

A hint of a milder winter

Outlook calls for a weak El Niño climate pattern

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With a bit of luck, Long Island could be in for a milder than normal winter.

The Island is in a stretch of the country showing just a slight tilt toward milder than normal temperatures to average out over December, January and February — which weather aficionados classify as winter — according to long-range forecasters.

The normal average temperature for the three months is 33 degrees at Long Island MacArthur Airport, with normal liquid precipitation amounting to 10.96 inches. As for snow, that would be 19.2 inches, according to weather service data.

A weak El Niño climate pattern has a slight chance of influencing temperatures for the northeastern United States, making them less severe, ac-

ording to the outlook issued Thursday by the Climate Prediction Center, which is under the umbrella of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

El Niño, which starts with periodic warming sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, is a climate pattern that can affect weather conditions worldwide. While El Niños vary in strength and impacts, they can result in milder temperatures and above-average precipitation for the Northeast, said Jessica Spaccio, climatologist with the Northeast Regional Climate Center.

But residents shouldn't get their hopes too high for a balmy winter just yet. "It's too soon to rule out a cold winter," Spaccio said. "Even in warmer seasons, we can still have cold snaps and winter storms," so, "be ready for winter regardless."

The Island is in an area with equal chances of above, below or right around normal precipitation, the Climate Prediction Center said.

Long-range forecasters had a bit more confidence in the outlook for other areas of the country. This year's outlook indicates

Electric, natural gas costs likely stable

BY ZACHARY R. DOWDY
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State officials expect virtually no increase in the cost of electricity and a slight uptick in the cost of natural gas as the winter season approaches.

Long Islanders, however, may be in for a break on natural gas costs.

The New York State Public Service Commission on Thursday announced the prices for electric power will remain about the same as they were last year and that any increase in gas prices may be offset by milder temperatures. The PSC, which regulates utilities, credited the utility companies' actions as a significant buffer to any market — or weather-driven volatility in prices.

"The utilities serving New York State have adequate sources and supplies of electricity and natural gas to meet current customer demands even under the most severe conditions this winter," Commission Chairman John B. Rhodes said in a news release. "We will continue to monitor the utilities' ability to meet customer needs, particularly during extreme cold conditions."

The agency said a residential customer using 600 kilowatt-hours per month is expected to pay about \$39 per month for supply but the actual amount will vary by utility, and "the average residential customer using 720 therms of natural gas can expect to pay about \$800 in total November through March."

Those figures are projected to be higher on Long Island, where the cost of living is higher than the statewide average.

Elizabeth Flagler, a spokeswoman for PSEG Long Island, said the average customer uses 755 kilowatt-hours each month, and that the utility estimates the cost for supply to be approximately \$73 per month. She expects the prices to remain flat.

Wendy Ladd, a spokeswoman for National Grid, which supplies natural gas on Long Island, said, "Based on typical usage of 720 therms for a five-month heating season (November to March), National Grid residential gas customers are forecasted to pay about \$882 this winter," a decrease of \$8 from last year.

a much stronger probability for areas of the Pacific Northwest and Northern Plains to come in warmer than normal and a stretch along the southern tier of

the county to be wetter.

The outlook is "probabilistic in nature," meaning "other outcomes are always possible, just less likely," Mike Halpert,

deputy director of the prediction center, said Thursday. In addition, a weaker El Niño can mean "a fair amount of variability," he said.

Republican in AG race has more cash on hand

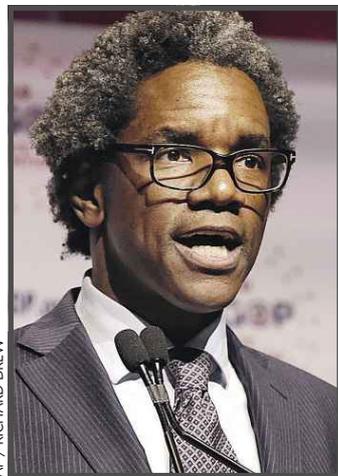
BY MICHAEL GORMLEY
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ALBANY — Republican Keith Wofford enters the final weeks of his underdog campaign for state attorney general with more money on hand and a TV ad blitz in the can to use against Democrat Letitia James in what polls show is the GOP's best shot at winning a statewide seat.

Wofford, a Manhattan attorney, had \$400,977 in his campaign account as of his Oct. 8 financial disclosure report.

James, the New York City public advocate, had \$383,808 on hand at a time when Democrats in the heavily Democratic state usually have an advantage. James, however, had to fund a bruising four-way primary, depleting her account.

In the last three months, Wofford received \$755,363 in contributions to James' \$320,363, state records show.



AP / RICHARD DREW

\$400,977
Wofford's
campaign
account

As of Oct. 8

Keith Wofford,
GOP candidate
for state
attorney
general

Wofford's campaign has paid \$1 million from a recent surge in contributions to a television production company for ads that stress his Buffalo roots and the need for an independent attorney general rather than one "hand-picked" by the governor.

Wofford's late spending is the result in part of a lucrative final month of fundraising, including \$169,947 collected in a single day, Oct. 1, records show.

The contributions included \$25,000 from billionaire investor and philanthropist Kenneth Langone, who also contributed



AP / KEVIN HAGEN

\$383,808
James'
campaign
account

As of Oct. 8

Letitia James,
the Democrat,
funded a
bruising
primary.

ture corruption cases.

James said Wofford would give a "free pass" to Wall Street, which the attorney general monitors, and big pharmaceutical companies, which the office regulates. James also says Wofford supports Republican President Donald Trump's agenda, an assertion Wofford denies.

"When I get in office, I am severing my ties with my law firm," Wofford said in an interview Thursday. "She will never sever her political ties. That's the difference."

James spokesman, Jack Sterne said, "New Yorkers can't trust him [Wofford] to be transparent, let alone take on pressing issues like corruption in Albany, protecting our rights and standing up to Trump."

Also running for attorney general are Nancy Sliwa on the Reform Party line, Green Party candidate Michael Sussman and Christopher Garvey of the Libertarian Party.