

FROM THE POINT

Environment's dynamic duo

With Long Island Democrats Todd Kaminsky of Long Beach and Steve Englebright of Setauket now chairing the environmental conservation committees in the State Senate and Assembly, respectively, local environmentalists expect the tag team to move a flood of bills through both chambers.

"This has potential to be enormously productive for protecting the environment," Citizens Campaign for the Environment executive director Adrienne Esposito told The Point.

Kaminsky served on Englebright's committee as an Assembly member and will assume his Senate post in January when Democrats take over the chamber. He's seen by environmentalists as a huge improvement over the previous chairman, Republican Tom O'Mara. "His goal was to make sure industry was represented on the issues," Esposito said of O'Mara.

Kaminsky, who saw superstorm Sandy ravage Long Beach, plans to push hard on climate change. "The Senate Republicans were climate change deniers and did very little in that area," he told The Point. "We're way past due to have aggressive environmental policy to reverse global warming."

Kaminsky plans to hold hearings around the state on the Climate and Community Protection Act, an Englebright bill that sets a state standard of zero carbon emissions by 2050. Other topics on his agenda are clean water and clean air issues, including emerging contaminants, and resiliency.

A list from Englebright's office also includes bills on nitrogen fertilizers, offshore drilling prohibitions, and banning 1,4-dioxane from household cleaning products.

Meanwhile, Esposito is fronting a coalition of environmental groups asking Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo for \$2.5 billion for clean water infrastructure in the 2019-20 budget, building on a similar amount in the 2017-18 budget.

But will having all your ducks in a row translate into reality in 2019?
— Michael Dobie

This is excerpted from The Point, the daily email newsletter of the editorial board. Sign up at newsday.com/ThePoint

Be extra careful in highway work zones

On Nov. 30, a privately owned vehicle crashed into a state Department of Transportation truck engaged in work on the Meadowbrook State Parkway. There were no injuries, but work zone crashes occur far too often and drivers must take responsibility for stopping them.

Nearly 1 million motorists travel Long Island's state highways daily. To keep roads safe, we need the participation of each driver; especially in work zones. Eliminate distractions. Obey speed limits. Move over and slow down for flashing lights.

In 2006, state Department of Transportation employee Patrick Mapleson was filling potholes on Sunrise Highway when a distracted driver struck and killed him. We feel his loss every day. On Long Island, about 25 DOT trucks are hit each year, in addition to dozens of other crashes, including our flaggers being hit and injured.

This year, the department launched a public education campaign, "Flaggers Have Families

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JUST SAYIN'



A Department of Transportation impact attenuator shows damage after it was hit by a vehicle Nov. 30 on the Meadowbrook State Parkway.

Too," reminding motorists to watch for personnel with flags; they are particularly vulnerable to work-zone crashes.

As the seasons change, drivers will find a different type of work on our roads — plowing. For safety, don't crowd our plows and never pass a plow.

To keep our workers safe, as well as yourself and other drivers, slow down and stay alert in work zones.

Paul A. Karas,
Albany

Editor's note: The writer is acting commissioner of the state Department of Transportation.

A loss of \$754 in 2019 in Social Security

I just received my Social Security letter showing my benefits for 2019.

The monthly deduction for Medicare is going up \$83.40, and the deduction for Medicare Part D is going up \$18.90.

As a result, my monthly benefit will go down \$62.90. That's an annual loss of \$754.80.

I am a senior citizen, retired for 33 years. How do I make up this loss?

Donald E. Wagner,
Greenport

OPINION

Horrendous tyranny of the humorless twits

BY MIKE VOGEL

If you can't laugh at yourself, who can you laugh at? Apparently nobody, if the case of an Indian-American comedian recently yanked off the stage in mid-performance by the Columbia University Asian-American Alliance is any indication.

The reason: telling politically incorrect jokes.

As comedian and "Saturday Night Live" writer Nimesh Patel performed at the group's terribly named "CultureShock: Reclaim" event, he was told by

organizers his night was over because his material was homophobic and racist.

But was it really? Here's an example: "Being gay cannot be a choice because no one looks in a mirror and thinks, this black thing is too easy, let me just add another thing to it."

How stupid do you have to be to not realize this is irony, a pro-gay and black joke? How insulated must one be not to realize that millions of Americans still think being gay is a choice, that you aren't born that way? That was clearly Patel's point, but these

guardians of purity somehow miss the difference between racist jokes and supportive ones.

These Patel bashers are the same type of humorless scolds who drove the likable cartoon character Apu, owner of "The Simpsons" Kwik-E-Mart and the most popular Hindu-Bengali character in TV history, off the air earlier this year.

Apu's critics complained that he was a stereotype with an accent. No kidding. It's satire! Every character on the Simpsons is a stereotype. Police chief Wiggum is a corrupt,

doughnut-stuffing fool; Krusty the Clown is Jewish, boorish and has multiple addictions; while white, Christian Homer Simpson is a fat, lazy moron. Yet we care about them all.

Simpsons creator Matt Groening told The Guardian, "I think it's a time in our culture where people love to pretend they're offended."

And it's not solely the self-righteous left that's guilty of this. Not sure? Turn on Fox News this month, and watch its annual wail about how no one is allowed to say merry Christmas anymore. Seri-

ously? Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! Happy Festivus!

Meanwhile, Patel told his audience that he meant no harm, and that his aim was simply to expose people to real-world ideas. In response, his mic was cut off.

Free speech? Real world? Not in our safe space!



Playwright Mike Vogel blogs at newyorkgritty.net.