

SUFFOLK BILL TO BAR PAY INQUIRIES

Bellone proposal aims to reduce salary disparities

BY RICK BRAND
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Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone proposed a law on Tuesday designed to reduce pay inequities for women, minorities and those long out of work by barring employers from seeking or using job applicants' salary and benefit history in hiring.

Bellone, flanked by two dozen workplace and human right advocates as well as Democratic lawmakers, dubbed the measure the RISE Act. RISE stands for Restricting Information on Salaries and Earnings.

"Today I'm proud . . . to announce a significant step toward closing the pay gap in Suffolk County [where] women and people of color continue to be systematically underpaid," Bellone said. "Now your salary history in Suffolk County will not stop you from rising."

He noted that Suffolk women make 78 percent of what men do. Statewide, Bellone said, black women make only 64 per-

cent of what their male counterparts do, while Hispanic women are even lower, at 55 percent.

"We have a long way to go to achieve pay equity, which is why, in Suffolk County, we must push forward and fight to ensure every man and woman is fairly compensated," he said.

The proposal, if adopted, would make it illegal for any public or private employer with four or more employees to ask an applicant about their pay, benefits or commission history during the hiring process or to seek the data elsewhere.

Salary negotiations would be limited to an applicant's qualifications, experience and job responsibilities, Bellone said, and therefore would "level the playing field" in setting pay.

The proposal includes no penalty provisions but Bellone aides said the bill would become part of the county's human rights law, which levies fines and penalties for damages, as well as other remedies like mandated training and job posting requirements after an investigation and hearing. The proposal would not apply to those seeking an internal transfer or promotion with their current employer or jobs for which pay is set in a collective bargaining agreement.



Bellone announces a proposal designed to improve rates of pay and prevent discrimination in hiring.

Legis. Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore), the GOP caucus leader, said his seven members have yet to review the proposal, but added that, as the owner of a small business, "I'm always concerned when government is proposing another regulation on business practices."

Bellone aides said the proposal is similar to legislation already approved by the New York City Council, as well as by Albany and Westchester counties. Legis. Kara Hahn

(D-Setauket), a backer, said she hopes Suffolk's passage of the law will help spur pending statewide legislation.

Matthew Cohen, the Long Island Association's government affairs vice president, called the initiative "an interesting proposal" but he said officials with the organization have not seen the legislation. While Bellone invited members of the business group to his news conference, none attended. Cohen said his group's

70-member board of directors has to review the proposal before taking a stand. The board meets Sept. 13.

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (D-Copague) predicted the measure would benefit hundreds of thousands of county residents, especially aging workers currently "affected all the way to retirement" by wage inequities.

"But, he added, "our work will not be over until there is no disparity."



Janet Aliperti is charged in the crash that hurt a student.

Car hits Northport student; school worker held

BY CRAIG SCHNEIDER
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A Northport school district employee was arrested after the car she was driving struck and seriously injured a Northport High School student who was heading to cross-country practice Tuesday morning, police and school officials said.

The 14-year-old male student was hit while walking west outside the school on Laurel Hill

Road, near Elwood Road, in East Northport about 8 a.m., Suffolk County police said.

The driver, Janet Aliperti, 57, of East Norwich, was driving east on Laurel Hill Road in her 2005 Honda sedan, police said. She was not injured.

Aliperti was charged with third-degree aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, and driving with a suspended registration and uninsured vehicle, police said.

School district officials acknowledged that Aliperti is an employee, but declined to elaborate, saying it was a personnel matter. A woman by that name is employed as a food service worker, according to district records.

The victim was airlifted to Stony Brook University Medical Center to be treated for serious injuries, police said.

"Emergency response teams were on the scene immediately

and the student is being treated," said Robert Banzer, superintendent of the Northport-East Northport school district, in a statement. "The district will continue to support the student and family in any way possible."

Officials did not identify the student. The first day of school in the district is Thursday. The accident is under investigation.

Anyone with information is urged to call Second Squad detectives at 631-854-8252.