Guide To The Suffolk County Legislature

2017

A message from Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory

In the continuing effort to make Suffolk County government as open and transparent as possible, the Legislature has made several changes recently. We began live video streaming all general legislative meetings, and we also hold two Committee Week cycles in Riverhead.

These changes were part of an effort to help residents take an active role in county government. That is also the purpose of the guide before you now. It is filled with information on what Suffolk County does, how it does it, and how you can become a part of that process.

In 2017, we will continue to focus on building an economy that will ensure that middle-class families have the resources they need to thrive. Revitalization of our downtowns will remain a priority, and we will continue to explore options for transit-oriented developments and affordable housing. Our goal is to ensure that a quality higher education is accessible to any with a dream, and to assist in creating good-paying jobs to help young people eager to build a life in Suffolk. Understanding that we are the stewards of your hard-earned tax dollars, we will create an ad hoc budget committee to cut the county's structural deficit. We will continue our efforts to create programs that support our vets and to find ways to assist the homeless, the hungry, and the less fortunate.

We hope the information you will find here will help you become an active participant in Suffolk County government. We look forward to working with—and for—you.

LEGISLATORS

District	Legislator
1	Albert J. Krupski
2	Bridget Fleming
3	Kate M. Browning
4	Tom Muratore
5	Kara Hahn
6	Sarah Anker
7	Rob Calarco
8	William J. Lindsay III
9	Monica Martinez
10	Tom Cilmi
11	Thomas F. Barraga
12	Leslie Kennedy
13	Robert Trotta
14	Kevin McCaffrey
15	DuWayne Gregory
16	Steve Stern
17	Lou D'Amaro
18	Dr. William Spencer

How The Legislature Works

The Suffolk County Legislature is the elected body responsible for public health and public safety. The Legislature sets county policies, reviews the administration of government, appropriates funding, levies taxes, and reviews and adopts the annual budget.

The Legislature is composed of 18 legislators elected to two-year terms to represent the citizens in a Legislative District. Among them, a Presiding Officer is elected, who chairs the General Meetings.

General Meetings occur 14 times a year at the William H. Rogers Legislature Building in Hauppauge or at the Evans K. Griffing Building in Riverhead.

Live video feeds of our sessions are broadcast on the Internet. Now, when the Legislature is in general session, interested parties can visit http://legis.suffolkcountyny.gov and listen to our discussion and our votes. Audio recording of meetings are also available.

Prior to each General Meeting, the legislature holds Committee Week, during which the (12) standing committees of the legislature, with several legislators serving on each one, meet to discuss legislation that will be addressed at the upcoming General Meeting. The public is always welcome to attend both the Legislative and Committee Meetings.

POWERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

Suffolk County Legislature has the power to:

- Organize, alter and abolish any unit of county government or to transfer any function or duty from one such unit to another.
- Make appropriations, levy taxes and incur indebtedness for the purpose of carrying out any of the powers and duties conferred or imposed on the county or any officer, board, commission or authority.
- Investigate the performance of any of the functions, offices or departments of Suffolk County government.

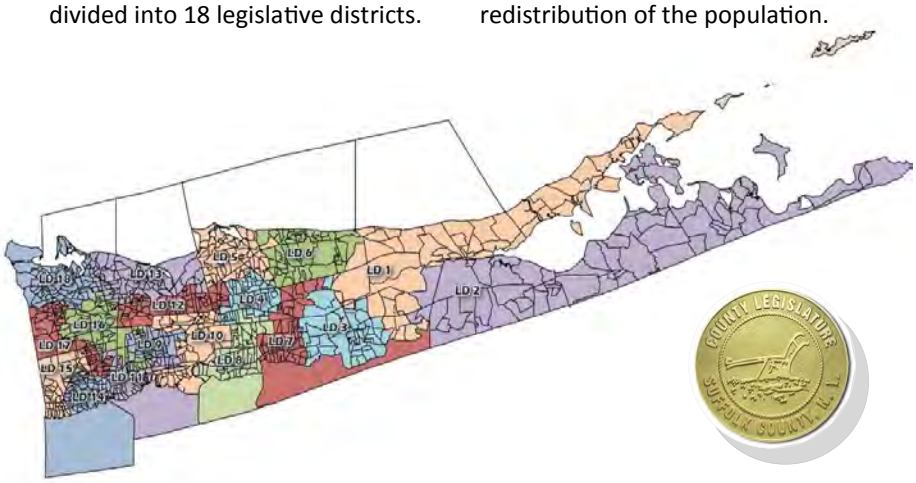
HISTORY OF THE LEGISLATURE

The Suffolk County Legislature was established in January 1970, replacing the 200-year-old Board of Supervisors.

With the establishment of the Suffolk County Legislature, the county was divided into 18 legislative districts.

Every two years, the residents of each of the districts elect a representative to the Legislature.

Every 10 years, after each census is tallied, the boundaries of the districts are redrawn according to the redistribution of the population.



Legislative Committees

Leadership, membership, jurisdiction and schedule of Legislative Committees are determined by the Presiding Officer. Each committee is led by a chair and vice chair.

When a bill is proposed, it is assigned it to a committee. Committees discuss proposals, bring in experts to inform committee members, listen to testimony from concerned citizens, and vote on bills.

If a bill is tabled in committee, it will appear on the committee's next agenda under "Tabled Resolutions." If a bill is passed through the committee, or is approved by a majority of the members present, it will move to the agenda of the next General Meeting for consideration by the full legislature.

Each committee meets during Committee Week, held the week before a General Meeting. The Committee Weeks of May 2 and Aug. 29 will be held for the first time at the Evans K. Griffing Building in Riverhead. All other committee meetings this year will be held at the William H. Rogers Legislature Building in Hauppauge.

2017 Committee Assignments & Schedule

MONDAYS

Environment, Planning & Agriculture
10 a.m.
Hahn (chair), Krupski (vice), Anker, Fleming, Muratore, Trotta

Seniors & Consumer Protection
12:30 p.m.
Anker (chair), Stern (vice), Cilmi, Krupski, Muratore

Public Works, Transportation & Energy
2 p.m.
Krupski (chair), Muratore (vice), Browning, Calarco, Fleming, Stern, Trotta

WEDNESDAYS

Government Operations, Personnel, IT & Housing
10 a.m.
Calarco (chair), Lindsay (vice), Hahn, Kennedy, McCaffrey

Parks & Recreation
12:30 p.m.
Hahn (chair), Lindsay (vice), Kennedy, McCaffrey, Stern

Economic Development
2 p.m.
Lindsay (chair), Stern (vice), Hahn, McCaffrey, Trotta

TUESDAYS

Veterans
9:30 a.m.
Stern (chair), Anker (vice), Barraga, D'Amaro, Kennedy, Martinez

Budget & Finance
10:30 a.m.
D'Amaro (chair), Martinez (vice), Barraga, Browning, Kennedy, Stern

Education & Human Services
12:30 p.m.
Martinez (chair), Barraga (vice), Browning, Calarco, Hahn, Kennedy

THURSDAYS

Public Safety
9:30 a.m.
Browning (chair), Calarco (vice), Cilmi, Fleming, Hahn, Kennedy, Martinez, Spencer

Ways & Means
12:30 p.m.
Fleming (chair), Spencer (vice), Browning, Calarco, Cilmi, Martinez, Trotta

Health
2 p.m.
Spencer (chair), Fleming (vice), Calarco, Cilmi, Kennedy, Martinez, Trotta

2017 General Meeting Dates

Feb. 7	9:30 a.m.	Hauppauge
March 7	9:30 a.m.	Riverhead
March 28	9:30 a.m.	Hauppauge
April 25	4 p.m.	Hauppauge
May 16	9:30 a.m.	Riverhead
June 6	9:30 a.m.	Hauppauge
June 20	4 p.m.	Riverhead
July 25	9:30 a.m.	Hauppauge
Sept. 6	9:30 a.m.	Riverhead
Oct. 3	4 p.m.	Hauppauge
Nov. 8	1 p.m.	Hauppauge
Nov. 21	9:30 a.m.	Hauppauge
Dec. 5	9:30 a.m.	Riverhead
Dec. 19	9:30 a.m.	Hauppauge

Is there an issue you would like to bring to the county's attention? Is there a piece of legislation you have thoughts on? One way to let your voice be heard is to address the Legislature directly during one of its meetings.

If you wish to speak at a General Meeting or a Committee Meeting, please follow these simple steps:

1) Prepare your comments. There are two opportunities during a meeting to speak before the Legislature: during the "public portion," when you may speak on any topic; and during a "public hearing," when you must speak on the specific agenda item being discussed. Speakers are limited to three minutes.

2) Fill out a "speaker's card," available in the lobby of the Legislative Auditorium.

3) Wait for your name to be called. Speaking order is first come, first heard.

4) Walk to the podium in front of the horseshoe and deliver your message.

5) You may also provide copies of your comments in writing to the Legislative Clerk. Please bring 20 copies.

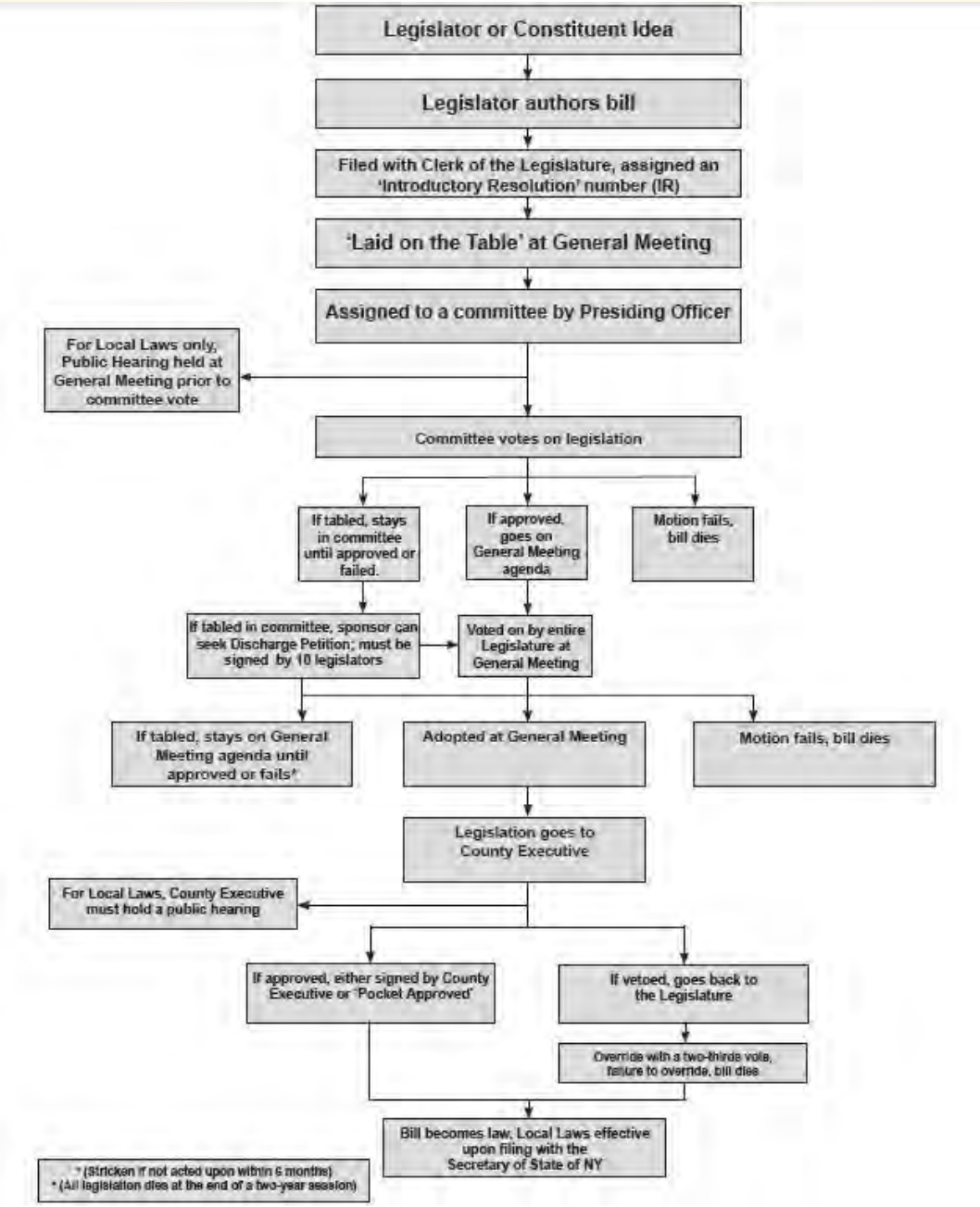
How A Bill Becomes A Law

Proposed bills are filed with the Clerk and "laid on the table" at each General Meeting.

Bills are categorized as:

- **Resolutions:** These only effect the operation of government and are passed by a majority vote of the Legislature.

- **Local Laws:** Generally speaking, a local law regulates the behavior of citizens or entities within Suffolk County. It requires two public hearings, one held by the Legislature before the Committee may pass the law, and one held by the County Executive before he/she may sign the law. It require a majority vote of the Legislature for passage and must be filed with the Secretary of State before it becomes law.

- **Certificate of Necessity:** This may be presented by the County Executive at a General Meeting if the case can be made demonstrating a need for immediate consideration of a resolution; this means it bypasses the committee process. This requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the body for adoption.

- **Home Rule message**: This is a request by the County Legislature for specific legislation from the New York State Legislature concerning the property, affairs, or government of Suffolk. It is initiated by the State Assembly and/or the Senate. The Home Rule request must accompany state legislation for it to be voted on by either House. If the County Executive endorses a Home Rule request a majority vote of the Legislature is necessary. If it is not endorsed by the County Executive, a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Suffolk Legislature is required.