



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS November 27, 2012

| ISSUE: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, HIGHWAYS**

| COMMITTEE: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Works of Fiction

I was advised not to write this column. I was told it wasn't politically expedient, that it would most certainly ruffle some feathers. But I've always maintained that I would shoot straight with my constituents, and I think my recent re-election means that most of you appreciate that effort.

That being said, we've all had the experience at some time or another in our lives of having worked hard for something – sometimes very hard – only to watch someone else swoop in at the last minute and take credit for our hard work. It's not only personally frustrating to witness someone else be recognized for something they didn't do, it's also disconcerting to watch as they try to pull the wool over people's eyes. Some politicians truly believe that their own constituents are so uninformed that they can make things up and no one will call them on it. That attitude was on display when a local resident from Elmont sent me the recent letter that his Nassau County legislator mailed to constituents.

The letter outlined the slate of road safety projects planned for Hempstead Turnpike and the legislator wasted no time in claiming credit for them. The opening line reads, "I am pleased to

announce that my office together with the New York State Department of Transportation has made it possible for improvements to pedestrian safety along the Hempstead Turnpike corridor to be implemented.” Let me be abundantly clear: at no time was the county legislator ever involved in the heavy lifting, or any lifting for that matter, that made this possible. The fact is it’s a state road, not a county road. The state, not the county, will be improving it.

With my colleagues, Senator Skelos and Senator Hannon, who also represent communities along Hempstead Turnpike, we worked with Governor Cuomo to commit resources to revamp traffic signals, crosswalks, center medians, and improved signage. The improvements will make Hempstead Turnpike safer, no question about it. But the point of this column isn’t who gets credit for safety enhancements to a road, it’s about honesty and integrity, virtues oftentimes missing in today’s political world.

In sending an update on legislative activities one has to wonder why a Nassau County legislator wouldn’t give his constituents an update on county issues. What is being done to restore county funding for after-school youth programs like GYO? What about addressing the county tax assessments which saw many homeowners’ taxes increase? What are they doing to address the annual overspending and deficit borrowing we’ve seen from county government and how can they put us on a course to no longer need NIFA oversight? It seems to me that there’s plenty to be done and it absolutely can get done when people put aside the partisan bickering to work on real answers.

For those who received the legislator’s letter, you probably already know who wrote it. For the rest of you, I simply remind you that governing is a two-way street that requires your input and your staying informed. Just like Hempstead Turnpike, it can be made better when people are willing to work together. By all means, support local leaders when warranted, but remember that honesty and integrity are essential to holding elected officials accountable.

With them, we can dig our way out of any mess.