

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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The Numbers Don't Add Up

Gregory Disapproves and Disproves Kennedy's Predictions that Nursing Facility will be an Election Year Issue

AMITYVILLE, NY—In a May 11 *Newsday* story about the closing of the John J. Foley Skilled Nursing Facility (JJFSNF) <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/suffolk/suffolk-moving-toward-closure-of-foley-nursing-home-1.5244466>, Legislative Minority Leader John Kennedy Jr. not only defended his lawsuit against the County to stop its sale (*at a cost so far of more than \$66,000 to county residents*). But as the paper reported, the Smithtown legislator also predicted that his colleagues who supported the county's divestment of the facility would face the issue in re-election campaigns this fall. However, according to an inquiry made by Legislative Majority Leader DuWayne Gregory (D—15th Id, Amityville) Kennedy's assertions are not supported by the statistics.

"No single issue has been more painful and difficult for the Legislature to resolve," says Gregory about the prolonged, varied and agonizing deliberations over financing Foley's continued operations (\$25 million annual County subsidy) and the fate of its patients and workers. "Personally, I think it shows poor judgment to make a campaign issue out of this. But aside even from that, John's ominous sounding election threats just aren't supported by the numbers."

The numbers Gregory refers to appear on a spreadsheet requested by him from the Department of Health Services back in March. Gregory made the query when the County Executive floated the possibility of leasing the facility; this after the Brookhaven Zoning Board of Appeals denied the special permit needed by the prospective buyers. If JJFSNF employees had voted to end their lawsuit to stop Foley's closure (*employees voted 137-9 against the deal*) Bellone promised to put a resolution before the Legislature to offer a lease to the Shermans. Realizing that this could well be the final vote he would take on the fate of Foley, Gregory wanted to get past all the rhetoric and know more about the patients.

—MORE, MORE, MORE—

“Opponents of privatization always argued that the nursing home was a County-wide facility serving patients from all over Suffolk. I wanted to know if that was really true and have a better idea who these people were and where they came from,” says Gregory. “It turns out that wasn’t the case. It primarily served residents from communities immediately surrounding it, along with a significant number of non-county residents as well.”

The numbers Gregory is referring to, from the Health Department, show the following:

- Between 2000 and 2013, JJFSNF served a total of 1,766 patients.
- 954 of those patients came only from the Town of Brookhaven.

The reason why Kennedy’s election year threats ring hollow is that within that population of 954, the majority of patients were from communities concentrated primarily in only three legislative districts within Brookhaven. Two of those districts are represented by legislators who opposed the privatization of JJFSNF, Kate Browning in the 3rd Id and Rob Calarco in the 7th Id. The other district is represented by Al Krupski (*1st Id*) who was voted into office in January of this year in a special election. Subsequently, he never had to vote on the disposition of Foley.

Once you get past the concentration of residents within only those 3 legislative districts, the number of patients from western Suffolk is actually lower than the total number of non-county residents:

- 148 non-county residents, including out-of-state patients from as far away as Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland and Pennsylvania .
- 144 patients total from the towns of Smithtown, Huntington and Babylon combined.

“After nursing home employees failed to keep the facility open for the patients that meant the Legislature would no longer have to vote on a lease. So I put these numbers away,” says Gregory. “But when I read that John is now trying to politicize this issue, and intimidate members of my caucus with bogus threats of voter backlash, I just couldn’t stand by anymore and not set the record straight.”