



Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo

CHARLES ECKERT

Climate bill on the ropes

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY

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ALBANY — A comprehensive bill to combat climate change is on the verge of becoming the first major casualty of the legislative session, according to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, although several legislators are fighting back.

Cuomo said this week at two events that he doesn't expect the proposed Climate & Community Protection Act to be approved in the final 10 days of the session. He said it is no longer among his priorities for this session.

The bill would set aggressive lower goals to reduce greenhouse gases from motor vehicles and development, and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels by shifting to renewable resources such as wind and solar power, among other actions. The bill is aimed at combating the rising temperatures of climate change that supporters blame for extreme storms and dangerous rises in sea level.

Supporters said legislative action is needed because the damage from climate change is accelerating. "We can all do that within the next nine days," said Sen. Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach), chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee. "We will not take 'no' for an answer."

Cuomo said his 10 priorities now for passage by the June 19 scheduled end of session include a rent control bill, women's rights issues, ending the statute of limitations on second- and third-degree rape, ending a "gay panic" defense

in connection with assaults on gay victims; and turning his executive order into law that empowers the attorney general to handle police shooting cases.

Democratic legislators pushing the bill are led by Long Islanders: Kaminsky and Assemb. Steven Englebright (D-Setauket), who blame superstorm Sandy on climate change.

The issue could force another confrontation between Cuomo and the new Democratic majority of the Senate. The Assembly and Senate could choose to negotiate a bill between themselves and pass it, but that would risk a veto by Cuomo. The Legislature has never tried to override a Cuomo veto, but this is the first year the Senate has been led by Democratic progressives willing to challenge the governor.

"The issue is the most important and pressing issue in our state and nation and, arguably, in the world," said Englebright, chairman of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee.

The June 19 end of session isn't set in law, but decided each year by legislative leaders and has often been exceeded when the Senate or Assembly didn't finish business they wanted to complete.

The Assembly has passed the climate change bill in each of the last three years, but it was stopped by the former Republican majority of the Senate. Kaminsky said all 39 Democrats in the Senate said they support the bill, which would be seven more votes than needed. The bill, however, has made little progress in the Senate.

LI'S D-DAY VETS

Remembering crucial event on 75th anniversary

BY FRANK LOVECE
Special to Newsday

In 1942, Walter Blum co-captained the track team at Great Neck Junior-Senior High School. He dreamed of competing in the 1944 Summer Olympics in London.

Instead, he arrived in England in May of 1944 as a freshly drafted GI. Two weeks later, he found himself scrambling down a cargo net and into a landing craft bound for the coast of France.

On June 6, 1944, at only 18, Blum found himself fighting in the titanic struggle that changed World War II. Historians would call it the longest day, the largest seaborne invasion in history.

As an amphibious engineering team member, Blum was one of the first Americans to arrive at Utah Beach on that early June day 75 years ago. Now, he is one of a dwindling number of Normandy veterans around the world.

"I was just lucky I survived," said Blum.

D-Day ushered forth the pivotal Allied invasion of northwest Europe, forcing an increasingly beleaguered Nazi Germany to defend a western front as the Soviet Union advanced from the east. Although another 11 months of fighting would remain, the successful Allied push foretold the downfall of the Third Reich.

Beginning in the predawn hours of that leaden day, 5,000 ships streamed across the English Channel toward a heavily fortified 50-mile stretch of exposed beaches. They disgorged some 160,000 American, English and Canadian troops.

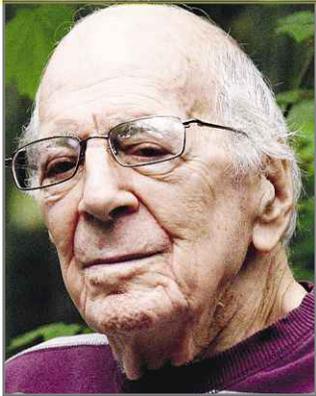
Many fell to German machine guns that began firing the moment Allied landing craft opened their protective doors. More than a few drowned far from the beach, pulled under by the weight of their gear. Within



Walter Blum in uniform during World War II. Blum was one of the first Americans to arrive at Utah Beach on June 6, 1944.

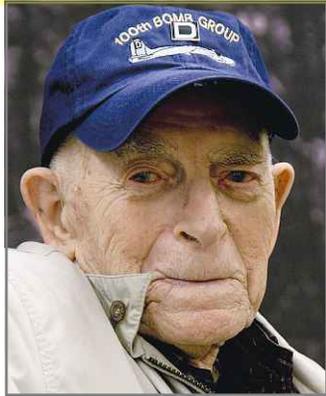
COURTESY WALTER BLUM

RECALL BATTLE



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Walter Blum of Great Neck



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David Wolman of Centereach



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A matte box with a photo of David Wolman during World War II and several of his medals. ■ Video: newsday.com/li

hours, more than 4,000 Allied troops were killed, according to the National D-Day Memorial.

Through Aug. 21, 1944, the Allies landed more than 2 million men in northern France and suffered more than 226,000 killed, wounded or missing, according to the U.S. government. German losses included nearly 450,000 killed, wounded or captured. As many as 20,000 French civilians died.

Long Island sent its share of men into the fray. Many of those who attended D-Day commemorations a year ago have since died. The few remaining survivors, all past 90, were mere teenagers on that day.

Blum's task was to clear a path through the maze of explosive mines and metal obstructions designed to trap the

Allies at the water's edge, in range of German guns and mortars fired from bluffs. But with many more obstructions than the engineers could possibly clear, Allied boats often dropped troops far from shore, forcing them to slog hundreds of yards.

To this day, Blum, who still lives in Great Neck, wonders whether his efforts made much of a difference.

"It was hard to see friends floating facedown in the surf, with their blood in the water," said Blum, whose combat ended a few days later when a mortar's shrapnel shredded his knee. "There were so many dead all over the beach."

Former Army Cpl. David Wolman of Centereach was a control tower operator for the

Eighth Air Force during the invasion. His task was to help keep order as Allied bombers lumbered aloft by the hundreds from England's Thorpe Abbotts airfield.

"My mission was to tell them the runway in use, the cloud formation, how high the clouds were," Wolman recalled. Now 97, he remembers seeing the sky thick with planes as the force launched some 2,200 sorties to hammer Germany's supply lines and beach fortifications.

"They gathered at least, I'd say, about 400 at a time, B-17s," Wolman recalled. "Each bomb group had a lead navigator, and they each followed each other and then they would line up in a V formation to cross the Channel."

On a trip to Normandy on Wednesday, Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-Glen Cove) plans to visit the graves of 21 soldiers who grew up in his congressional district, died in the invasion and were buried in a nearby military cemetery.

Among the graves: Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt III, the eldest son of the 26th president, who died in France a month after the invasion. Known as Theodore Roosevelt Jr., the only general on D-Day to come ashore with the first wave of troops was awarded the Medal of Honor "for gallantry and intrepidity" that included walking amid gunfire to embolden embattled soldiers.

In a bipartisan congressional delegation, Suozzi plans to place a handful of soil on the general's grave from his childhood home of Sagamore Hill estate.

On Thursday, President Donald Trump will also visit Normandy to pay homage to the fallen Americans alongside French President Emmanuel Macron.

"D-Day recognizes the sacrifices of so many," said Suozzi. "We have to remember that to be worthy of the sacrifices made on D-Day, we have to have our conversations about politics and government be more noble than they have become."

Prosecutor out: sources

BY ANDREW SMITH
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Days after the Suffolk district attorney's office abandoned a trouble-plagued arson case against two firefighters, the lead prosecutor in the case has resigned at the office's request, according to multiple sources familiar with the case.

Assistant District Attorney Andrew Weiss, chief of the Public Integrity Bureau for District Attorney Timothy Sini, led the prosecution of Stephen Hernandez, 25, and Weldon Drayton Jr., 35. Sheila Kelly, a spokeswoman for Sini, said the district attorney's office would not comment on personnel matters.

Weiss' last public appearance was May 28, when he watched Chief Assistant District Attorney William Ferris tell jurors and state Supreme Court Justice John Collins that the prosecution had to end because several witnesses testified so inconsistently. Left unaddressed by Ferris, however, was the evidence prosecutors had withheld in an apparent violation of legal and ethical rules before and throughout the trial.

Weiss, who declined to comment Tuesday, resigned three days later.

The withheld evidence included new criminal charges against accomplices who testified against Hernandez and Drayton, surveillance video that failed to show the defendants doing things claimed by the accomplices, video from fire scenes that did not show the defendants, and crack dealing and gang membership of one of the accomplices.

Weiss repeatedly argued in court that the evidence was not relevant or that he had only just learned of it. Collins grew increasingly frustrated with those explanations, calling them "doubletalk" and "mealy-mouthed" and said at one point that it would be "giving them too much credit" to suggest that Weiss and his co-counsel were capable of committing intentional misconduct.

Sini came into office promising accountability and integrity from his staff. "There's not an issue that's more important than creating a culture of com-



JAMES CARBONE

Andrew Weiss

pliance," Sini said then.

During the trial, Sini criticized past prosecutorial misconduct that led to a wrongful murder conviction, and urged lawyers to be scrupulous about obeying ethical rules.

"I hope people are paying attention in the criminal justice community, including in my office," he said.

Hernandez's attorney, Steve Politi of Central Islip, said it was sad — but appropriate — that Weiss lost his job.

"I hope this serves as a warning to all prosecutors not to even think of engaging in similar conduct," Politi said. "I hope everyone doesn't lose sight of the fact that innocent people can end up in prison when exculpatory evidence is concealed and the law relating to such material is not followed."

Drayton's attorney, Stephen McCarthy Jr. of Manhattan, expressed similar sentiments.

"Sad when any individual with a family loses their job, but as a practical matter, the role of a prosecutor in this country is so special and potentially so powerful, they absolutely must treat people fairly at all times," McCarthy said.

Fairness wasn't present in the prosecution of the case until the upper echelons of the district attorney's office stepped in, McCarthy said.

Harry Tilis, president of the Suffolk County Criminal Bar Association, praised Sini for handling the situation appropriately.

"Prosecutors and law enforcement in general have a substantial obligation to ensure that our criminal justice process is fair and protects everyone involved," Tilis said. "When that fairness doesn't happen, all of us suffer."