

EDITORIALS

Privacy wins another round

The Supreme Court is progressively adjusting the nation's laws to the digital reality of everyday life, especially when it protects the information cellphones can reveal.

In recognizing that details of a person's physical movement exist on his or her cellphone, the court ruled Friday that police must obtain a search warrant to get data from cellphone providers. There is an exception for emergency situations. To obtain the records, police must show to a court there is probable cause to believe a crime was committed, a much higher standard than the previous one developed in 1979, when the only phones were landlines. In that era, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote, "few could have imagined a society in which a phone goes wherever its owner goes, conveying to the wireless carrier not just dialed digits, but a detailed and comprehensive record of the person's movements."

It's the third recent court decision to favor an individual's privacy, protections rooted in the Constitution's Fourth Amendment. Those cases required a search warrant for police to attach a GPS device to a vehicle or examine the contents of a cellphone. In Friday's ruling, the court went beyond the facts of the 10-year-old case in which prosecutors used cell-tower data they obtained from Sprint and Metro PCS as evidence to show that Timothy Carpenter was in the vicinity during the armed robbery of mobile-phone store.

Back then, tower technology generated only a record of when a call was made and could pinpoint just a neighborhood. The majority opinion said it was important to project ahead as rapidly changing technology is likely to pose more intrusive threats to privacy.

Progress in technology always has given the government the potential to abuse power. It was time for the court to update the rules to protect our privacy.

— The editorial board

All eyes on Brookhaven's noble efforts to cut costs

The \$20 million state grant awarded recently to Brookhaven is more than the payoff for winning a statewide competition to encourage local governments to share services, consolidate and increase efficiencies. It's really a down payment on the opportunity for Long Island to remake itself and reduce taxes for its residents.

That's big. Really big.

The ball is now in the court of Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine, who spearheaded Brookhaven's proposal, and he's got all sorts of good ideas, including the overarching one: It's time to change the structure of government and how it delivers services.

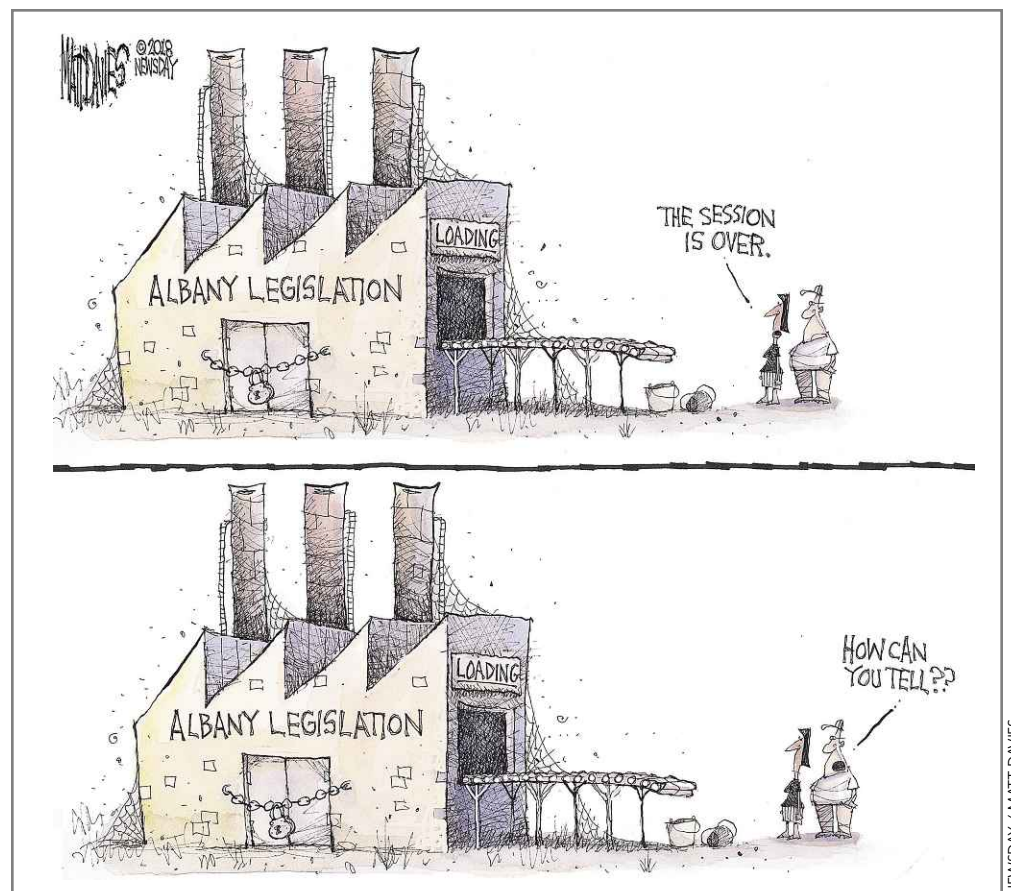
Brookhaven plans to continue to consolidate special districts, like erosion, sewer and water districts, and offer its tax collection services to villages and school districts in the town. It's going to enter into similar agreements for bulk purchases of sand, salt and the like. It plans to use some of the \$20 million to buy equipment it can share with villages — like street sweepers, a machine that vacuums leaves out of storm drains, and a garbage truck to pick up recyclables from the 23 school districts in Brookhaven — and to build a truck wash at the town landfill for school district buses and public works trucks. The list includes sharing information technology and consolidating cybersecurity.

All of it has the potential to cut the cost of government with the savings passed on to taxpayers. But local governments and school districts must follow suit and actually cut taxes, not use the savings to increase spending elsewhere.

Romaine says he hopes the experiment is a model for the state. We hope all of Long Island is paying attention.

— The editorial board

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

Was Gov. Cuomo pandering?

On the surface, it seems great that Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo came to the Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns & Rockaway in Lawrence to announce a state grant that makes \$25 million available to protect private schools from hate crimes ["Private schools win security aid," News, June 14]. But reading further we discover that of the 45 private schools which have been awarded \$2.1 million thus far, all but two are Jewish organizations; the other two are Roman Catholic.

This, to me, reeks of selectivity and favoritism of one group over others. Once again we are told it is to combat the ubiquitous and growing threat of anti-Semitism from white supremacist groups. Why haven't any Muslim or African-American organizations received

money for their protection? Maybe Cuomo's real motive was political, to win back some Jewish voters in this conservative district.

Harry Katz,
Southold

Key concerns about legal marijuana

Maybe I'm misunderstanding something. We crucify tobacco smokers — no, I have never smoked — but now New York State's health commissioner is recommending legalization of recreational use of marijuana ["Backing legal marijuana," News, June 19].

Will it be OK to be subjected to secondhand pot smoke? We tell kids to, "Just say no" to drugs, then we say, go for it!

Nancy Zappala,
Farmingdale

With all the money spent on ads and free cessation med-

ications offered by New York State to prompt smokers to quit cigarettes, I find it ludicrous that this state is considering legalizing recreational marijuana.

Yes, cigarettes threaten smokers' health and those nearby, but they do not alter one's thinking, make anyone high by their use, or cause contact highs to those within the proximity of the smoker. Where will pot smoking be allowed? At the wheel of a car? At home with babies and children? On the street? In theaters, clubs and bars?

Our government is opening another can of worms for the sake of collecting more tax dollars while jeopardizing the lives of users and nonusers.

This government should put the health and welfare of its people above its quest for their hard-earned money via another sin tax. Someone needs to wake up and realize