

EDITORIAL

Pothole season is only beginning

Local gov'ts are failing a basic function

They're baaack. Or, more appropriately on many roads in many neighborhoods, they're still here.

Potholes. Add your own expletive.

Potholes are the bane of a Long Island driver's life. They're rim-rattling, tire-tearing, bone-jarring — and they're seemingly everywhere, as outlined in a Newsday story Sunday. And we haven't even descended yet into the teeth of winter, when the pothole cycle — rain, sleet or snow gets into a crack in the pavement, then freezes and expands, making the crack bigger — is at its demonically destructive worst.

Year in and year out, potholes are one of the top subjects of angry complaints to municipal call centers and email tip lines — and to Newsday's editorial board.

One recent letter writer termed potholes "a fact of life on Long Island roads." Another called our streets "a war zone." A third compared driving on Long Island with being a bull rider who is "pummeled, jostled, hurtled, a bone crushing experience." Chances are each would agree with another writer who summed up the "disrepair of our roads" as "an absolute disgrace."



NEWSDAY / JOHN KEATING

A pothole in Northport on Jan. 4.

The solution is simple: Fix the potholes. It's one of the basic functions of government. But too many municipalities come up short in fulfilling it. Many potholes linger too long. Our roads are subject to too many different jurisdictions — state, county, town, village. Motorists reporting potholes to one municipality often are redirected to another level of government that oversees the road, an ordeal that can be every bit as exasperating as driving into one of these car-eating caverns. The pothole problem also is symptomatic of the nation's larger infrastructure issue. Some 70 percent of Long Island roads are in poor or mediocre condition, according to one estimate, thanks partly to increasing traffic over the last 30 years.

Why not approach the pothole problem as the regional issue it is? As more governments look to share services and sign inter-municipal agreements, it's time our governments joined forces in one big road crew that wouldn't have to worry about who has jurisdiction. They could share best practices — whether that's an innovative way to fill potholes quickly, a method of making repairs that really last, a good system for judging whether to fill a hole or do a more expensive but longer-lasting resurfacing, or one big interactive map that pinpoints the location of potholes to help set priorities. North Hempstead Town has a smart new law that bans utilities from opening up newly paved roads, increasing their life by avoiding the seams in which potholes form.

There's a lot at stake for motorists, beyond reducing exasperation. A solid pothole hit can easily cost a driver \$600 for repairs. If 10 drivers hit the same pothole, that's \$6,000. Filling the hole is cheaper. But the longer it takes to fix, the more expensive the repair job. If more money is needed, it should be appropriated.

We'd like to think that potholes don't have to be as persistent a problem as they have been. Our governments need to step up their game. Because the problem will only get worse.

Winter is coming.

— The editorial board

MATT DAVIES



NEWSDAY/MATT DAVIES

■ See more Matt Davies cartoons: newsday.com/matt

LETTERS

At issue: The shutdown and the wall

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said President Donald Trump's wall would be ineffective and a waste of money ["No compromise as shutdown rolls on," News, Jan. 6].

Yet some people at the border where parts of the wall have been built applaud the construction. Brandon Judd, president of the National Border Patrol Council, the union that represents border patrol agents, says they are effective. Our new speaker seems to be detached from the real world.

Joe Ruszczuk,
Kings Park

So President Donald Trump says he encourages landlords to be "nice and easy" with tenants who are federal employees and will not be paid during the shutdown. Do we have any evi-

dence that Trump, as a landlord, was ever lenient to tenants who fell behind in their payments? Just wondering.

Raymond Boivie,
Kings Park

The government shutdown should affect only Congress. Members' compensation should cease until they resolve the problem. It makes no sense to shut down parks and other agencies. Why punish those who have no power?

Aurora Forte,
Smithtown

President Donald Trump says the 800,000 federal workers affected by the shutdown, which he said he is proud to own, might not get paid for "months or even years."

Many of those workers are secretaries, custodians, file

clerks, park rangers, law enforcement, customs inspectors, airport security agents and others, who, like most Americans, live paycheck to paycheck. Many will be unable to make rent, mortgage, car, credit card, child care, utility or even grocery payments. Many will be forced to go on welfare and food stamps.

Then there is the spillover affecting nongovernment workers: businesses that sell the government office supplies, gasoline, etc.; businesses that serve federal workers: dry cleaners, restaurants, auto shops, taxis, etc.; businesses that depend on tourists in and outside national parks.

Other than the dire economic hardships that will be imposed on many hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Americans, the Trump shutdown will have