

FROM THE POINT

Escape route for Gregory

New York's Byzantine election laws make for weird and wild ballot-line dances. Observe the scramble to remove indicted upstate Rep. Chris Collins and get a Republican replacement for him in time to counter an expected blue wave in November. Or the tiff that occurred in June when Bronxite Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez accused her vanquished Democratic opponent, Queens Rep. Joe Crowley, of staying on the Working Families Party line into the general election for New York's 14th Congressional District. Crowley argued, convincingly, that he wasn't campaigning and also, it's pretty difficult to get off the ballot.

However, the chessboard is becoming clear on Long Island, where Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory lost the 2nd District Democratic primary to Liuba Grechen Shirley, who will go on to face Rep. Peter King in November.

However, Gregory remains on the ballot lines of the Independence, Women's Equality and Working Families parties.

Rather than be forced to defend a spoiler, Suffolk Democratic leader Rich Schaffer tells *The Point* he "thought ahead to this" and planned an escape route for Gregory involving a nomination for Suffolk County clerk, a Supreme Court judgeship ballot line for legislature counsel George Nolan, and a non-campaign by Gregory against established Republican Suffolk County Clerk Judith Pascale.

What those minor parties will do with their vacated lines is up to them. Of interest is the WFP's plan to give Grechen Shirley its line, after the progressive party snubbed the self-styled hard-charging progressive in favor of Gregory before the primary. WFP endorsed Grechen Shirley after her win, and it also plans to give her the line.

"It is our hope and our goal" to have Grechen Shirley on the WFP line, says Lisa Tyson, a WFP leader for Long Island.

— Mark Chiusano

From The Point, the newsletter of the editorial board.

JUST SAYIN'



A healthy row of sycamore trees along Hempstead Harbor in Sea Cliff, above, and, at right, a stretch farther north where successive plantings have failed. The marked trees were removed this week.



KARIN BARNABY

On Sea Cliff waterfront, try another idea

For 80 years, residents and visitors to Sea Cliff have strolled under an iconic sycamore allée that lines a mile-long stretch of Hempstead Harbor. Designed by renowned landscape architect J.J. Levison and planted in 1931, these trees are as much a cherished Sea Cliff landmark as the village's Victorian homes.

Unfortunately, more than a decade ago, many of the sycamores on Shore Road north of Tappen Beach failed and were taken down. Repeated efforts to replant them have been futile.

Last year, I counted 28 trees that were dying. Just this past week, 15 were marked with orange paint and removed.

Clearly, replanting more trees is not an answer. I suspect that saltwater that floods over the seawall may be to blame. Why needlessly sacrifice any more trees?

We need a more humane and creative solution to replace the shade and beauty that the trees once provided. Perhaps there

could be an engineering, artistic or landscaping competition to design an alternative. Perhaps there could be an arcade or allée of artificial tree-like structures, tarps or cleverly designed solar collectors. We have the imagination, talent and resources to solve this problem. All that is missing are the will and courage of our political representatives.

Karin Barnaby,
Sea Cliff

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OPINION

Why play politics with security clearances?

BY HEIDI GILCHRIST

President Donald Trump has revoked the security clearance of former CIA Director John Brennan. In and of itself, that isn't necessarily a problem; Brennan probably doesn't advise current agency officials much these days.

But as a former CIA analyst and now a law professor who studies national security, I find the reasons the White House gave for the move alarming. Our security is at risk in an era when saying something negative about the Trump administration is characterized as "erratic conduct and behavior," and be-

comes a reason to revoke clearances. Getting good intelligence assessments requires different voices and frank assessments, not just people who agree with what the president says.

Cutting off former high-ranking government officials from classified information sends a chilling message to intelligence professionals. That message is that dissent is not welcome. And for intelligence analysts with a family or a mortgage, the prospect of losing a security clearance is grim — it means you lose your job, too. Will CIA employees be worried they may have their security clearance revoked if they don't go

along with Trump's impulses? How can we attract the "best and brightest" to work in government when the administration shows what it does to people who criticize Trump?

Trump is correct that the executive branch has almost absolute authority on security clearance decisions. People have had their clearances revoked without even learning exactly why, as it is a matter of "national security."

The Supreme Court is clear — no one has a right to a security clearance, and decisions are not generally judicially reviewable. The only small opening the Supreme Court left open, never successfully used, is when there

is a "colorable constitutional claim." Brennan, along with other past officials the administration may revoke clearances for, such as former FBI Director James B. Comey and Obama National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, might really have such a claim: exercising their First Amendment right to criticize the president appears to be the reason for the decision.

One of the things that makes the United States intelligence services so unique and adept is their incredible diversity. When I worked at the CIA, if I had trouble translating a difficult Arabic phrase that I could not find in any dictionary, in

my office was a native speaker who could tell me what it referred to and give me the background to make sense of it. Having people precisely because they disagreed and had different backgrounds — race, religion, language — is what made us better. Would you join the CIA right now if you were Muslim? Or if you simply disagreed with Trump?



Heidi Gilchrist, an assistant professor at Brooklyn Law School, wrote this for *The Washington Post*.