

## Why isn't East End solution good for all of Suffolk?

The Town of East Hampton is preparing a sensible plan to help fight nitrogen pollution in area waters. Supervisor Larry Cantwell's legislation would create full or partial rebates of up to \$15,000 to encourage some homeowners and business owners to replace cesspools and failing septic systems with new technology. There's a lesson for the whole county here.

The money would come from the town's Community Preservation Fund. The program is fueled by a 2 percent tax on real estate transactions approved by East End voters in 1998 — after the State Legislature gave the five East End towns permission to put a public referendum on the ballot. In November, East End voters approved extending the CPF land preservation program to 2050 and allowing up to 20 percent of the revenue to be used for water-quality projects — because the State Legislature allowed the East End towns to put another public referendum on the ballot.

But Long Island lawmakers in the State Legislature now are reluctant to let Suffolk County hold a similar public referendum this November that would let voters decide whether they want to pay a fee for water usage to fund a plan to help homeowners switch to better nitrogen-reducing systems. Why the change of heart?

The goal — clean water — is the same. The mechanism — asking the public to vote to fund the fight — is the same. What was good for the East End should be good for all of Suffolk. And if lawmakers don't trust Suffolk to spend the money for that purpose, as some say, they can insist the county use the same lockbox language that was in the CPF referendum. They liked it then, they should like it now.

Anything else would be hypocrisy.

— *The editorial board*