the first warrant and 6,000 related to the  
4 problems of the reassessment. We figured 15  
5 minutes per call and that was 43,500 in cost  
6 right there. Then we've had to work some  
7 weekends because the phones just keep ringing  
8 and you're trying to do the regular work and  
9 it can't be done, so there's overtime costs.

10 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Thank  
11 goodness somebody's answering the phones at  
12 least.

13 MR. PRAVATO: We give the  
14 number. You have to call this number. The  
15 craziest thing was we called the hotline, no  
16 one picked up the hotline that was  
17 established. Then they call us back. We  
18 can't get an answer. We try to help them the  
19 best we can. Unfortunately, sometimes we  
20 can't do everything for them but we try to  
21 walk them through everything.

22 Again, Presiding Officer Nicoletto,  
23 Minority Leader Abrahams, thank you and the  
24 county legislature, thank you for your time.

25 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Something

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2 tells me if there was an elected assessor  
3 those phones would have been answered and you  
4 wouldn't be getting those calls.

5 MR. PRAVATO: I guarantee you.

6 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Thank you  
7 Jeff. Anyone else on the legislature have any  
8 comments? Is there any other member of the  
9 public who would like to speak? Hearing none,  
10 then I'm going to call for a vote on this  
11 resolution. An aye vote is a vote to  
12 override. Nay would be not to override and we  
13 need 13 votes to override the county  
14 executive's veto.

15 All in favor signify by saying  
16 aye. Those opposed? So the vote fails by a  
17 vote of 11 votes to override and eight votes  
18 against overriding. Since we didn't get the  
19 13 votes the override is unsuccessful.

20 Motion to adjourn by Legislator  
21 Walker. Seconded by Legislator Schaefer. All  
22 in favor of adjourning the legislature signify  
23 by saying aye. Those opposed? Carries  
24 unanimously. The legislature is adjourned and  
25 we'll go right into the Rules Committee.

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Thank you receivers Driscoll and Pravato.

Appreciate you being here.

(Meeting was adjourned at 2:08

p.m.)

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CERTIFICATION

I, FRANK GRAY, a Notary  
Public in and for the State of New  
York, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing is a true and  
accurate transcript of my stenographic  
notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have  
hereunto set my hand this 13th day of  
April 2021

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FRANK GRAY