

EDITORIAL

Prickly politics again in Albany

State Senate should do people's business

The recent decision by Tom Croci to return to active duty in the U.S. Navy left the State Senate evenly split — 31 votes apiece for Democrats and Republicans.

With neither side able to pass legislation on its own, no one sure whether the Sayville Republican would return or for how long, and the scheduled end of the legislative session looming on June 20, there seemed to be one logical solution: Both parties would have to put aside their differences, work on issues on which they could find common ground, and do the people's business of passing bills that move the state forward.

But this is Albany, where raw political considerations, not sense of duty, always prevails.

After a brief interlude Monday when comity reigned and the Senate managed to pass more than 100 noncontroversial bills, the chamber devolved into stage-managed chaos Tuesday. Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, was present to exercise her rarely used power to pre-

side over Senate sessions — and was greeted with a GOP effort to override a veto by her boss, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, of a Democratic bill to expand full-day kindergarten. It passed, 61-0, the first Senate override since 2006. Majority Leader John Flanagan (R-East Northport) then trolled Cuomo and Hochul: "We thank the Governor for sending his Lieutenant Governor to preside over this historic override." The Assembly quickly said it wasn't taking a companion override vote so that was the end of that.



JAMES CARBONE

Going AWOL in the Senate, Tom Croci leaves GOP without a majority.

It never got better. Democrats tried to attach hostile amendments to GOP legislation — like an abortion rights measure on a Lyme disease bill — while Republicans used parliamentary maneuvers to try to trip up Hochul. At one point, Flanagan asked her whether she had a copy of Senate rules. Mansplaining, Albany-style. Democrats said Republicans were trying to prove Democrats aren't ready to run the chamber. Republicans said Democrats were trying to prove Republicans create dysfunction.

Croci deserves criticism for abdicating his responsibility as an elected official for the second time; he also returned to the Navy during his tenure as Islip Town supervisor. His dissatisfaction with Albany was well known, but he should have waited until the end of the session to leave. He promised he would return for votes but his entire absence is shrouded in needless uncertainty.

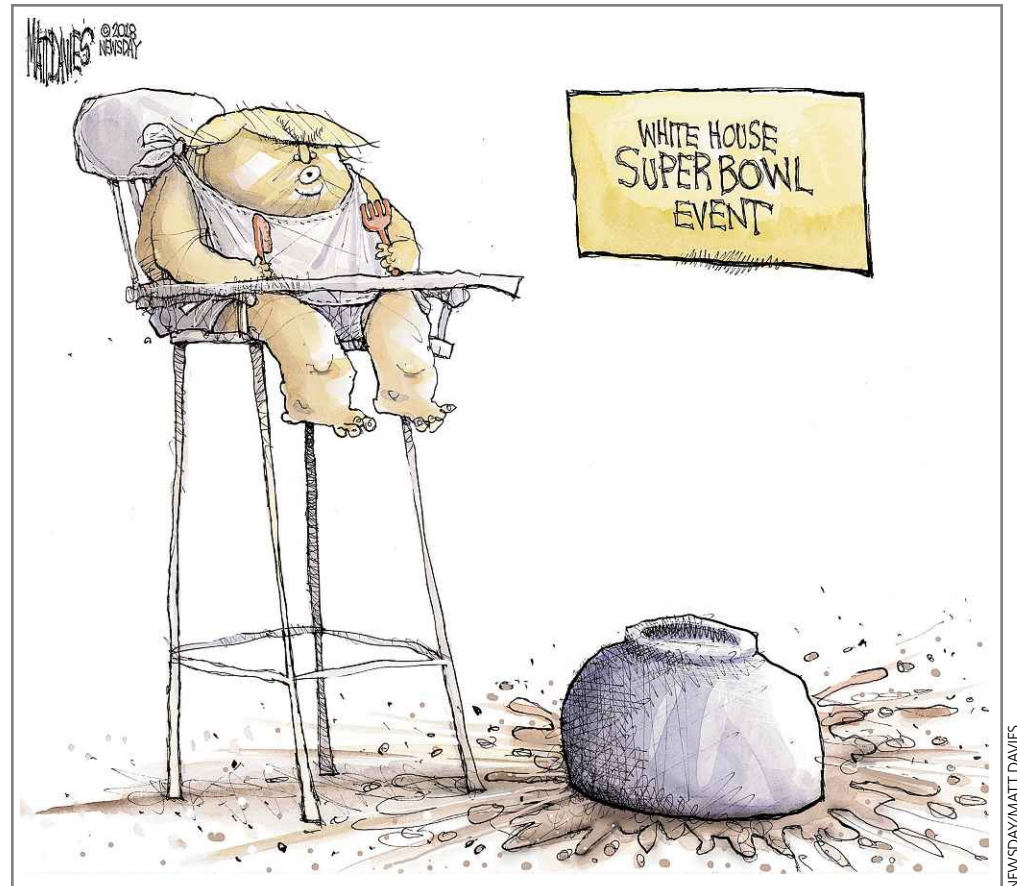
But the main blame goes to those who are there. In trying to show the other side incapable of good leadership, each makes the same case about itself. If you want to show you can get things done, try it.

The tension is clear — elections are in the fall, and Cuomo is lending his considerable muscle to an effort to return the Senate to Democratic control. In the meantime, there's plenty of good legislation that needs action — from tweaks to Nassau County's assessment law to a ban on off-shore oil drilling in New York waters to the establishment of a program for safe disposal of pharmaceuticals to a measure to stop people considered a danger to themselves or others from buying or owning guns.

Stop trying to score political points and get back to business — the people's business.

— *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

Pot arrests have damaging effects

Statistics in the May 20 news story "LI cops: We'll keep making pot arrests" say marijuana arrest rates on Long Island are four times higher for minorities than for whites. This statistic stands in stark contrast with studies that show usage rates being roughly equal among racial groups in America.

Regardless of your stance on legalization, we can agree that there is a disparity in the enforcement of our marijuana laws along racial lines, and that is an unfortunate reality.

I am proud to represent a racially diverse district, and it pains me to think that our laws could apply differently to my constituents based on the color of their skin. We need to take a look at the whole picture when it comes to marijuana policy.

Marijuana arrests can have

long-term consequences, preventing otherwise law-abiding individuals from accessing education, housing and employment. How many young people do we prevent from realizing their full potential because we pin a bad decision to them for life? What is the societal cost for a policy that favors incarceration over education and prevention? It's a long-overdue conversation that we need to have.

Kimberly Jean-Pierre,
Wheatley Heights

Editor's note: The writer represents New York's 11th District in the State Assembly.

A better description of autism

I was angered when I read the opinion section on May 25. Columnist Michael Dobie's crossword puzzle, "Puzzling Long Island," in-

cluded this clue: "Kids suffering from it are on the spectrum." The answer is autism.

I am the younger sibling of a person with autism. I have worked with children with autism. Not one person I have met on the spectrum has been "suffering." More appropriate wording would have been "Children living with it are on the spectrum."

Hilary Gruber,
Greenlawn

The offensive words of Barr and Bee

I agree with Lane Filler's May 30 column about actress Roseanne Barr, "Trump's avatar speaks loud and clear."

While I was happy to see Rep. Peter King's tweet condemning Barr, I was shocked at how many of his constituents posted negative comments to it. They seem to think that they can