

, with a limit of twelve consecutive years.

4. LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

BACKGROUND

The Suffolk County Legislature was established in January 1970 in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's "one-man, one-vote" decision, replacing the 200-year-old Board of Supervisors. On the Board of Supervisors, the Supervisor of each of the County's ten towns had one vote. With the establishment of the Suffolk County Legislature, the County was divided into 18 Legislative Districts, having substantially equal populations. Each Legislative District elects one member to the Legislature every two years. The Suffolk County Charter provides that, after each census, the boundaries of the Legislative Districts be re-drawn, if necessary, to maintain a substantially equal distribution of population.

QUALIFICATIONS OF LEGISLATORS

To qualify as a legislator, one must (1) be a citizen of the United States, (2) be a resident of Suffolk County for at least one year immediately preceding the election, and (3) reside in the district represented at the time of the nomination and throughout the entire two-year term of office. The exception to these qualifications would come in a year when redistricting took place. A sitting legislator who is redistricted out of his or her district could run for reelection, but would have to establish a permanent residence in the new district prior to running in the next general election. Other qualifications are determined by the Legislature and are subject to judicial review. In the case of a vacancy, a special election will be held within 90 days to fill the vacancy. Mayors of villages, supervisors of towns and members of the legislative bodies of towns and villages are not eligible to serve as members of the Suffolk County Legislature.

POWERS

The Suffolk County Legislature has the power to (1) organize and alter County government in accordance with the Suffolk County Charter; (2) adopt local laws and regulations for the residents of Suffolk County; (3) make appropriations, levy taxes and incur debts; (4) investigate the functioning of government; and (5) fix their own salaries. The Legislature approves the County

Executive's major administrative appointments and has certain appointment powers of its own.

PRESIDING OFFICER

The Presiding Officer presides over and acts as Chair of all meetings of the Legislature and is empowered to call special sessions of the Legislature. The Presiding Officer also assigns each resolution or local law to a Standing or Special Committee of the Legislature for its review. It is the Presiding Officer's exclusive responsibility to set up the various committees of the Legislature, to define each committee's responsibilities, and appoint each committee's members and chairperson. The number of committees, their responsibilities, and chairpersons may change yearly.

THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE

The Clerk of the Legislature and the Clerk's staff are responsible for (1) the records of all legislative proceedings; (2) the routing to the proper departments of all resolutions passed by the Legislature; (3) keeping records of all local laws passed; and (4) maintaining records assigned to this department.

The Clerk of the Legislature, as well as the Chief Deputy Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, and the Counsel to the Legislature, are appointed by the Legislature and serve at its pleasure.

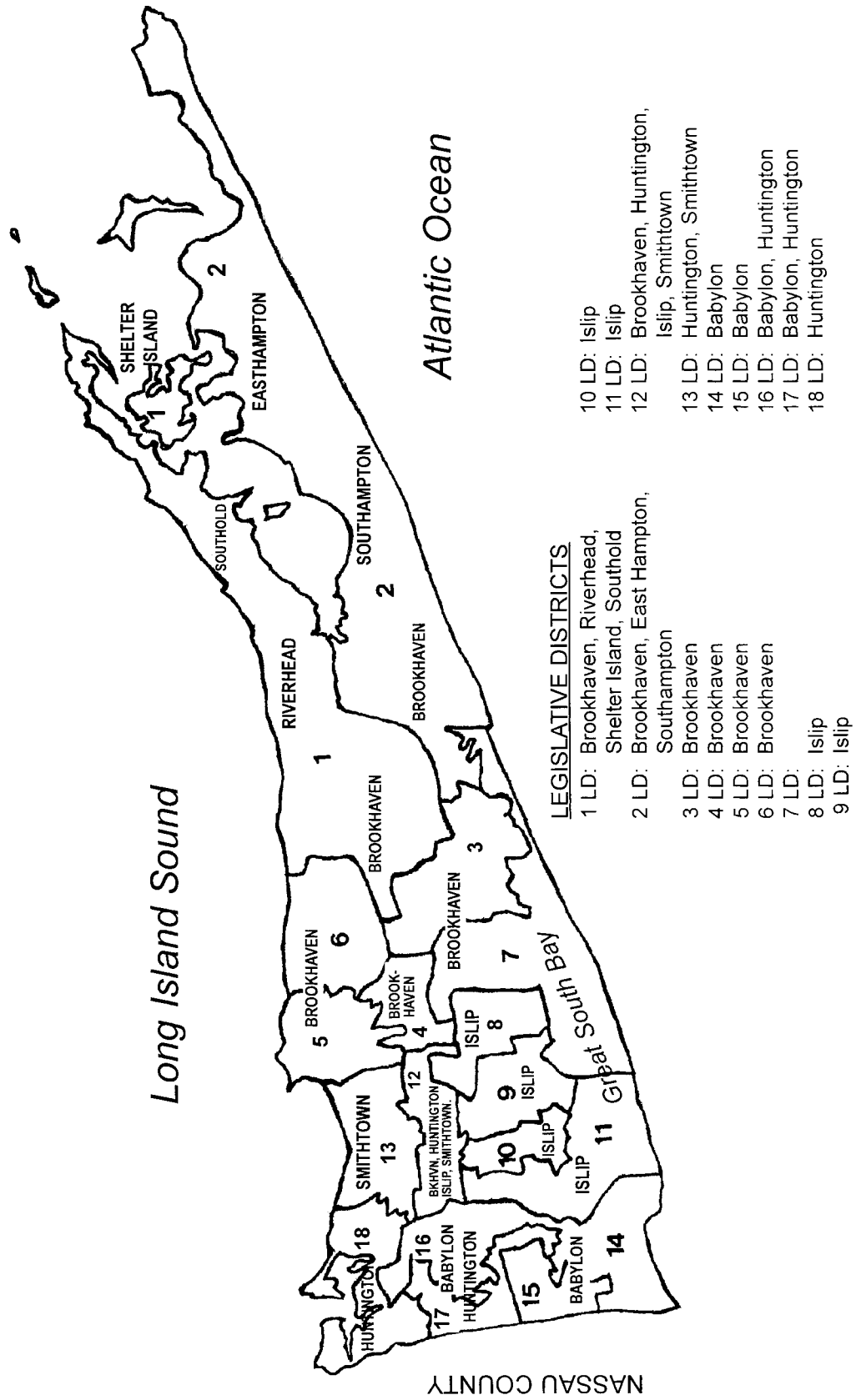
Before a local law may be introduced by any legislator, it must be presented to the Counsel to the Legislature, who must then, within 45 days, deliver to the Clerk of the Legislature a memorandum as to form, legal significance, and possible budgetary impact of the proposed local law.

HOW THE SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE WORKS

Each year, on the first business day in January, the Suffolk County Legislature meets at its organizational meeting. It is at this meeting that the Legislature elects its Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer. The elections are by a majority vote of the entire membership. If a consensus on who should be elected Presiding Officer cannot be reached, the Legislature has 15

FIGURE 4.1

Legislative District Boundary Lines



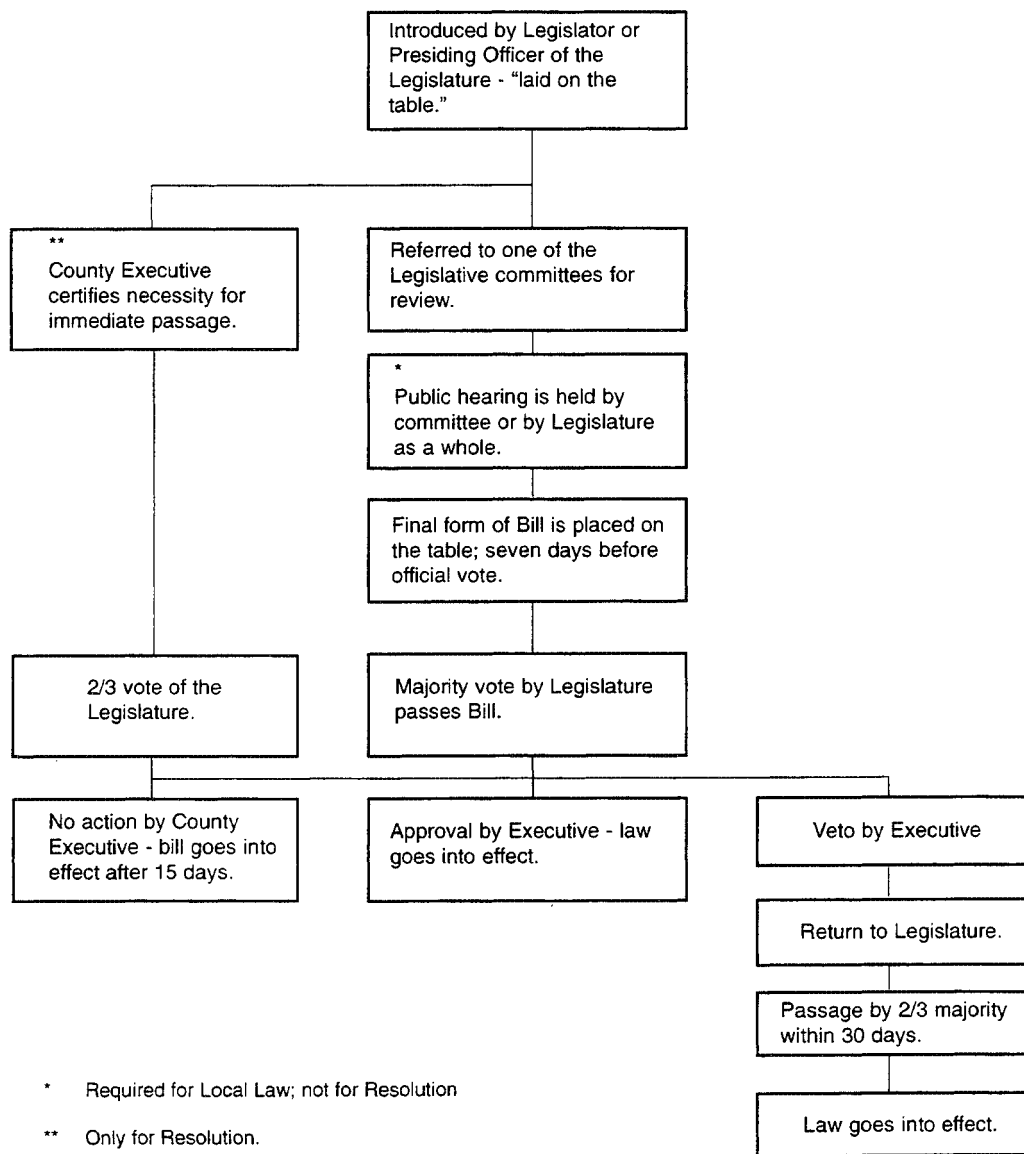
days in which to reach a decision. If, at that time, a Presiding Officer were not chosen, the Suffolk County Clerk would appoint a legislator as Presiding Officer.

It is at the organizational meeting that the Legislature sets the calendar for the year, determining the number of public meetings to be held, as well as location and time of day. Meetings of the Legislature are held either in Hauppauge or Riverhead. The Presiding Officer of the Legislature may call meetings for special purposes

with 48-hours notice. When meetings are called to order, the roll is taken to determine if a quorum is present (a majority of the legislators constitutes a quorum).

Meetings are usually held on Tuesday, the frequency determined at the organizational meeting. Meetings are called for 9:30 a.m. An agenda is available for each session and the business is conducted according to a set format. At 2:30 p.m., the agenda is suspended and the Legislature conducts formal public hearings on scheduled

FIGURE 4.2 PASSAGE OF A BILL



local laws. Prior to and following these formal hearings, the floor is opened to members of the public who wish to address the Legislature on any subject and who have filled out cards requesting to do so. Speakers are limited to five minutes each, and the Legislature does not return to the agenda until everyone has been heard.

All resolutions and local laws to be submitted to the Legislature must be filed with the Clerk of the Legislature by 1:00 p.m. at least three business days prior to the meetings at which such resolutions and local laws are to be laid on the table. Petitions and any other papers addressed to the Legislature for informational purposes only may be presented by the Presiding Officer, Clerk, or by a legislator. A member of the Legislature may introduce any memorializing resolution, sense-of-the-Legislature resolution, or non-official Home Rule Message by submitting same to the Clerk of the Legislature no later than 1:00 p.m. at least three business days preceding the next regularly scheduled meeting. These proposed resolutions and local laws are made available to all legislators and to the County Executive. They are laid on the table, submitted for committee review, and the vote takes place at the next scheduled regular meeting of the Legislature.

RESOLUTIONS AND LOCAL LAWS

The passage of resolutions and local laws is by vote of a majority of the entire Legislature except for special circumstances where a two-thirds or three-quarters vote is required by law. A full roll call can be taken on any question when requested by a legislator, and must be taken on all resolutions authorizing the appropriation of money. When a Certificate of Necessity is presented to the Clerk, the rules of the Legislature and the Charter require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the total Legislature for adoption.

When a piece of legislation is deemed extremely important by either the County Executive or a legislator, a Certificate of Necessity can be requested. For one to be granted, 12 legislators must approve, and the County Executive must also approve. A Certificate of Necessity means that the legislation in question can bypass the normal legislative committee process and be brought to a vote quickly.

HOME RULE

A Home Rule Message is a request by the County Legislature for specific legislation from the New York State Legislature concerning the property, affairs, or government of the County of Suffolk. It is initiated by either the State Assembly or State Senate, or by both. If a Home Rule request is endorsed by the County Executive, only a majority vote of the Legislature is necessary. If it is not endorsed by the County Executive, at least two-thirds of the Suffolk County Legislature must vote in the affirmative.

MEMORIALIZING

Occasionally, the Legislature may wish to officially state its position on legislation or actions pending in another legislative or administrative body. This can be done by a memorializing resolution.

SENSE-OF-THE-LEGISLATURE RESOLUTION

This is a legislative device whereby the County may express itself on a particular issue over which it has no direct control or jurisdiction as long as it bears directly on the affairs of Suffolk County.

OTHER LEGISLATION

The Legislature may give immediate consideration to any resolution that has received the approval of a majority of the membership of the primary committee to which it was assigned and that pertains to the adoption of (1) a local law with prior public hearing by the Legislature; (2) the annual Capital Program; (3) the annual Capital Budget; or (4) a Home Rule Message.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

In 2000, the following standing committees were named: (1) Ways and Means; (2) Health; (3) Social Services; (4) Budget; (5) Veterans and Seniors; (6) Consumer Affairs and Government Operations; (7) Finance, Technology and Management Services; (8) Energy and Environment; (9) Economic Development and Education; (10) Parks, Land Acquisitions, Cultural Affairs; (11) Public Safety; (12) Public

Works and Transportation. These committees may change yearly.

The Chair of each committee is appointed by the Presiding Officer. Each standing committee is generally composed of seven members. Although committee assignments are made by

the Presiding Officer, a legislator may request assignment to a particular committee. Most standing committees meet at least once a month. Special committees are appointed by the Presiding Officer as deemed necessary, serving only for time necessary to complete their work.



Courtesy of Suffolk County Historical Museum, Riverhead

Captain Josh Fournier on the beach with fishing outfit, East Marion, NY



Photo by Henry Mangels

Beebe Windmill, Bridgehampton, NY

At one time, before steam engines, there were hundreds of grist mills on Long Island. They were built to mill grain, saw wood and to pump water. Beebe Windmill was built in 1820. There are summer tours and children's activities at the windmill.