

COMMITTING TO DIVERSITY IN LI LEADERSHIP

- NAACP presses for inclusion at national level, too
- Advocacy group plans awards luncheon Saturday

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Civil rights advocates from Long Island branches of the NAACP on Monday called for a renewed commitment to diversity and criticized a divisive national political climate that they said affects efforts toward inclusion and equal rights in the region.

Nearly 20 officers and members of branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People came together on Presidents Day in Huntington Station to say the fight for justice remains an urgent matter, and announced the organization's Long Island Regional Awards Luncheon, scheduled for Saturday in Woodbury.

Some advocates were critical of President Donald Trump's leadership, his state-

ments on issues affecting minority communities and his restrictive immigration policies.

"Not only should Congress denounce the president's statements, they should continue to support our history of inclusion and pass the Dream Act" that would grant legal status to young immigrants brought here as children, said William King Moss III, president of the Islip Town branch of the NAACP.

Moss said his branch has reported 15 incidents of bias allegations to the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission in the past two months, which he said is a new phenomenon as more people are feeling discriminated against at a time of divisive political rhetoric and policies that do not prioritize diversity.

"This political environment has only increased our fight



William King Moss III, president of NAACP's Islip Town branch, during Monday's news conference.

This political environment has only increased our fight against injustices.'

— Rev. Larry Jennings

against injustices," said the Rev. Larry Jennings, president of the NAACP's Huntington branch, particularly to counter those who feel "that they now have a free pass to be openly

oppressive" against people of color.

Saturday's luncheon to discuss those issues in the larger context of the national struggle for continued civil rights will start at noon at the Crest Hollow Country Club in Woodbury, with hundreds of people expected to attend, NAACP officials said.

The keynote speaker will be Rashad Robinson, a Long Island native who started his advocacy as a high school student in Riverhead and is now executive director of the Color of Change, a national organization advocating for racial justice.

Other members cited lack of representation in local government as a significant concern, referencing the recent appointments of 11 white men to top town positions in Huntington and problems with access to other influential posts for African-Americans and other minority groups.

"We'd like to meet with those elected officials both here in Nassau and Suffolk to discuss these issues," said Douglas Mayers, president of the Freeport-Roosevelt branch of the NAACP. "You all see around the county executives nobody looking like us, but if we don't vote they can't win."

PSEG LI not happy with pay disclosure law

BY MARK HARRINGTON
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Two months after passage of a bill that requires PSEG Long Island to disclose the pay of its management team when requesting a rate hike, a utility official expressed disappointment that it passed and said the company is "considering its options."

Among concerns about that law and 34 other new pieces of legislation introduced in the State Legislature this year is that they may alter terms of the 12-year contract PSEG signed in 2013 with the Long Island Power Authority to manage the electric grid.

"I think we've removed a lot of

politics from how the utility is run and really focused on it as a business, and focused it from a customer satisfaction standpoint," PSEG Long Island president and chief operating officer Daniel Eichhorn said in an interview last week. "We want to make sure what we signed up for to run the utility stays that way. And it doesn't migrate back to being influenced greatly from the outside. We think we can run a great utility."

The law, introduced by Assemb. Fred Thiele (I-Sag Harbor) and Sen. Kenneth LaValle (R-Port Jefferson) and signed into law by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo in December, amended the LIPA Reform Act of 2013 to

require disclosure of pay, bonuses and contract costs. Its introduction followed a report in Newsday in which a PSEG lawyer in 2015 said the LIPA Reform Act explicitly provided for the company to keep salaries and contract costs secret.

Thiele rebuffed the notion the compensation law was about politics. Rather, he said, it's "about transparency and accountability. Ratepayers have a right to know how their money is being spent."

LIPA officials must file annual financial disclosure statements with the state that list savings, stock and retirement accounts, real estate and other holdings, even spouses' salaries. Annual

salaries of state employees are available on publicly available databases. PSEG had been under no such requirement.

Eichhorn said PSEG had been aware the legislation had passed the Assembly in June, but hadn't expected the governor, whose office helped negotiate the PSEG contract, would agree to it.

"We were disappointed when it got signed," he said. He noted the bill requires more than just revealing executive pay amounts, including management bonuses.

"The bill itself was more than just disclosure," Eichhorn said. "It gave the Department of Public Service the ability to look at our management

fee and evaluate it. I would say we're still trying to get full handle on the impacts and we're evaluating our next steps."

The law would require the disclosures only as part of a rate-hike proceeding, which Eichhorn said could take place in 2019, with a possible increase in 2020 to 2022.

He declined to say if the "next steps" included legal action, as some have suggested, because the law may be viewed as a breach of PSEG's contract.

"There's other stuff in the legislature this year that we're concerned over," he said. "We're looking at our options on that" as well.