

Gov makes case for

Teachers would block access by flagged students

BY CANDICE FERRETTE
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Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo on Monday continued to drum up support for state “red-flag” legislation that would allow educators to get court orders to block students’ access to guns for youths suspected of being a danger to themselves or others.

In a final push before the end of the legislative session, Cuomo held a morning event in front of Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School before traveling by yellow school bus along with Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul to a second public school, Evander Childs campus, in the Bronx.

The bill would enhance school safety by empowering teachers and school officials who often see warning signs of mental illness in students before a violent episode such as a mass shooting, supporters say.

“If a parent or a teacher knows a child might act out, has access to guns, let them have the ability to go to a judge,” Cuomo said. “This has nothing to do with politics. It is common sense. There is no reason this shouldn’t pass.”

Assemb. Jo Ann Simon (D-Brooklyn), who joined the governor, said it would be debated in the Assembly on Tuesday and she expects it to pass. Simon



Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo is joined Monday by government and school officials at Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School.

noted an earlier version of the bill was widely supported.

“At Columbine, at Sandy Hook, at Parkland, San Bernadino and at Santa Fe High School — the shooters exhibited observable signs of escalating focus on committing

violence. Families and teachers do not have the ability to step in because too often our laws limit that to criminal acts and these people have not necessarily violated the law yet,” Simon said.

School officials currently

have no legal standing to petition a judge to remove or secure guns in the home of a student. The student’s right to due process would not be violated because he or she would have a mental health evaluation before the judge could de-

cide, Cuomo said.

If passed, school staff — including guidance counselors, social workers, school nurses and administrators — could petition a judge for an extreme-risk protection order to prevent a potentially dangerous student from

Vote on Heartland sewer delayed

BY DAVID M. SCHWARTZ
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Suffolk County lawmakers voted Monday to delay an agreement that would allow Heartland Town Square to hook up to the Southwest Sewer District after concerns surfaced about the project’s potential to draw down Long Island’s aquifers.

About a dozen residents and environmental activists spoke against the project during a meeting in Riverhead of the county legislature’s Public Works Committee.

Several argued that the planned 9,000-unit development, with 3.2 million square feet of office space and 1 million square feet of retail space, should build its own

sewage treatment plant.

Suffolk County estimates the development would generate 2.5 million gallons of wastewater per day that would be treated at the Bergen Point Sewage Treatment Plant before being pumped out to the Atlantic Ocean. Some speakers advocated that the county require a new sewage treatment plant, which would recharge treated wastewater

back into the ground.

Developer Jerry Wolkoff said that, without a connection to the Southwest Sewer District, the project won’t be built.

“I won’t develop it unless it’s hooked up to the Southwest Sewer District,” Wolkoff said Monday in an interview in his Brentwood office.

Karen Blumer, vice president of the environmental group

Open Space Council, said Heartland would draw down the aquifer and cause impacts such as saltwater intrusion.

“The Legislature must make a decision that could make a critical difference to an already beleaguered aquifer,” Blumer told the committee.

The committee voted unanimously to table a resolution that would allow Heartland to pay a one-time connection fee of \$15 per gallon on the first 1.6 million gallons of daily sewage flow, and the current rate of \$30 per gallon on the remaining flow.

gun bill

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— Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo

purchasing, possessing or attempting to possess a firearm, rifle or shotgun.

Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb (R-Canandaigua) called the red-flag bill “another political ploy in the governor’s continued attack on 2nd Amendment rights.”

“Threats and potential dangers should always be reported to the proper authorities. Decisions on a person’s mental health should be left to mental health professionals. Assembly Republicans have called on Gov. Cuomo to form a commission on school safety and security — but the silence is deafening,” Kolb said in a statement Monday.

Cuomo, who is running for re-election, said in Monday’s interview with Newsday that he was calling on Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (R-East Northport) to bring the bill to a vote before the legislative session ends.

“I can’t pass it with the Republican senators on Long Island,” Cuomo said. “They have

been unwilling to pass it. We’re down to a week and a half. The only way we get it passed now is if we successfully strip away from the excuses.”

In a statement, Flanagan said the GOP-controlled chamber would review the legislation but expects the governor and the Assembly to consider the State Senate’s school safety package.

Nina Melzer, president of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Congress of Teachers, said the 650-member teachers union supports Cuomo’s measure. “I think we need to do more, but it’s a step in the right direction,” said Melzer, who hopes to learn about how the law will be applied on the district level. “Often the ills of society are put upon teachers — where we are supposed to solve all of the problems — but I don’t think this is looking for us to solve the problem, just have a voice.”

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, Town of Hempstead Supervisor Laura Gillen, Nassau Legis. Arnold Drucker (D-Plainview), as well as school officials, teachers’ union representatives and student activists, joined Cuomo at the event in supporting the bill.

At least six states — Rhode Island, Florida, Vermont, Delaware, Maryland and Vermont — have some form of “red-flag law,” according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, with dozens more states considering similar proposals.

With Emily Ngo

Wolkoff also has applied to reduce the discounted \$15-per-gallon fee to \$7.50. The developer received conceptual approval in 2004 from the county before it raised the rates. Wolkoff also says the project will use less water than the county calculates: 1.6 million gallons per day when fully built out.

Legis. Kevin McCaffrey (R-Lindenhurst), who represents the area that includes the project, said taxpayers in the sewer district paid to expand the plant. “If someone wants to connect to that plant, it

should be \$30 per gallon,” he said. “It’s bad enough that we’re taking everyone’s effluent. We shouldn’t have to pay for the privilege of doing it.”

Legis. Al Krupski (D-Cutchogue), Public Works Committee chairman, said he has requested county staff to prepare more information on the effect of the project on groundwater and the capacity of the plant to remove nitrogen.

Wolkoff said the project would produce jobs, tax revenue and housing for seniors and millennials.



Allison Lemaire Koutsis and mother, Patti Lemaire, in Massapequa on Friday. ■ Video: [newsday.com/biz](https://www.newsday.com/biz)

LINDA ROSIER

Bargains as Toys R Us approaches final days

BY DAYSI CALAVIA-ROBERTSON
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As Toys R Us winds down its U.S. operations, Long Island parents are taking advantage of deep liquidation discounts to stock up on toys for holidays and birthdays.

In March, shortly after the bankrupt chain announced it would close all of its stores, including 12 Toys R Us and four Babies R Us locations on Long Island, some shoppers grumbled about discounts that were often only 10 percent.

But the discounts have grown, as some LI stores have closed and others get closer to their final days.

The sales are now “better than on Black Friday,” parents said last week. Some have scoured the remaining stores in search of specific toys wanted by their children.

Others, like Emily Ciancarelli of Port Jefferson, are simply seeking the latest markdowns.

In March, she shopped at a Babies R Us in Massapequa the last week it was open. “That final week, items were 70 to 90 percent off,” she said. “I bought a brand-name jogging stroller for \$225 which originally sold for \$450.”

Ciancarelli, whose son Jameson is 18 months old, said she’s going to keep a close eye on liq-

uidation sales and plans to visit different locations to see what she can find.

Allison Lemaire Koutsis of Merrick said Christmas gifts for her daughter are now crossed off her holiday to-do list. She stocked up on toys for the toddler at a Toys R Us in Massapequa.

“I bought so many things . . . a Little People bus, plane, and doll house; a Fisher Price tea set; and a baby walker,” she said.

Lemaire Koutsis said she didn’t buy many toys for her 5-year-old because she was unsure what he’d “be into by Christmas.”

But she did take him to the Carle Place Toys R Us store and let him pick out a toy in celebration of his preschool graduation: an Imaginext Batman bat cave marked down to \$17 from \$35.

“I probably saved about \$100 in total,” she said.

Amy Von Walter, Toys R Us executive vice president of communications, said store closing dates will vary, depending on how quickly each location sells out of inventory.

At least two Long Island stores, in Valley Stream and Carle Place, will close by Wednesday, according to Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification, or WARN, filings that Toys R Us submitted to the state Depart-

ment of Labor.

The company’s next bankruptcy court hearing takes place in late June, Von Walter said.

Tara Howe of Merrick said that although she stocked up on Hanukkah, Christmas and birthday gifts for her two sons, Jakob, 5, and Dylan, 2, whose birthdays are two days apart in October, she has other plans for the rest of the items she snagged.

She said she bought “Barbie dolls, craft kits, cars, just random and inexpensive small items” to donate to children who will spend their holidays in the hospital.

Howe said she’s personally “witnessed the fear kids can experience when in the hospital,” and she knows “it can be especially sad around Christmas, if kids [who are hospitalized] feel that Santa isn’t coming.”

She said she hopes the toys put a smile on the faces of the children who receive them and can help them forget about where they are.

Howe said she hopes others in the community, who may not otherwise have an opportunity to be generous, can take advantage of the Toys R Us liquidation sales and follow suit.

She said, “My family is by no means wealthy, but this is a great chance in which I can, and I’m sure others could, afford to be generous.”