

# Call to have LI oil forum

BY CARL MACGOWAN

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Long Island officials have asked the federal government to move a hearing next week on an offshore oil drilling plan from Albany to a site on the Island.

The Feb. 15 meeting on the U.S. Department of the Interior's proposal to expand drilling to as many as nine sites in the Atlantic Ocean, including two off Long Island, is the only scheduled hearing in New York.

Brookhaven Town Supervisor Edward P. Romaine, in a letter sent Tuesday to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, said the Albany hearing "would be inconvenient for many Long Island residents." He asked that the meeting be moved to Long Is-

land, or that a second meeting be held on the Island.

"Hosting a public forum at a landlocked city three hours away from the shoreline of New York will make it more difficult for members of the public who have an interest in coastal waters in their backyards to attend," Romaine wrote, adding he opposes the drilling plan.

An Interior Department spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

Assemb. Steven Englebright (D-Setauket), who is co-hosting a separate state hearing on the drilling plan Wednesday in Smithtown, also said the federal hearing should be moved to Long Island.

"I don't know why they would think the appropriate place to

hold a hearing [is . . . ] the foothills of the Adirondacks," he said. "That's almost as senseless as the proposal itself."

President Donald Trump's administration last month announced a draft plan to authorize nine new drilling lease sales in the Atlantic Ocean, including two in a coastal region that includes New York. Specific sites have not been identified.

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo has asked the federal government to remove the New York sites from the list, calling the drilling plan an "unacceptable threat" to the coastline.

The federal government is holding 22 hearings on the plan, including the Albany meeting, which is to be at 3 p.m. at a Hilton hotel. Meet-

ings also are planned in Hartford, Boston, Trenton and Providence.

U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-Shirley) said in a statement a hearing should be held on Long Island, "instead of or in addition to where it is currently scheduled to take place in Albany."

"On Long Island, our coastal economy is our economy and it makes much more sense for a hearing of this nature to take place in the region most impacted by this proposal," Zeldin said.

The state hearing is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Wednesday at the Suffolk County office building on Veterans Memorial Highway in Smithtown. The hearing is open to the public.

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## THIS DATE IN HISTORY

**1587** Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

**1693** A charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

**1910** The Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

**1922** President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.

**1952** Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her father, King George VI.

**1968** Three college students were killed in a confrontation between demonstrators and highway patrolmen at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in the wake of protests over a whites-only bowling alley.

**2013** A massive storm packing hurricane-force winds and blizzard conditions was sweeping through the Northeast, dumping nearly 2 feet of snow on New England and knocking out power to more than a half a million customers.



## Colorful time at the library

Samantha Sayers, 9, of Selden, seems focused on her drawing at the Middle Country Public Library Wednesday. The library offers arts and craft programs on most weeknights for youngsters as well as teenagers.

NEWSDAY / JOHN PARASKEVAS

## LI surgeon will repay, forfeit \$14M for fraud

BY JOAN GRALLA

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A surgeon who practiced on Long Island and in Brooklyn will repay and forfeit a total of more than \$14 million and serve 13 years in prison for defrauding Medicare, a judge said Wednesday.

Dr. Syed Ahmed of Glen Head billed Medicare for more than \$85 million between 2011 and 2013, prosecutors said.

After an 11-day trial, a federal jury found him guilty in 2016 of health care fraud, three counts

of making false claims about health care matters, and two counts of money laundering, they said.

The surgeon, who practiced at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center and Wyckoff Heights Medical Center in Brooklyn, Franklin Hospital in Valley Stream, and Mercy Medical Center in Rockville Centre, also must pay a \$20,000 fine, they said.

"Dr. Syed Ahmed treated Medicare like a personal piggy bank, stealing over \$7.2 million by making fraudulent claims

for medical procedures he never performed," U.S. Attorney Richard Donoghue of the Eastern District of New York said in a statement.

An attorney for the doctor declined to comment.

The defendant billed the federal health program for incising, draining and debriding wounds — "phony surgeries" he did not perform, prosecutors said.

The treatments were billed as if they were carried out in operating rooms, which drove up the payouts, they said.

"The fraud scheme that Dr. Ahmed engaged in was motivated by pure greed," said Scott J. Lampert, special agent-in-charge, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General Office of Investigations, New York Region.

When the charges were unveiled in 2014, prosecutors said they filed a civil forfeiture complaint against Ahmed's Long Island residence, valued at about \$4 million.

That home now is in foreclosure, court records show.