

\$16M for anti-gang effort on LI

State funds for jobs, training and fighting MS-13

BY RICK BRAND
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The new state budget will bring \$16 million in new money to fight criminal gangs in Suffolk and Nassau counties, much of it targeted for Brentwood and Central Islip, aides to Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said.

Lisa Black, Bellone's chief of staff, said the new funding grew out of cooperative efforts among the counties, local communities and the state to battle recruitment by gangs such as MS-13.

The state funding includes:

- \$3 million for Catholic Charities during the next three years for case management of unaccompanied children, who move to Long Island from other countries without their parents, to help counter efforts to enlist them into gangs.

- \$5 million for a summer jobs voucher program administered by state and county labor departments for at-risk youths in Suffolk and Nassau.

- \$2 million for local schools and nonprofits to run after-school programs to keep students engaged in sports, music and educational activities. Officials said the state funding will replace federal funding for after-school activities that was cut several years ago.

- \$1.5 million over three years for Empowerment Collabora-



Steve Bellone, pictured Monday, said the state funds will help Suffolk to undermine violent gangs.

tive of Long Island, a Bohemia nonprofit, to provide training and support in middle schools and high schools to combat gang involvement.

Beyond the anti-gang funding, Suffolk will get a \$522,600 increase in bus aid, bringing it to \$26,966,300 for the coming year, county officials said. However, Suffolk was unsuccessful in getting any funding from increased ride-sharing fees in the state budget.

The money will go to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Suffolk cut nine bus routes in 2016. County officials blamed state formulas for transit that failed to take into account the wide geographic

areas Suffolk buses must cover.

Bellone's office said Suffolk also will get increased funding from the state's Farm to School Program, which provides aid for school lunches for which local farmers provide 30 percent of ingredients.

Funding for the program will rise from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million.

Cops: Suffolk drugstore robbery may have Nassau links

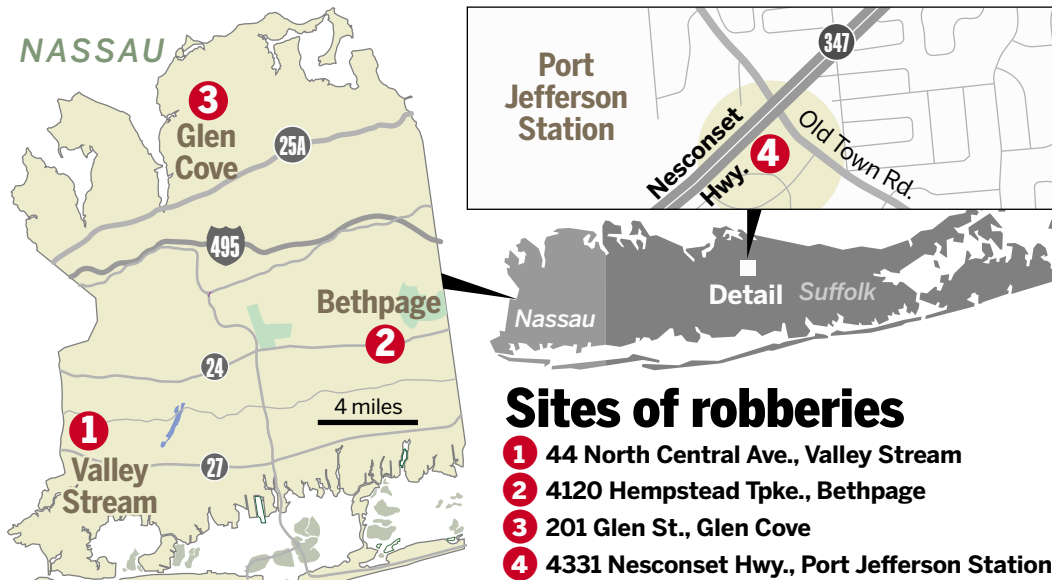
BY LISA IRIZARRY
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Three armed men in ski masks stole narcotics and cash from a pharmacy in Port Jefferson Station early Tuesday morning, and authorities are investigating whether the holdup might be related to similar robberies in Nassau, police said.

Suffolk police said the Tuesday robbery happened about 3:40 a.m. at the 24-hour CVS on Nesconset Highway, and the three men "restrained" at least one employee during the incident. The suspects then fled in a vehicle, police said. No one was injured.

No further information was immediately available, including what type of vehicle was used in the getaway or the types of drugs stolen.

Two weeks ago Nassau police released pictures in connection with similar robberies. Those robberies happened between 2:30 and 5 a.m. at a CVS



Sites of robberies

- 1 44 North Central Ave., Valley Stream
- 2 4120 Hempstead Tpke., Bethpage
- 3 201 Glen St., Glen Cove
- 4 4331 Nesconset Hwy., Port Jefferson Station

in Glen Cove, a CVS in Valley Stream and a Walgreens in Bethpage.

"We are trying to figure out if we have patterns and how we can assist [Suffolk police]," a

Nassau police spokeswoman said.

The Glen Cove robbery occurred on March 15 at 5 a.m. when two men walked into the Glen Street store and ap-

proached the pharmacy counter. They displayed handguns, demanded money and narcotics and the employees complied, police said. The suspects then fled.

On Feb. 17, two men, both wearing dark-colored clothing including gloves and masks, robbed a CVS on North Central Avenue in Valley Stream at gunpoint, then robbed a Walgreens on Hempstead Turnpike in Bethpage at gunpoint two days later, Nassau police said.

Amphetamines, oxycodone, Percocet and cough medicine were stolen in the Nassau robberies, police said. No one was injured in any of the incidents.

There have been similar incidents in Queens, but a New York City police spokesman said so far no connection is being made to those on Long Island.

Suffolk police are asking anyone with information on the Tuesday robbery to call the Major Case Unit at 631-852-8555 or Crime Stoppers at 800-220-8477.

Police are asking anyone with information on the Nassau robberies to call 800-244-8477.

With William Murphy