

# on budget



Sen. Michael Gianaris hugs Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins on opening day of the 2019 session. Stewart-Cousins presides over a Senate that seems less deferential to Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

tively as *Silver v. Pataki* ruled that if a budget isn't passed by the April 1 deadline, a governor can impose his budget, leaving the legislature with the option to approve it or risk a government shutdown. The last time the legislature pushed the budget envelope was 2010. Gov. David Paterson vetoed 6,681 items over two days that he said the state couldn't afford.

In addition, if Cuomo doesn't agree with the legislature by the April 1 deadline, legislators could lose a \$10,000 raise scheduled for 2020.

## Not in a hurry

Cuomo is in no rush to pass a budget. "Being right is more important than anything else this year," he said.

"The core role of the governor gives him different interests than the legislature," said Gerald Benjamin, distinguished professor of political science at SUNY New Paltz. "He must think of the budget overall, and is inclined to some fiscal constraint. Members think of particulars, bringing home the bacon, and are distributive — less constrained."

Through this struggle so far, both sides filled the airwaves

and Twitter-verse with snark and sniping.

Cuomo has accused the legislature, and especially the new Senate majority, of failing to grasp the difference between politics and governing. He also accused the Assembly of "carrying the agenda" for teachers unions, which oppose the property-tax cap.

On Wednesday, Cuomo dispatched his top aides to refer to the legislative budget proposals as irresponsible, bloated and something from "fantasy land."

On Thursday, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie (D-Bronx) compared Cuomo's ultimatums in the budget to the full-of-bluster cartoon character Yosemite Sam, who kept drawing new lines in the sand and warning Bugs Bunny against crossing them.

Stewart-Cousins responded to a Cuomo barb with an uncharacteristically flippant retort: "I'm thinking it's SDDS — 'Senate Democratic Derangement Syndrome' — at this point."

"I'm surprised at the public and intense level of criticism," said one veteran Democratic Assembly member. "Maybe it's

third-term-itis . . . but I don't think you have to make it personal."

Cuomo senior adviser Rich Azzopardi dismissed the friction with the legislature as "petty palace intrigue." "We're here to pass a fiscally responsible budget," he said.

Stewart-Cousins said these exchanges prompted her to talk with Cuomo in recent days in an effort to tone down the sniping. "I had a concern of what I considered to be the constant sort of disparagement of the conference," Stewart-Cousins said Wednesday. "The governor and I have spoken and we are planning to move forward positively."

"The finger-pointing following the collapse of the Amazon deal has ratcheted up the political pressure on a lot of electeds to show they're tough and can still deliver for their constituents," said Lawrence Levy, executive dean of Hofstra University's National Center for Suburban Studies. "There's nothing wrong with the tension of competing interests, but the danger here is that it leads to stubbornness and inflexibility and important issues don't get addressed."

## Diversity forum for LI educators

BY RACHEL UDA

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Students, teachers and school administrators joined a forum Saturday to discuss ways to develop a more culturally diverse curriculum in Long Island schools and how to better serve students from all backgrounds.

The event, Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Curriculum Forum, held at Molloy College in Rockville Centre, was organized by the Long Island chapter of Links Inc. and ERASE Racism, along with the organization's student task force.

"It's very easy for us to be ignorant of each other, because we don't live together; our children don't go to school together," said ERASE Racism president Elaine Gross, who noted that Long Island is one of the most segregated regions in the country. "Implementing a culturally responsive education is one way to build a just Long Island."

The K-12 participants attended lectures on subjects ranging from the need to teach more black literature to the problem of disproportionate suspensions for minority students and English-language learners.

Kristen Kyoneris, a kindergarten teacher at Jefferson Primary School in Huntington, found the lecture on suspension particularly eye-opening.

"You think you're really open-minded, but there are so many things that educators have to be aware of when you're teaching students from diverse backgrounds," Kyoneris said. "I think every teacher

should take classes like this."

Nichelle Rivers, the director of grants and funding of the Roosevelt Union Free School District, held a workshop on how to discuss hate symbols in the classroom. It's a difficult topic to teach, and many educators shy away from it, but Rivers said it's important students are given historical context.

"We have to continue to have those types of courageous conversations so that the students and our youth can understand what those symbols and messages mean and how they can really impact people of color."

Rivers spoke about a recent incident at Roosevelt Middle School in which three teachers were put on paid leave for displaying images of nooses in a classroom.

"We don't do enough to educate them to understand the history of these symbols and how they were used by the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize black people," Rivers said during the workshop.

The student members of ERASE Racism also presented some of their ideas for improving the curriculum. Sage Gladstone, a ninth-grade student at Syosset High School, noticed that her curriculum seemed to draw heavily from European history and literature, and she hoped more teachers would broaden their lesson plans to include material from other parts of the world.

"Our main goal was just to share with everyone that culturally responsive curriculum connects everyone and pushes for inclusiveness," Gladstone said.



Westbury High School English teacher Pepper Bonay-Martin, right, and Syosset Deputy Superintendent Adele Bovard speak at the forum.