



J. CONRAD WILLIAMS, JR.

'Kicking' it at the beach

A woman kicks her heels during a day at Quogue Village Beach in Quogue on Saturday. Sunday's forecast calls for partly cloudy skies with highs in the mid-30s and rain likely at night, with lows in the mid-20s.

Friction over lobbyist



POLITICS & POWER

Rick Brand

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A lobbying firm headed by Islip Democratic Party chairman Luis Montes has started work, buttonholing state officials in Albany on behalf of the Suffolk County Legislature.

However, some county lawmakers say they weren't even aware of a \$24,900-a-year contract with Long Island Government Relations was consummated or that work was underway in the state capital.

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (D-Copliague) executed the one-year agreement on Jan. 4 without seeking a procedural vote of the legislature as he originally had planned when the idea of hiring lobbyists surfaced late last year.

Legis. Kara Hahn (D-Seatauket), majority leader, said she was "totally unaware" Gregory had signed a contract. Hahn, an opponent of the idea, said, "If we

lobby separately from the county executive, will our lobbying be at cross-purposes so neither of us get what we want?"

Legis. Al Krupski (D-Cutchogue) said he also was unaware of the hiring, but took no position on Gregory's action. But Krupski asked: "If we hire someone, what is the agenda going to be? We should all have a say, all 18."

Legis. Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore), the GOP caucus leader, called the contract a "complete waste of taxpayer money." Cilmi said Gregory may have acted alone "because it's entirely plausible . . . a majority of the legislature would have balked at the idea."

Legis. Rob Calarco (D-Patchogue), deputy presiding officer, said he believes Gregory would have had the votes for passage. He said Gregory acted on his own because he wanted to get a lobbying firm on board quickly for a state legislative session in which lawmakers are moving fast on a range of legislation affecting Suffolk.

Under legislative rules, Gregory is empowered "to execute contracts for day-to-day opera-

tions and administration of the county legislature without additional . . . authorization."

Gregory said the county comptroller said he needed at least three proposals from lobbying firms and could act without a vote if the contract was under \$25,000. Gregory said he reached out to seven firms and got six proposals.

He said while the county executive's office in the past has done Suffolk's lobbying in Albany and Washington, D.C., "it's important for us to know what's going on. We're the policymaking branch of the government, but we've had no input."

Gregory said Bellone aides have talked for a year with Airbnb about legislation to change the hotel-motel room tax that could allow the county to collect up to \$1.2 million in revenue. Gregory said lawmakers knew nothing about the discussions until recently.

Deputy County Executive Jon Kaiman said the county executive's office has given the legislature monthly reports on all lobbying activities.

Kaiman, who is involved in

Bellone's lobbying efforts, said he defers to the presiding officer on the issue of hiring legislative lobbyists. Kaiman said he would work with anyone the legislature hires and try to update them on lobbying efforts.

Cilmi, meanwhile, has raised the specter of patronage, saying the effort to hire legislative lobbyists was motivated by a need to "write a check for someone who needs an additional check."

Gregory countered that Long Island Government Relations is bipartisan. He said Montes has credentials as Bellone's former top Albany lobbyist and his partner, Republican Steve Moll, served as an aide to the late GOP Assemb. Robert Wertz.

Richard Schaffer, Suffolk Democratic Party chairman, said Gregory "just wants to make sure the legislature is pitching in and helping the county in every way possible."

Schaffer said Montes "knows all the staff people for [Assembly Speaker Carl] Heastie and [Senate Majority Leader] Andrea Stewart-Cousins. His ability to open doors and get access is tremendous."

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CORRECTION

The Hospital for Special Surgery received \$50,000 from the I'm Not Done Yet Foundation to launch the Bobby Menges Memorial Hospital for Special Surgery Limb Deformity Course. The amount is incorrect in today's LI Life, which was printed in advance.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Monday is Presidents Day. All federal, state, county and town offices are closed, as are courts and financial markets. Post offices are closed, as are most banks. The Long Island Rail Road is running on a holiday schedule, with off-peak fares in effect all day.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1801 The U.S. House of Representatives broke an electoral tie between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, electing Jefferson president; Burr became vice president.

1815 The U.S. and Britain exchanged the instruments of ratification for the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812.

1864 During the Civil War, the Union ship USS Housatonic was rammed and sunk in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, by the Confederate hand-cranked submarine HL Hunley in the first naval attack of its kind; the Hunley also sank.

1947 The Voice of America began broadcasting to the Soviet Union.