

Dementia Risk For 9/11 Responders

SBU study shows higher
rate for those
at Ground Zero

A4



NEWSDAY / VIOREL FLORESCU

A first responder amid the rubble of the
World Trade Center on Oct. 5, 2001.

Maximum Temps For Classrooms

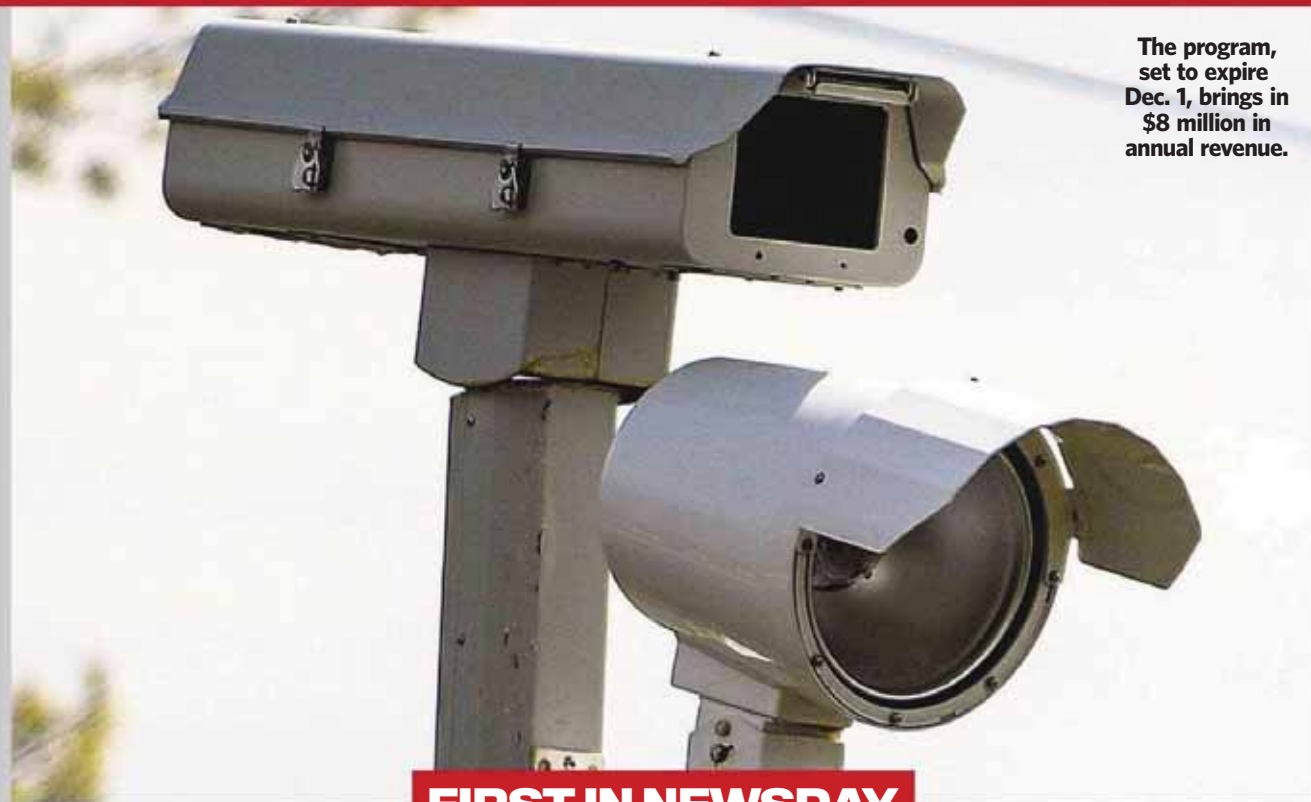
Newly passed law
could lead to 'heat days'

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RICK KOPSTEIN

Students keep cool at Wantagh
Elementary School in September 2023.



The program,
set to expire
Dec. 1, brings in
\$8 million in
annual revenue.

FIRST IN NEWSDAY

RED LIGHT CAMERAS SET TO END

State, county lawmakers blame each other
for failing to renew Suffolk's program

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SUFFOLK PICTURES \$8M LOSS

Red light camera program to cease operations Dec. 1

FIRST IN NEWSDAY

BY SCOTT EIDLER
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Suffolk County's red light camera program is scheduled to end Dec. 1 after a bill to extend it for five years failed in the State Legislature, leaving county leaders without a plan to make up more than \$8 million in annual revenue.

State lawmakers, who are up for reelection in November, did not extend the program before the legislative session ended last Thursday. The State Legislature reauthorized Nassau County's camera program, which expires Dec. 1, for five more years.

With 216 camera systems in place at 100 intersections, the program is a major recurring source of revenue for Suffolk. The fine for ticket violations is \$50. In Nassau, fines and fees total \$150.

Suffolk County issued 357,732 red light camera tickets last year, said Mike Martino, a spokesman for County Executive Edward P. Romaine, a Republican.

Suffolk Comptroller John Kennedy Jr., a Republican, told Newsday the \$8 million shortfall in next year's county budget "is going to have to be confronted and addressed, and we will work together to do it in the most prudent matter. It may mean some things have to be cut and trimmed. We will have to, working with the county executive and the Legislature,



Legislation to continue Suffolk's red light camera program was not introduced in the State Senate.

tighten the reins on a budget that already has had diminished receipts on sales tax during the first half of the year."

Martino declined to comment or answer questions about how the county will replace the lost revenue.

Officials play blame game

State and county lawmakers pointed fingers at each other Tuesday for imperiling Suffolk's 15-year-old ticketing program.

The Suffolk legislature never took the required step of passing a "home rule message" to the State Legislature supporting the extension.

State Assemb. Fred W. Thiele Jr. (D-Sag Harbor) sponsored an extension bill in Albany, but said no one proposed an extension in the Senate.

Thiele said he sponsored the extension at the request of Suffolk County's lobbyist, Manny Vilar, of Accabonac Strategies

LLC, a government relations firm. Vilar did not respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.

Some Republican state senators from Suffolk said no one from the county had asked them to carry the bill.

"I was not approached. No one asked me to carry it," State Sen. Dean Murray (R-East Patchogue) told Newsday. "It didn't come up. It wasn't an issue that anyone declined to carry it. It was more of an issue that no one was asked."

State Sen. Alexis Weik (R-Sayville) said no one in the county asked her, either.

"On our end we just carry the bill when there's a home rule message, or they ask us," Weik said in an interview Tuesday. "I personally didn't speak to anyone about carrying the bill."

State Sen. Monica Martinez, of Brentwood, the lone Democrat in the Suffolk senate dele-

gation and an opponent of the camera program, said "no one called me to sponsor the bill in the state Senate."

Democrats control the Senate and Assembly.

Suffolk County Legis. Kevin McCaffrey (R-Lindenhurst), presiding officer of the county legislature, said county lawmakers didn't introduce a home rule message because there was no red light camera bill in the State Senate, only in the Assembly.

McCaffrey said a home rule message must refer to both an Assembly bill and a Senate bill.

"The only way we can send a home rule message is if there's already bills filed in the Assembly and the Senate," McCaffrey said.

"I don't know what happened or what didn't happen up in Albany," McCaffrey said. "I don't know whose fault it is . . . it's a touchy subject."

WHAT TO KNOW

- Suffolk County's red light camera program is scheduled to end Dec. 1, after a bill to extend it for five years failed in the State Legislature.
- The county has not proposed a plan to make up the more than \$8 million in annual revenue from ticket fines.
- With 216 camera systems in place at 100 intersections, the program is a major source of recurring revenue for Suffolk.

Legis. Jason Richberg (D-West Babylon), minority leader of the county legislature, blamed the Romaine administration as well as Republicans in the county and state legislatures.

"The people elected folks who they believed were going to get things done. It seemed like we were hoping on an uncertainty to be the cornerstone of our process," Richberg said.

Window to save program

Some state and county lawmakers said they could get another opportunity to extend the program before it expires in December.

Thiele said state legislators could be called back for a special session to vote on a new funding plan for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, after Gov. Kathy Hochul's decision last week to put the issue of congestion pricing in New York City on indefinite hold.

Thiele suggested state lawmakers could tuck an extension of Suffolk's red light camera program into an omnibus bill that would not require a home rule message.

Whether or not an extension is ultimately included depends on how hard county officials lobby for it, Thiele said.

"If red light cameras get included, it is going to depend largely on the actions of the county," he said. "It's still alive, but it's uncertain."

Supporters of red light cameras say they deter speeding and reduce crashes. Critics call the program a cash grab by municipalities. *With Vera Chinese*

SUFFOLK COUNTY RED LIGHT CAMERA TICKET REVENUE

| Camera program | 2017 Actual | 2018 Actual | 2019 Actual | 2020 Actual | 2021 Actual | 2022 Actual | 2023 Estimate | 2024 Adopted |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Total revenues | \$27,639,792 | \$27,492,068 | \$29,358,969 | \$22,402,087 | \$19,621,476 | \$23,677,337 | \$14,300,000 | \$13,249,000 |
| Payment to vendor | \$7,195,204 | \$7,177,000 | \$7,646,771 | \$5,816,046 | \$5,173,983 | \$6,131,976 | \$5,400,000 | \$5,130,000 |
| Net revenue to Suffolk County | \$20,444,588 | \$20,315,068 | \$21,712,198 | \$16,586,041 | \$14,447,493 | \$17,545,361 | \$8,900,000 | \$8,119,000 |

SOURCE: OFFICE OF BUDGET REVIEW, SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE