



THOMAS R. SUOZZI
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PRESS RELEASE

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Suozzi Proposes Legislation to Strengthen Housing Discrimination Laws

*-- Bill Would Set up System to Quickly Resolve Violations,
Disputes;
Also Ensures County Law Mirrors State and Federal Laws*

Mineola, N.Y. – As part of his continuing commitment to ensure all Nassau County residents receive equal protection under the law, Nassau County Executive Thomas R. Suozzi today proposed legislation that would strengthen the county's enforcement of laws prohibiting housing discrimination.

The bill would set up a system to resolve violations and disputes in a fair and timely manner. It includes establishing within the Nassau County Human Rights Commission an administrative law judge capability, which would allow both complainant- and commission-initiated complaints to be filed, investigated and heard before an administrative law judge. It would also allow the HRC to encourage conciliation and award attorney fees.

The legislation also would simplify the often complicated and confusing housing legal system by making county law substantially equivalent to existing state and federal fair housing laws. This has the additional benefit of allowing the

county to apply for funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to help pay enforcement costs.

“If we want to end discriminatory housing practices in Nassau County, it is crucial that we beef up our enforcement system,” Suozzi said. “It’s all too clear that can’t rely solely on the state and the federal systems. We have to take the lead at the local level.”

The bill has received praise from civil rights and real estate industry leaders.

“This legislation takes bold steps to protect all Nassau residents from housing discrimination and provides a sound mechanism for local enforcement of fair housing – providing Nassau County residents who are victims of housing discrimination with local remedies and deterring those who would otherwise break the law,” said Elaine Gross, President of ERASE Racism, based in Syosset. “ERASE Racism applauds the leadership of the County Executive in introducing this new legislation and hopes that it will receive the full support of the Nassau County Legislature.”

“We have anti-discrimination housing laws on the books, but all too often the current enforcement system doesn’t handle them in a timely or efficient manner,” Suozzi added. “This legislation sets up a system to prosecute violations and mediate disputes quickly, competently and fairly.”

Kate Rossi, president and Chief Operating Officer of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, also expressed support for the legislation.

“I believe this bill is an important one. Everyone has the right to home ownership without being discriminated against. It’s the American dream.”

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