

DMV hours drive us to distraction

Need a license or plates? Don't plan on trying late at night or on weekends.



Lane Filler

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When I realized I needed to hit the Medford branch of the Department of Motor Vehicles a few weeks ago, I made a plan.

Experienced hands know "I'll try to get there right when they open and just speed on through" is a fantasy akin to "I'll just pop in to the IRS audit and explain that the psychiatrist for Gerald, my pet marmot, is a business expense."

But surely anyone showing up at 8 a.m. for a government office that opens at 8:30 would be early enough to be practically first in line, right?

Oh, my, no. On the last Friday in May, 30 minutes early didn't even merit a spot on the same side of the building as the office, where a line of at least 80 people began. This was the kind of crowd you'd expect to see camping out for tickets to a hot concert, if crowds camped

out for their favorite bands did so in a spirit of glum fury.

Lines give us time to mull, and as I stood and chatted with linemates, I mulled two things.

- Why are government agencies practically the only customer-service organizations that aren't open when it's convenient for customers?

- Why don't people running for office promise to make government work better, and once elected, do so?

Most DMV branches on Long Island are open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays. Port Jefferson closes on Fridays and is open until 5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday and 7 p.m. Thursday. Massapequa is open until 6 p.m. all five days.

No Long Island DMV branch is open on Saturday or Sunday, and DMV officials could not name one in the state that is. None are open until 8 or 9 p.m., either. At one time, you could have accused the DMVs of following banker's hours, the old-fashioned term for easy gigs. But most banks are now open on Saturday, and some on weeknights.



NEWSDAY/LAWRENCE STRIEGEL

People wait for service at the New York Department of Motor Vehicles office on Tuesday morning in Huntington.

Companies like Bank of America, TD Bank and Wells Fargo now open branches on Sunday.

"Even just to open the DMV on Saturday would be an amazing help," said Debbie Giordano of Middle Island as we stood on line. Just there to drop off a set of license plates, she fretted that she'd be late for her job at an insurance brokerage in Bohemia. "This is the only DMV I go to, because they move fast," she said.

And that was true. Once the doors opened, the employees of the Medford DMV were great: kind, organized, competent and in some cases far more reasonable than the irate customers. One left furious, turned down for a driver's license because he could provide absolutely no proof of his identity.

The seemingly infinite set of letter-and-number series used to call people was baffling and

frustrating, but it also created relationships.

"You're VB129? I'm VB130. Really rooting for you, man!"

It makes sense that most DMV employees don't want to work nights and weekends. But retail and restaurant workers and police officers and nurses often don't want to work nights and weekends. So what? You work when you're needed in this life. Employees can be hired and shifts adjusted. If money is the problem, many customers would gladly pay a bit more to have a matter handled at a convenient time.

Many of us must be at our own jobs every hour government offices are open. It's a terrible system, one easily fixed.

So how about this, politicians? Instead of promising to end waste, fraud and abuse (you're not) or lower property taxes (you're so, so not), why not fix government? It works poorly in a thousand tangible ways, and many would not be hard to fix.

Opening offices at all levels of government when it's convenient for customers would be a great start.

Lane Filler is a member of Newsday's editorial board.



First responders at the scene of Friday's vehicle rollover accident that killed three young people on the Meadowbrook Parkway.

Stunned by age of young mother

You have a 15-year-old who has been charged with manslaughter after driving in an accident that led to the deaths of three teenage boys ["Lawyer: Teen in crash became desig-

nated driver," News, June 12].

In the car, according to reports, was her 23-month-old son. That would mean she gave birth to this child nearly two years ago. She was a child. What is wrong with this picture?

Peggy Connell, Wantagh

A mikvah isn't essential

In the article about mikvahs, a rabbi's wife says the mikvah "is the Torah's way of keeping women respected and valued and cherished" ["Dipping into the waters of renewal," News, June 3].

I am Jewish and respect, value and cherish my wife even though she has never been near a mikvah.

Richard Beckman, Merrick

Are Dem delegates really representative?

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's bid for a third term garnered 95 percent of the vote of party delegates at the state nominating convention on May 23 at Hofstra University ["Cuomo easily wins nomination," News, May 24].

Does this showing really ring true?

A Siena College poll released April 17 gave Cuomo an overall favorable rating of 49 percent, 62 percent among registered Democrats.

Should readers ask themselves, who are these party delegates and why are they so far out of step with public opinion?

Jim McConville, Shirley

Editorial cartoons were in poor taste

I know there are always political cartoons about presidents, but don't you ever think they go too far?

Your Opinion page's June 2 cartoon roundup included a Mike Luckovich cartoon that depicted President Donald Trump celebrating a booming mortuary business in Puerto Rico. To suggest that a president is happy that people are dying from a storm is absolutely disgraceful. Maybe your editorial cartoonists should try to come

up with more creative ideas.

Theresa Malone, Nesconset

Two editorial cartoons in your June 9 roundup used Catholic symbols as backdrops for promoting negative stereotypes. Not funny.

In light of the "me too" movement, it is insulting that you published a cartoon that depicted a nun to correlate prudish purity with the decision to eliminate swimsuits at the Miss America pageant. The second cartoon correlated the sacrament of confession to presidential pardons.

Decisions to use religion for mockery are not "visionary."

Michael and Mary Fenster, Bohemia

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