

Bellone veto of borrowing bill stands

■ **Override fails** when two Democrats switch votes

■ **Comptroller:** 'A village idiot could decipher' politics

BY RICK BRAND

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The Suffolk County Legislature, reversing position, failed to override County Executive Steve Bellone's veto of a bill to give Comptroller John Kennedy the ability to negotiate sales of up to \$565 million in short-term cash flow borrowing to react to volatile markets.

The borrowing measure, approved on a 12-6 vote in December, fell two votes short of the needed two-thirds majority for an override when Legis. William Spencer (D-Centerport) and Monica Martinez (D-Brentwood) switched sides.

Also Tuesday, lawmakers unanimously approved a measure requiring the county to detail the number of sexual harassment and discrimination lawsuits, complaints and settlements since 2015 and track the statistics in the future.

Bellone, a Democrat, had vetoed the bill borrowing sought by Kennedy, a Republican, and lobbied lawmakers to block an override. Bellone said the legislation would eliminate one of the checks and balances in Suffolk's procurement system. Kennedy currently needs a waiver from a county committee to negotiate the borrowing.

After the vote, Kennedy said, "Even a village idiot could decipher the politics. If this was a different [party] registration, the law would already be filed."

Richard Tortora, Suffolk's outside fiscal adviser, said recent market swings have increased the need to give the comptroller flexibility to move fast to get the best deal and make sure all notes are sold.

Tortora said he was most concerned about the year-end period, when Suffolk must sell \$410 million in tax anticipation notes at a time when demand can be slack. Tortora said shifting market conditions could cost Suffolk as much as \$800,000 in added costs.

But Legis. Robert Calarco (D-Patchogue) said Kennedy's past requests for waivers have always been approved and never impeded his efforts to negotiate a sale.

"We have an established process that works," Calarco said.

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (D-Copiague) said the new measure would have increased transparency by requiring the comptroller to disclose details of the sale and how different proposals are rated — issues the waiver committee never considers.

Spencer said Kennedy has his full support but fears changing the process. "These changes would be in perpetuity," Spencer said.

Martinez said she was "troubled" that all sides had not come to an agreement. She urged Bellone and Kennedy to come to a compromise within several weeks or she would reintroduce the bill herself.

The sexual harassment measure was aimed at combating sexual misconduct following widespread allegations of abuse in business, entertainment and government.

The resolution instructs the director of labor relations to provide lawmakers with statistics on the number, type and disposition of employee disciplinary proceedings involving sexual harassment or discrimination for 2015, 2016 and 2017.

The resolution also directs the Suffolk County attorney to provide statistics on sexual harassment and discrimination claims filed against the county in court or before other administrative bodies.

Relative motion



Cousins Lucy Caldwell, 15, left, and Mia Caldwell, 11, both visiting family on Long Island from Argentina, glide around the ice rink at Christopher Morley Park in Roslyn Tuesday.

DANIELLE FINKELSTEIN

Ramos daughter's pay cut \$92G

BY RICK BRAND

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The daughter of Assemb. Phil Ramos will lose \$92,669 in annual salary after her demotion Monday at the Suffolk County Board of Elections.

The move came after Ramos' wife, Angela, in September lost a Democratic primary for Suffolk County Legislature to Legis. Monica Martinez (D-Brentwood).

Replacing the Ramos' daughter is Martinez's sister-in-law, Marisol Martinez, 54, who is married to Babylon Town Board member and Deputy Supervisor Tony Martinez. Tony Martinez is a key ally of Suffolk Democratic chairman Rich Schaffer, who also is Babylon Town supervisor.

Tina Ramos, 36, the Democrats' \$138,663-a-year Hispanic outreach coordinator, will move into a \$45,994-a-year job as assistant elections clerk March 1. She has worked at the board since 2003 and held the coordinator's post since 2012.

Schaffer said the shift simply was part of a reorganization by Democratic elections Commissioner Anita Katz.

"There's no story," Schaffer said. "We deal with primaries on the field and only on the field."

Several Republicans saw the elections board move as politically motivated. "I like Monica and I like Richie, but for him to say it's just reorganization, to me, it appears more like to the victors go the spoils," said Legis. Kevin McCaffrey (R-Lindenhurst).

Phil, Angela and Tina Ramos did not return calls for comment.

Monica and Tony Martinez said they were unaware of Marisol Martinez's promotion.

Martinez beat Angela Ramos by 66 percent to 34 in the primary.

Katz said the demotion was one of several moves, including promotions for three other election officials to fill vacancies due to retirements.

She said Marisol Martinez, who has worked at the board for three years, will move up from assistant elections clerk. "She speaks fluent Spanish, can read fluently in Spanish and has a background as a community organizer working for Catholic Charities. That's the direction I chose to go in," Katz said.