

VETERANS & SENIORS COMMITTEE

of the

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

A regular meeting of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislative Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on March 19, 2012.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Steve Stern - Chairman
Legislator Sarah Anker - Vice Chair
Legislator Tom Barraga
Legislator DuWayne Gregory
Legislator Ricardo Montano

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Legislator Edward Romaine - 1st Legislative District
Legislator Hahn - 5th Legislative District
Thomas Cilmi - 10th Legislative District
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk - Suffolk County Legislature
Laura Halloran - Budget Review Office
Tom Ronayne - Director of Veterans Services
Holly Rhodes-Teague - Office for the Aging
Paul Perillie - Aide to Legislator Gregory
Bob Martinez - Aide to Legislator Montano
William Shilling - Aide to Legislator Anker
Deborah Harris - Aide to Legislator Stern
Ali Nazir - Aide to Legislator Kennedy
Ben Zwirn - County Executive's Office
Richard Meyer - AME
Merri Ciano - Long Island Senior Council
Wendy Goidel
Patricia Gesele
Bill Closter
All other interested parties

VERBATIM MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Lucia Braaten - Court Stenographer

(*THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 12:09 P.M. *)

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Good evening, everybody. Welcome to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. I'm going to ask everybody to please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Legislator Anker.

(*Salutation*)

I'm going to ask everybody to please remain standing and join us in the moment of silence as we keep all our brave men and women fighting for us overseas in our thoughts and prayers.

(*Moment of Silence*)

Thank you. Holly. Holly.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Good afternoon, everybody. Hi.

LEG. MONTANO:

Mark me present.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I just wanted to -- I dropped off on -- at everybody's spot a survey that the County Office for Aging did on the needs of Suffolk County residents sixty years of age or older. We did this last year, and I just wanted to give you a little bit of information on it.

This was done -- we're required to do a needs survey within our office every four years, and we had had a couple of different grants that were requiring information so we decided to do this. Started last January and when we did this we decided we were going to target the most vulnerable seniors in Suffolk, so we used a food stamp database, we used a HEAP database, and that was approximately 14,000 people that were on that -- within the two databases that were over age sixty. And we decided to ask them questions on health, housing, income, economic security issues, transportation and home care personal care. And all told, we sent out 14,153 surveys and we were happy -- we were going to be happy if we got 500 back. We said, you know, we'll be good. And, amazingly, we got 3,755 surveys back, which just told me that there's a great need out of the County for people over age 60. Out of those 3,755, we had also given them the option of telling us whether they wanted us to give them a call, you know, if there was something that they felt that they wanted to talk about, and we got back 2,533 people who asked for us to call them. So that was a little shocking to us, and we weren't really prepared to do that. So we had -- initially we had staff call and say, "Listen, we're going to give you a call back in depth, but if there's anything immediate, we'll have somebody talk to you right away. So, out of the that, we had 22 people who had absolute immediate concerns that we dealt with within the first couple of days of hearing from them.

It was an interesting -- it was interesting the way it worked out. We had -- 71% of the people who responded back to us said that they were really concerned about affording their heat and their utilities. That was a major concern for them. The second thing they were concerned about, 60% said that they were concerned about maintaining their homes. That was the second thing. And then the third one, which was close to the second, was 58% were concerned about affording their medical costs. So those are the top three concerns that we've had with the seniors. And those who requested followup, 230 of them had requested information on home energy assistance, and then we had some for legal assistance. We had 400 people who had already been involved with our

office at one point or another, so we had those same advocates and case workers who had spoken to them previously call them back to see if there was anything else they needed. And if we only had an address, we sent them the program and services guide.

But I just wanted to let you know that that -- we did the survey. We were amazed at the number we got back, because, really, it was 26% of the people we mailed it to actually sent back the response, so that's a huge response for a survey. So I just wanted to give you a heads-up on it.

We are doing -- because of what came out -- well, not because, we've done it in the past anyway -- we are reaching out to those who had HEAP in the past who did not apply again this year. We have done phone calls out to them. We're doing -- you know, we're doing outreach for those we know were eligible in the past who, for some reason, did not apply this year, and we're trying to do as much as we can to let people know what services that are out there. But I just thought you might want to know about the survey that was done. Any questions on it?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you, Holly. Do you know offhand some of the -- and it might be in here and I just haven't gotten to it yet -- some of this year's HEAP numbers, applicants, those assisted?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Our HEAP numbers within our office, the numbers are a little lower than they were in previous years. And what we have kind of thought in our process of trying to figure it out is that if you're -- if you're on food stamps, you're automatically eligible for HEAP, and there has been a push to put people on food stamps. So I think what's happening is people are automatically enrolled at HEAP, and that's through DSS, so they're not coming to our office. So our numbers are probably running seven to eight hundred less in terms of applications than they -- than they have in the past. Last year we did sixty-eight hundred applications. I think we're in like the high fives this year. And the program's going to be ending I believe in April, so it's -- you know, I don't think our numbers are going to get much higher than what they are right now. They've really come down to a trickle in terms of the HEAP apps. But I believe it's not because there isn't a need for it, I think it's because they're automatically being enrolled because they have food stamps.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Anker.

LEG. ANKER:

Hi, Holly. Thank you for presenting this survey to us, because it's really important for us to really get an understanding of where -- you know, where the issues are, because that's what we, as Legislators, are here to address.

You know, I recently met with Leisure Village and probably over a hundred people were there. EPIC -- is there a County representative that could maybe go to some of the senior communities and explain EPIC in a little bit more detail, because there was a little confusion about, you know --

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

EPIC has changed drastically from what it used to be. Starting January 1st, EPIC no longer -- no longer provides coverage for anything but when a senior is in the doughnut hole. So a senior has to have Medicare Part D, and if they reach the doughnut hole and they're eligible for EPIC and they've applied for EPIC, they will get coverage for the doughnut hole time. There is no fee, there is no anything else, they just have to be income eligible to be in EPIC. So that's a big change for the seniors, because a lot of them saw their costs for some of their drugs go sky high after EPIC changed. And, as you all know, the Legislature here ended the EPIC reimbursement program for County residents, so that's another thing that we've had phone calls on, but that's over with. There

isn't a lot to explain to them, except for the fact that it's -- EPIC does not do what it used to do.

LEG. ANKER:

Is there anything as a backup that they can look into?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

They all should be in Part D plans, and we tell people that, because if you're not in a Part D plan, you're going to be penalized when you do go into it if you didn't take it when you were supposed to. There's a penalty, and that's a federal program.

LEG. ANKER:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not a member of this Committee and I appreciate the courtesy. I just had one issue that I wanted to raise with Holly. Again, it's the same issue about the centralized kitchen at Brookhaven Lab. I know that at our last committee meeting, Long Island Cares, which is a very reputable organization, came forward and indicated a willingness to run that kitchen. And I think at the end of the meeting you said you were going to have some discussions with them regarding this. Have you had those discussions?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

No, I haven't. I've been checking to see what other -- how the people who -- you know, Brookhaven Town and some of the contractors, if they have issues with the providers of service they're going to have effective April 30th, and so far I have found no one who's having an issue with who they are going to start with on April 30th.

LEG. ROMAINE:

This is an issue that I would also suggest you speak with Legislator Kennedy. We had a meeting --

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I got his e-mail this morning

LEG. ROMAINE:

Oh, I didn't get it. What did it say?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

It said that you'd like me to look at this issue again.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Right, and we would like you to look at this issue again. In fact, there's some talk about doing a resolution and speaking with the Executive about even a CN about putting this out to bid, because we think that this is an organization that could take over that kitchen. That kitchen has always run, has always run and it cost less than what it was budgeted for. So there was always money coming back, from what I was given to believe, and --

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I would have to look into that, because if they gave money back, it might be because the meals weren't being served at a site. I'm not so sure it's because of their cost. I would have to look into that.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Yeah, because, obviously, a centralized kitchen at the time, I believe Red Cross, when they ran it, and still running it, are serving eight separate nutrition centers.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

No. It was seven sites. We're down to five sites because two of them got taken over by Brookhaven. So we're down to five sites within the Town of Brookhaven.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Right. Now the ones that the Towns take over we don't provide meals to or --

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

No. The Town of Brookhaven will be contracting with a contractor they have in the Town of Brookhaven, and I think they --

LEG. ROMAINE:

Do you know who that contractor is?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I believe it's Florian who has the contract at the Brookhaven Town Hall.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Florian.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Florian.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Do you know where they're based out of?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I know they have a site at Brookhaven Town Hall.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Okay.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

And they're already providing meals for them for I think their adult day care program, so they -- they went to them.

LEG. ROMAINE:

I appreciate that. I haven't seen John Kennedy's e-mail, but I will ask him to forward it, because there was an extensive discussion amongst members of my caucus on Friday about this issue.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

I got a two-liner, it wasn't --

LEG. ROMAINE:

Oh, I know. Well, John is known for his brevity, thank God.

MR. NOLAN:

In writing.

*(*Laughter*)*

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

But Brookhaven is quite comfortable with their contractor that they're going with April 30th.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

I'll be right back.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

He has a question for you.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Okay. I'm good.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Anything else for Holly?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Deck of cards?

*(*Laughter*)*

CHAIRMAN STERN:

How's everything else?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Everything's good. The luncheon is May 17th. Just put it on your calendars. It's over at Villa Lombardi for the seniors.

LEG. MONTANO:

I forgot to shut off my phone. I apologize. I think I owe you \$5.

*(*Laughter*)*

Sorry, Holly. I think we have a \$5 penalty if the phone rings during the session, so.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Uh-oh.

LEG. MONTANO:

I had a very simple question and I was looking at the overview page of this report.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Okay.

LEG. MONTANO:

And the cutoff, the age for the older population starts at 60? In other words, these figures pertain to anyone 60 and over?

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

That's correct. Under the Older Americans Act it's over -- it's 60 and older. There are some programs, employment programs, sometimes they're lower than that. There's a few other programs, but over age 60. Like Medicare is 65, but for our purposes, it's over age 60.

LEG. MONTANO:

Right. But this front page is 60.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

It's sixty, sixty-plus.

LEG. MONTANO:

That's all I wanted to ask you. Thank you.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Uh-huh.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Holly, thank you.

DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:

Yep.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Director Ronayne.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Good afternoon, Chairman, Members. Thank you again for the invitation to appear before you. I have a couple of items that I'd like to go into, but first I'd like to say that Legislator Montano, if these \$5 penalties, if you're looking for a place to park that money, you're more than welcome to periodically convert those into gift cards and we'll see that they're used well for veterans services.

LEG. MONTANO:

All right. Well, why don't I give you the cash and you can get the gift card?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Please, no cash. Thank you for the offer, but no.

*(*Laughter*)*

We have a couple of issues going on. I'll start with very good news. I received a call this morning from the Chief of Social Work and the Chief of Psychology at VA. March is National Social Workers Month, and each VA Medical Center is invited to nominate somebody to be recognized as the "Social Worker of the Year" during Social Worker Month, and Northport VA has decided to honor David Rivera, who, unfortunately, is no longer in my office, but had run our stand downs and job fairs, etcetera. And in recognition of his efforts, they will be recognizing him. So 10:30 a.m. at Northport VA in Building 5, the auditorium, on March 30th, if anybody would like to attend.

LEG. MONTANO:

David Rivera?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

David Rivera.

LEG. ROMAINE:

He was in --

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Sure, Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Mr. Rivera is located where now?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

He resides in Setauket, I believe.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Oh, no, no. I mean, he's no longer with the Veterans?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

He is no longer with us, his position was eliminated.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Oh, it was budgetary reduction?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Correct.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

But in recognition of the work that he did, I thought it worthy of making note.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

I'm sorry. He was part of the original -- well, the 88 that were not extended; is that what you're saying?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Correct.

LEG. MONTANO:

There were 88 positions in the budget that were eliminated as of January 1st.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

That is correct.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay. Thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Our annual Homeless Veteran Stand Down is still taking place. That is now scheduled for April 27th. That will be at the Suffolk campus of the Community College in the Police Academy building, as it always is. Again, we're partnering with the VA this year in order to be able to produce a quality event, as we always have in the past. I would invite each of you, if you have the opportunity, to spend a moment and visit us at the Stand Down and see just exactly what it is that we do. Most of you have been to one in the past, but from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on April 27th we will be conducting our stand down.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

I would just say to any of my colleagues who has not been to a Stand Down, it really is an outstanding event. It showed how many outstanding organizations, and our professionals here at Suffolk County really come together for our veterans in our community. If you haven't had the experience, I certainly recommend going.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

It's always -- unfortunately, you know, it's a bittersweet experience when we have a successful Homeless Veteran Stand Down because it identifies that that need is so real and that it does exist. And when we see large numbers, we realize that the demand for those services is great, but it is bittersweet. It's great that we're able to be available to provide assistance, but the fact that we see so many of them is always a disappointment.

This week, I believe on Thursday, Legislator Stern is hosting his Veterans forum at Touro Law School. My office will be in attendance, as well a number of leaders in the veterans community that I have already spoken to. I would also make note that on the 30th of this month, John Narciso from the Department of -- my apologies -- from the Small Business Administration, who was at our last session, will be hosting his career expo at Suffolk -- at State University of New York at SUNY Farmingdale, and that will be ten to three, I believe, on March 30th.

We have also been contacted again. As I believe I reported at our last session, the Army has contacted us again, and based on the success of the job fair that we conducted at the Armed Forces Center in Farmingdale, they have asked us if we would again produce that same event in the same location. There's been a great demand for a follow-up event based on the first one that we had. They did conduct, in partnership with one of the participants that we had working at the last job fair, they partnered with them, and they had a follow-up workshop, if you will, on financial services and credit repair, and mortgage issues, issues relevant to the financial side of the Servicemen's and Sailors' Civil Relief Act. They had 140 soldiers attend that follow-up workshop. That's -- you know, for an optional program, that's a pretty good turnout. So, again, they're asking us to produce another event. If we are able to come to terms with all of the logistical issues, it will probably take place in mid May. May is a tough month because we also have our annual Armed Forces Day ceremony, but the job fair will likely take place in May.

I know Legislator Cilmi is here with us today, and I believe we're going to be hearing on the legislation concerning increasing the effectiveness of the existing solicitation, veterans solicitation legislation. I would hope that we can count on all of your support. It's a very worthwhile program.

I received a telephone call only this morning from somebody who encountered somebody over the weekend in Babylon, and they were able to confront the individuals raising funds in the name of veterans. Their paperwork was in order, but the fact that they had all of their paperwork in order and they have registered and received a permit through our office is a testament that the program is

having an effect.

Yesterday, I was invited to attend an event. It came together on somewhat short notice, but we had a number of soldiers from what they refer to as the Triple Deuce. It's one of the infantry brigades out of Fort Drum, New York. This was a unit that was the home unit to Sergeant Michael Esposito, who was killed in Iraq a number of years ago. Mrs. Esposito, Dawn, the Gold Star mother, was able to organize this. And they had a group of soldiers from the Triple Deuce came down. The Brentwood Fire Department hosted a little gathering for them, and it was nice that out of respect for their lost comrade, they made the trip from Fort Drum to Brentwood to acknowledge that he's still very much a part of their thoughts.

One other event that we've tried in the past and we've had limited success with it, but I've been working with new people, we're working with the Long Island Ducks to host a Veterans Appreciation or Veterans Recognition Day and have a day devoted to veterans this year. And specifically, what we had hoped to do is invite veterans of all generations, of all wars and services. But, specifically, we're hoping to be able to invite and acknowledge as many Iraq and Afghani veterans as we are able. So, as that develops, I will keep you informed of dates and times and so forth. That is still in the planning stages.

One other thing. I've been asked by the representative of the Long Island State Veterans Home in Stony Brook. They've been here. They're friends to our office, certainly, and they've appeared before you numerous times. They are in a situation right now where the Governor is proposing reducing their budget. Now they're a little bit different. They're not contained in the Veterans budget, they're actually a part of the Office of Higher Education because of their affiliation with Stony Brook.

The proposal is to remove \$842,000 from their budget this year and \$843,000 next year. It's a significant reduction for them. The concern with -- given that they're a State entity, it's really not within our realm, but I want you to be aware of it because as they lose their State funding, it places limitations on their ability to deliver certain services. And, ultimately, some of those costs, the Medicaid specifically, could eventually wind up becoming a responsibility to the County. So there's a potential economic impact to the County by that facility losing State funding.

We're working very closely with them to identify as many of their residents and as many of their potential residents as we are able. There's a federal law now that requires that any veteran who is rated at 70% or greater service connected, that the VA, the federal government will pay 100% of the costs of their residing at a State nursing home. So we're in the process of trying to identify as many of those individuals as we can, but there is a very real possibility of an economic consequence to the County if they should lose that State funding. That would be the reason that I make you aware of it.

And I believe at this point I would be happy to take questions.

LEG. MONTANO:

Quick question.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

Yeah. Tom, I'm sorry. Could you give me the name of that State agency that you said is losing the funding?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

That would be the Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook.

LEG. MONTANO:

Oh, I'm familiar with it. Okay. And their proposed -- the proposal is for them to be defunded 845,000 --

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I believe it's eight hundred and --

LEG. MONTANO:

That's the proposed Governor's budget.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

It's in the Governor's proposed budget. It is, I believe, \$842,000 this year and \$843,000 next year.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Tom, do you know if there's been any kind of an analysis done as to -- it might be premature, but what that would translate to in terms of lost services?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

We do not know. They were in the process of doing that now. In fact, they have a trip this week planned to Albany to meet with their -- to meet with the delegation and have that discussion. I know that there's an analysis in the works as we speak. I did speak with them this morning, and, obviously, this is a very real concern to them. As soon as I have some indication of what the potential impact to the County may be, I'll be certain to forward that to you. I'll e-mail the committee that information.

LEG. MONTANO:

Actually, if I may, could you forward the information that you have so far?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Absolutely.

LEG. MONTANO:

Would you e-mail that to the committee? I actually am familiar with it, because when I was in the Attorney General's Office, we had some issues with -- not issues, but some dealings with them, so I'm familiar with what they do. I'd like to know more about this.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I'll have the e-mail sent today.

LEG. MONTANO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay? Anybody else? Okay. Tom, thank you.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. It's my pleasure to welcome Merri Ciano to the committee today. Ms. Ciano is with the Long Island Senior Education Council, and we're pleased to have you. Welcome.

MS. CIANO:

Thank you very much. I have to just push this button?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

You just need to keep -- you can actually come sit at the table. It's fine.

MS. CIANO:

I might be a little uncoordinated in holding the button down. Thank you very much for having me. As I was introduced, my name is Merri Ciano.

MS. ORTIZ:

Pull it right up to you.

MS. CIANO:

Oh, thank you. As I was introduced, my name is Merri Ciano, and years ago I had established a not-for-profit learning and resource organization, the Long Island Senior Education Council.

First, I want to say thank you to Tom Cilmi and Mr. Barraga, who -- and Tom -- Steven Stern, who invited me here. We have some issues that may not directly affect Suffolk County, but maybe in the long or the bigger scheme it does. It's about the way that Medicaid applications are being processed. In fact, I had brought some friends of mine, and I'll be very quick to introduce them, but I have Patty Gesele and Bill Closter behind me, and also Wendy Goidel, who's an attorney. So there they are. Thank you. You can stand up.

The reason why I'm introducing you is because on the second page of the packet that I had given you, I had written an article and referenced to Medicaid, the Fair Hearing Crisis. And it was because of Patty and also Mr. Closter's plight in applying for Medicaid on behalf of their loved ones that made me so incensed that I had to do something, and that's why we're here today. And, in fact, that this is not an isolated problem in trying to file for Medicaid on behalf of loved ones. Suffolk County was recently sued, and I'm not exactly sure of the outcome of that lawsuit, and Suffolk County had up to March 12th to answer the lawsuit. And I have information about the not-for-profit organization who had sued Suffolk County because we were supposed to have better control in the eligibility process of Medicaid applications. And since 2009, unfortunately, things have not gotten better, they're only getting worse.

So, in my mind, we need to make people more aware through education on how caregivers can take more responsibility in gathering information. We need to make it that on either the County level and, of course, the State and Federal levels that caregivers can access information. It shouldn't be just attorneys would be able to get the information that they would need to file for Medicaid. And it's unfortunate that we have an aging society, so we're going to have more and more people that are going to be affected by the way that Medicaid applications are being processed. Unfortunately, there are more denials in the way that nursing homes are experiencing with the Medicaid applications. And it is through these experiences that I have had with my own clients and seniors that I've helped with the not-for-profit organization, that it's not just financially devastating, but it's also taking an emotional toll. I mean, this is a time when Suffolk County and Nassau County, we're all still recovering from this economic turndown and we real need to make these changes.

I have in Page 2 and 3 of the handouts some proposals that -- just common sense proposals that I would hope that -- not maybe that on the Suffolk County Legislator level, that you would be able to make these changes, but you know people. You know people on the State levels and you know people on the Federal level that would be able to help in making these changes right for the future caregivers and taxpayers. I mean, for taxpayers to have to pay so much extra money to file Medicaid on behalf of a loved one -- I know people that have spent thousands and thousands of dollars in hiring an attorney to file Medicaid for a poor person and that's not right. So we really, in my mind, need to make these changes; that the information is accessible through online, even through my own not-for-profit website. I had put down on my intake sheet that I use when I help people file for Medicaid, and the help that even regular caregivers would be able to use this information so that they might be able to save money on the basis for filing the application for their loved ones, and, hopefully, that they can have some peace of mind.

So, again, I had put some information that -- I hope that it would make if more straightforward in the article that I had written, and also, in some of the Medicaid proposals to help it -- not just you to understand what the bigger problem is, but, hopefully, as I said, it's on my website that we could make more people aware of the situation at hand. So, if anybody has any questions, I'd be more than happy to answer, you know, about what Suffolk County may be able to do, or, you know, hopefully, we could make this a bigger issue on, again, the State and the Federal levels through the people that you might know.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Montano first.

LEG. MONTANO:

Hello, Merri. How are you?

MS. CIANO:

Hi. Good.

LEG. MONTANO:

Actually, one of the questions I had was answered, because I did just pick this up. What I'm gathering is that there was a consent decree in existence and this motion is that the County is violating the consent decree?

MS. CIANO:

Yes.

LEG. MONTANO:

I think you have your attorney here. Is she --

MS. CIANO:

Well, I have an associate attorney of mine, Wendy Goidel, who also handles Medicaid applications.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay. So she's not the attorney --

MS. CIANO:

No.

LEG. MONTANO:

-- on the case.

MS. CIANO:

No. There's actually -- the lawsuit was filed by two not-for-profit organizations.

LEG. MONTANO:

I see that here.

MS. CIANO:

Right.

LEG. MONTANO:

I have that.

MS. CIANO:

It's a class action suit. So, again, Nassau County was sued last year, and unfortunately, fortunately, I don't know, they lost that, that case, because they were also supposed to make the eligibility process easier for regular folk to understand.

LEG. MONTANO:

What were -- do you know what the penalties that were imposed if they lost the case?

MS. CIANO:

No. That's why I put the information for the not-for-profits there, so this way you would be free to contact them directly.

LEG. MONTANO:

All right. What I was going to ask you is, maybe through your attorney, if you -- I'm Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, which is the committee that regulates the Law Department. I'm also an attorney, you know, having done similar litigation for the government. Could you get me a copy of the motion that was filed with the court? Does your attorney have access to that?

MS. CIANO:

I can.

LEG. MONTANO:

I don't have the eCourt, so I can't go in --

MS. CIANO:

Yeah. I mean, I can try. I mean --

LEG. MONTANO:

All right. Never mind. We'll call up the attorney and ask them directly.

MS. CIANO:

Right. Again, that's why I put the information from the not-for-profits, you know. They would have all the information, I'm sure.

LEG. MONTANO:

We'll find it. Thank you very much.

MS. CIANO:

You're quite welcome.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

How are you doing today?

MS. CIANO:

Good. We're doing well.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Good. First of all, thank you for making the time to come out today to talk about this serious problem. I'm not on this committee, but I am on a committee earlier in the day that met, the Human Services Committee, where our Social Services Commissioner came. Legislator Gregory was the Chairman of that committee, and we heard testimony to the fact that because of the suit that was brought by the Empire Justice, that there is a consent decree and the County is in danger of not complying with the decree. We also heard that we have a prompt payment bill for our not-for-profits, which is a totally separate item. But just to give you an idea and put things in perspective, that we're about one week away from violating our Prompt Payment Law, and that's going to slip considerably and we're not going to be able to pay people in a prompt fashion.

But getting back to Medicaid, there was discussion this morning. And the Chairman is -- Gregory is here, and he can correct me, that there was a possibility that the courts would appoint a special master and come in and make Social Services do things that they should be doing in terms of processing these applications, including overtime, or filling positions that are budgeted, but vacant. I think there was over 200 positions in the Social Service Department that was budgeted and vacant, because this is becoming a growing problem for Medicaid and for other services, and this is why this lawsuit was brought. So there's a fear that if we are not complying with the consent decree, the courts could appoint a special master and they could take other issues with it. It's almost like Nassau County in miniature. As you know, Nassau County has a Financial Control Board. The courts would essentially do that for that segment of Social Services that deal with Medicaid and other related issues in terms of processing payments to vendors and processing applications. So that is a grave concern, and you are only echoing those concerns that we heard today. And I think it's something really as Legislators, which is one of the branches of government, we need to be concerned of, to have a voice on this so things don't get to that point. But thank you again, please.

MS. CIANO:

Thank you. I think, also, that's part of it. And I think a bigger picture is that people just need to be educated. You know, the information shouldn't be, you know, fishing through different websites and trying to piece together how to do this without having to hire a very expensive attorney, you know?

LEG. ROMAINE:

I could not agree with you -- a lot of people that are eligible for Medicaid, a lot of people that are eligible for Medicaid are dependent on other people for information, they are reliant on them. Many of them old, some of them are poor, some of them are children. This information should be readily accessible. And you make recommendations, which I think our federal delegation or Congressman, our U.S. Senators should take to heart in terms of simplifying the application form, which should be done, because I would hope -- I would hope that the Social Service Department would do outreach to various community groups that would deal with the aged population, would deal with the poor population, would deal with children, many of whom get Medicaid, so that applications could be furnished, so that instructions could be given, so that help or assistance could be given in filling out these applications, and you raise an excellent point. Thank you very much.

MS. CIANO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Barraga.

MS. CIANO:

Oh, hello.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Good afternoon, Merri.

MS. CIANO:

Hi.

LEG. BARRAGA:

You know, I really want to key in on your proposed recommendations for change in the Medicaid application process. When I take a look at the six recommendations, they're not major changes.

MS. CIANO:

No.

LEG. BARRAGA:

I mean, you're talking about caregivers should be given ten business days to respond to a pending request letter. Social Services should have ten business days after dated acknowledgement to contact the caregiver. Caregiver should be given more vocal instructions. Case workers and fair hearings should have an independent review board. These are not major changes. The question is whether or not our own County Department of Social Services, because we have to come up with 25% of the funding for Medicaid, can make these changes unilaterally, or would they tell you you have to really go to the State? But I'm not so sure any of this needs legislation. It's more or less adjusting regulations to a minor degree to make it a lot easier for caregivers to do the application process and know what to expect.

MS. CIANO:

I agree with you. And I'm not sure, you know, whose job or, you know, who should be doing what in trying to make these changes. I just know that more people find this whole process very confusing. And it really shouldn't take that I had to make a call to a Legislator to see even about getting heard. I've spoken to Social Services several times on behalf of Mrs. Closter and Mrs. Gesele and, you know, you're getting the runaround.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Yeah. As I indicated when we met last week, my office is in the process right now of setting a meeting with the Commissioner of Social Services and/or his Deputy, and with you and several others, to see if we can -- what we have to do to implement some of these changes.

MS. CIANO:

I can tell you it's greatly appreciated. And again, I said this before, this is not about me, this is about the people that I was helping, Wendy Goidel's clients. These people are really suffering, you know, and something really needs to be done, you know. So I really just appreciate everybody, you know, listening. And as I said, you know, we all know somebody, so we can just, you know, keep talking to other people and finally getting these changes to come to light.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Well, we should have, you know, an answer for you within a couple of days --

MS. CIANO:

I hope so.

LEG. BARRAGA:

-- on the meeting. Okay?

MS. CIANO:

I hope so. That's it?

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Ms. Ciano, thank you.

MS. CIANO:

Great. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thanks so much for being with us. And thank you to everybody who came along. It's good to see everybody today.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

Okay. We will go then to the agenda. Tabled resolutions: ***I.R. 1171 - designating April as "Month of the Military Child" (Stern)***. I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. MONTANO:

Second.

LEG. ANKER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Second by Legislator Anker. Anybody on the motion? All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? I.R. 1171 is approved. ***(Vote: Approved 5-0-0-0)***

LEG. MONTANO:

Put me on as a cosponsor, please.

LEG. ANKER:

And also a cosponsor.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

CHAIRMAN STERN:

I.R. 1295 - Adopting a Local Law to further strengthen the County's registration of non-profit veterans organizations (Cilmi & Stern). This does need to be tabled for a public hearing. I'll make that motion.

LEG. ANKER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Second by Legislator Anker. Anybody on the motion? Good? Good?

LEG. CILMI:

Yeah. I think we'll do it after the public hearing.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Very good. I'll call the vote. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? I.R. 1295 is tabled for public hearing. **(Vote: Tabled for Public Hearing 5-0-0-0).**

Okay. Anybody else? Anybody else? Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Even though we tabled it, you want to do a little discussion on this? There's a couple of questions I had that maybe the sponsor might want to consider as he moves along with the bill. Okay.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Sure, Legislator Barraga.

LEG. MONTANO:

May I ask for an explanation of the bill first

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Cilmi. You know what? Legislator Cilmi, before you begin, I just want to point out, Director Ronayne is still in the crowd with us. So, Director Ronayne, if there's any question on this legislation you're here to answer questions?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Thank you. Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

So this is basically an outgrowth of legislation that we've passed over the past couple of years in an effort to sort of get at and impede the efforts of some, shall we say, unscrupulous organizations, in their effort to raise money, portraying themselves to be local veterans groups when in reality in some cases they're not. So the legislation we passed last year eventually made it a criminal violation to raise money in Suffolk County as a veterans group, as a non-Congressionally chartered veterans group without first having registered with our Department of Veterans Affairs. What we encountered was that some of these groups were providing the necessary information to Veterans Affairs, which was required under these laws that we passed, but we're still raising the money. So they were able to register, and we were unable to prevent them from registering, because those laws only required a certain amount of information, and they were able to go out and continue to raise money.

So, basically, what we did here was Legislator Stern and I got together with Director Ronayne and with many of the veterans organizations, and talked for about an hour about how we could get at this more effectively, and the sum of that discussion is basically in this legislation, and what it does is a couple of things. Number one, it requires as part of the registration process these organizations to basically describe, you know, the -- how they're -- how the money is being spent. And number two, what it does is it says to them, "You may not portray yourselves as veterans." I'm being very basic in my description here, but, "You may not portray yourselves as veterans, if, in fact, you are

not." So I -- you cannot wear a uniform that is indicative of somebody in the armed forces if you are not, you know, authorized to wear that uniform.

So, I mean, that's basically -- you know, I don't know if Counsel's listening to my description, but if that's a fairly -- I think, Tom, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that's a fairly comprehensive description at a very basic level of what this legislation does.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

In a nutshell.

LEG. CILMI:

What's that?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

In a nutshell, yeah.

LEG. CILMI:

In a nutshell.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

As I understand the bill, this particular piece of legislation does not cover the 44 Congressionally chartered veterans organizations that most of us are very familiar with, right?

LEG. CILMI:

That's correct. In fact, those organizations are attached to the legislation as an addendum.

LEG. BARRAGA:

And, of course, the legislation talks about the percentage of dollars that go to the professional organization raising the money versus the organization itself, and in some cases you will find that the professional organization may keep 80 or 90% of what is raised. On the face of that, when you read about such a thing, it has a negative connotation. But there are organizations out there, legitimate organizations, that just do not have any ability whatsoever to raise funds from a telephonic, e-mail perspective, and they have to go out to these professional organizations, and that's what the organizations sometimes charge, 70 or 80, 90% of every dollar. But the legitimate organization takes the position, "If we didn't get the 10 or 20%, we wouldn't get anything, we wouldn't be able to raise a penny." So just keep that in mind. You know, it's in there, and it's suitable, that it does exist in the legislation, but often you'll find a legitimate organization that says, "Look, you know, I'd rather have 20 cents on the dollar than have zero."

LEG. CILMI:

If I may just readdress that concern.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Sure, Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

Legislator Barraga, that was a concern of ours as well, and we talked about that at length, actually, when we met with all of the different veterans organizations. And I think unanimously they agreed that it was better to have it in there than not to have it in there.

LEG. BARRAGA:

I understand. No, it's fine. As long as we understand that there is a legitimate reason why good organizations sometimes take very little, because if they didn't use a professional organization, they wouldn't be able to raise any money whatsoever.

The other element in your bill, the registration certificate, my feeling is that certificate -- see, where you see these groups is outside of supermarkets, Tom. You go out there and the guy's in fatigues. But I'd like to see the registration certificate, like a 12-by-12 inch-wise right on the table, right there, so that everybody knows. And I've had instances where, you know, I've gone up to people in fatigues and within two minutes I know they've never been in the military, this is a phony organization. And it's horrific what they do, because most people, most Americans you see somebody in a uniform of some type, you know, it's hard to go by them and not throw a quarter in or make a donation of a dollar. These guys are the worst, they're out there to rip off the system. So I'd like to see the registration certificate right on the table. And if it's not there, people, not -- probably the average person wouldn't know, but at least I'd go out there and say, "Look, you're not going to get a dime from me." Or if they're soliciting door to door, somewhere on them, the registration number with their name and their organization. The other thing?

LEG. CILMI:

If I may, Legislator Barraga, just to address that. That's actually part of the previous legislation that was passed that's required. I'm not exactly sure what the size of the certificate is, but they are required to display that certificate when -- and, by the way, some of them don't, but they're required by way of the previous legislation that was passed to do just that.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Well, I've had in the West Islip, Bay Shore area, three or four times in the last year these organizations have been outside of supermarkets and I've walked out, every single one was phony. And there's also a provision in the bill that, "No person soliciting funds from the public for a nonprofit veterans organization, either professionally or as a volunteer, shall dress in military fatigues or a military uniform when soliciting." I don't know why anybody would be dressed in uniform soliciting, period. I mean, I've gone up to these people, they're in fatigues, they look like slobs. Even before I say a word to them, I wonder why they're in uniform. They're a symbol of our military, but they're phonies. I think it should be a period after that and just, you know, that's it. You just -- you want to wear a shirt or a sweater indicating the organization, or a hat, so be it, but not in uniform, not soliciting money.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

As to -- before I go to Director Ronayne, as to Legislator Barraga's concern, Legislator Cilmi, of course, is correct, under the prior legislation that we passed, looking on -- if everybody has a copy of them, look on Page 3, capital "D". Under the old legislation it does require that there be the registration certificate, but it requires that it be on the premises at all times, and that it be presented upon request, which I think is slightly different than what Legislator Barraga is going to -- whether it should be on display.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Yeah. On the premises means to me like this organization has an office someplace and you put it on the wall. Well, they're in front of supermarkets, that's where they are, and it should be on the table, it should be somewhere, and it should be large enough that when I come out, I look for it and it's there.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

So perhaps, because we haven't yet gone to public hearing, Counsel advises that there be time to change just a couple of words there to put in that requirement.

LEG. CILMI:

Makes sense to me if it makes sense to you, Chairman.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay? All right. We'll fire away on that. That's good. Director Ronayne.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I completely agree about the display of the certificate. The certificate that is issued is an actual 8 1/2 by 11 certificate, it's not a wallet size card or an I.D. that you would wear on your shirt. It's easily displayable. So I agree, that that would be -- that would be as close to an ideal as we're likely to get in this situation.

With regard to the issue of -- and you're correct, some of these organizations are retaining 80 or 90%, and we have one group that is actually attempting to negotiate with their Congressionally chartered veterans service organization to increase the amount that they withhold, that they'll give the veterans an actually -- actually a smaller amount than the 90.

We had, again, as Legislator Cilmi said, a discussion at length on this issue with many of these organizations, and it was agreed, first of all, there would be nothing to preclude these organizations from continuing to use those solicitors, provided that they enrolled, they received the appropriate certificate, and that they make the required disclosures. There's nothing that would preclude them from continuing to use those organizations. We just felt that it was -- I think this follows with what you were saying. It allows the individual member of the general public who is making that donation to be aware of just where his money is actually going.

Quite honestly, when we're contacted through our offices, we simply suggest that if you are interested in making a donation, go down the street to your local American Legion, AmVets, Marine Corps League, whatever it might be, go to the entity within your local community. At least you know where your money is going. The misrepresentation is what really has us concerned here.

So the issue of the organizations not being permitted to continue to receive those funds, they could continue as long as they're -- as long as they like. It's less than desirable, but they will have that option.

And as far as the uniforms go, there's an issue right now, which is actually before SCOTUS. The Supreme Court of the United States is actually hearing the arguments on whether or not to allow the Stolen Valor Act to remain. The Ninth Circuit in California had struck it down. I believe the Tenth Circuit had upheld it. So the Supreme Court is supposed to make a decision on that in this judicial year as to whether or not the Stolen Valor Act would be allowed to continue. And that law specifically provides for who can and who cannot wear a uniform of the military -- of the U.S. armed services, as well as -- you know, the uniforms aside, we've got folks who do not wear uniforms, but they'll wear a cluster of ribbons or a row of metals, which is just as much of a misrepresentation. So those issues are covered more so under the Stolen Valor Act. Whether it's in good taste or not, we can't really tell them, those who are authorized to use the -- you know, wear the uniforms that they cannot. That would be a function of the Stolen Valor Act. But with this legislation, it would prevent those individuals within Suffolk County who are not, irregardless of the Stolen Valor Act, to be required to wear or to not wear those uniforms, again, resulting in that misrepresentation.

LEG. CILMI:

And, if I may, this bill provides for the revocation of the registration, of the certification in the event that they violate any of those clauses.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

They violate those clauses, or, and I think very significantly, if they misrepresent the allocation of their proceeds.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Well, you know, the way the legislation reads now is that they're not supposed to wear the uniform unless they are a bona fide military veteran and are in compliance with State and Federal law regarding the wearing of military uniforms. How am I supposed to determine that when I walk out of a supermarket and three guys are standing there in fatigues?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Unfortunately, most people will not. You have the ability to know who's on the level and who's not, I have that ability. Part of it would be a matter of us relying on -- as the phone call I received this morning was from an Iraqi veteran who had encountered one of these organizations, they were not wearing uniforms. But it would largely fall to people who have the ability to discern who should and who shouldn't be, based on what they're wearing, their conversations. It's -- again, it's less than an -- it's less than ideal.

LEG. BARRAGA:

I'll tell you what happens, Tom. It was a confrontational situation with me and I'm trying to avoid that. That's why I just don't feel that the uniform, when you're soliciting, is appropriate. Because, if you start questioning someone, you're going to say, "Well, you know, when were you in the service?" "Oh, really? And you're a veteran?" "Yeah." "Well, where did you serve? What's your MOS?" All of a sudden they realize, you know, there's a problem. And then you say to them, "Well, what are you wearing that uniform for?" That's a problem.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I had a guy tell me he was Navy Infantry.

*(*Laughter*)*

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Director, what then might you think about that as a suggestion? I think, if I understand Legislator Barraga, what he is suggesting is a provision that just ends it and says nobody, regardless of whether it's appropriate or not, nobody gets to wear the uniform, at least not while soliciting.

LEG. BARRAGA:

I have no qualms about an American Legion hat, Veterans of Foreign Wars. You see them in the Memorial Day Parade wearing their hat, fine. You want to wear a shirt or a sweater, but not the uniform.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Well, that was going to be my next question, because we do specifically exempt those Congressionally chartered veterans organizations, and note those guys wear their hats and their jackets. So we're in agreement then that those organizations, what they're doing now is acceptable?

LEG. BARRAGA:

It's fine. This law is not applicable to them anyway.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Cilmi

LEG. CILMI:

I mean, unless -- if our Counsel could comment on the possibility of doing that, I would be open to including it.

MR. NOLAN:

Well, I have a -- let me pose a question to Director. I'm just wondering. I mean, in terms of a military veteran with their uniform, is it appropriate under Federal and State regulations, laws for them to solicit money while wearing their uniform? I don't know the answer to that question, but I'm curious.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I don't know that that's really covered anywhere. I mean, there is a federal regulation that allows veterans of military service who had honorable service. There is -- there are criteria for who can and cannot wear a uniform. I think it's more a matter of whether or not it's in good taste.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Most of the time, when you're allowed to wear a uniform, it's usually in ceremonial events, a Memorial Day Parade, the dedication we had last year in Hauppauge here. But you just don't throw the uniform on and go out and solicit bucks, you just don't do it.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And, truthfully, most veterans --

LEG. BARRAGA:

Whether there's a law against it or not, that's something -- you know, you just don't do that.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And most veterans that I know do not and would not.

MR. NOLAN:

We'll look at that issue, okay?

LEG. MONTANO:

Yeah.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

Tom, thanks. And we're running late, so I'm going to be very quick. You actually answered most of the questions that I had. Maybe a couple of suggestions. I agree that this is a serious issue. Number one, I would probably recommend to the sponsor that we make the violation in Section B, \$1,000 or up to a -- I don't know about the year imprisonment, but for each violation. Do you understand what I'm saying, Tom? If an organization that's decertified and they continue to solicit, then the penalty should apply to each solicitation individually, as opposed to -- the way I read it is one blanket solicitation.

Number two, and you wouldn't have to take this up now, I agree that they should be decertified -- I don't know whether or not it's appropriate, Counsel, to even make an application to revoke their not-for-profit status if they're in violation, and I'll tell you why. There's a -- there was a publication

in the AG's office called Pennies for Charities and it analyzed what the charity was collecting and what it was paying for administrative expenses. And you mentioned that 80/10 or 80/20 split. The problem with that is, and I don't know if this bill covers it, the public, the person that's being solicited, when he or she is asked to give a hundred dollars, I don't think they know that \$80 of that hundred is going to the professional fundraiser. And if I was going to give a hundred dollar check, I'd want to make sure it went to an organization where the majority of that money was going to go, not to that fundraiser, but to the purposes of the organization. So does this bill cover that?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

It does. I think it covers that under the disclosure component where it's -- you must either -- if it's via telephone, you must verbally disclose the allocation of funds, or if you're doing it in a public place like a supermarket or a shopping center, you must have signage to that effect prominently displayed.

LEG. MONTANO:

Oh. So basically saying that 20% of the proceeds will go towards the charity, and 80% is going to the fundraiser.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Correct.

LEG. MONTANO:

Good. Okay.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

And that will also allow us the opportunity to subsequently reverify that that continues to be the case. And if is not, that becomes subject for revocation.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay. And we'll deal with this in public hearing. The other point that I wanted to make was that it might be difficult to have a -- the certificate displayed, but maybe your office could, in lieu of a certificate that you carry around or you make 50 copies, have one statement that they can carry, saying that this agency is certified by Suffolk County pursuant to blah, blah, blah, and our certificate is on file. Because I don't know if you want all those copies of the original certificate photocopied and passed around, so that's just a procedural thing that you guys can work --

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Well, the nice thing about the actual certificate, the physical certificate has an expiration date on it.

LEG. MONTANO:

But does it have a seal?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

It does.

LEG. MONTANO:

Right. So what if an agency is soliciting in 15 locations on a particular day?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

They would be -- that organization would be covered under the -- under that individual permit, but that permit would have not only a permit number, but, more importantly to me, an expiration date. So a member of the public would be able to know whether or not that permit were current or not.

LEG. MONTANO:

Right. But if you have one seal in 15 locations, how do you take that -- what do you do, copy the seal and just display it?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Yeah, and we would be happy to do that.

LEG. MONTANO:

All right.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

We'll provide the seal and we'll laminate them if they'd like. I mean --

LEG. MONTANO:

Yeah. I would recommend some kind of statement that maybe they could request so that if they have different locations. Those are just technical things.

Last question I had is that I'm familiar with the Circuit decision that you referred to and the discrepancy now. Has the Supreme Court already granted argument, or are they in the process of granting certiorari? I'm not sure that status.

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I believe they've already heard the case.

LEG. MONTANO:

Oh, they've heard the case, your just waiting for a decision?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

I believe they were supposed to rule by June.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay. That's what I red. I wasn't clear. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Legislator Anker.

LEG. ANKER:

Yeah. Again, this is a problem. You know, you have people who are basically taking money from our vets and who desperately need it, you know, for terrible reasons. But in the resolution information or Exhibit A, it gives a list of the organizations involved that have a certificate. Is this information available on the web where if we had a Suffolk County Police Officer -- say Legislator Barraga had seen someone at a supermarket, he felt that this was not a true veteran, we could call Suffolk County Police and then they could check the records, or at least check the website to see if they are actually legit?

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

That is in the process of being done.

LEG. ANKER:

Wonderful. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Okay. Thank you

DIRECTOR RONAYNE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STERN:

Thank you, everyone.

*(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 1:09 P.M. *)*