

East End officials meet with Senator Gillibrand

[By Brian Bossetta](#)

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Local government officials had the opportunity to meet with newly appointed U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand in Hauppauge on Friday to discuss a plethora of issues affecting the East End, including commercial fishing, coastal erosion and immigration.

Suffolk County Legislator Jay Schneiderman, who attended the session, described Friday's meeting—which included Southampton Town Supervisor Linda Kabot, East Hampton Town Supervisor Bill McGintee, New York State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr., Suffolk County Legislator Ed Romaine, Greenport Mayor David Nyce and Southampton Village Mayor Mark Epley—as productive.

"She was very open and responsive to our needs," Mr. Schneiderman said Tuesday. "It's nice to have someone interested in solving some of these long-standing problems."

Ms. Gillibrand, a Democrat from Albany, was appointed by New York State Governor David Paterson in January to fill the seat vacated by now U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

According to Mr. Schneiderman, federal policies on commercial fishing have a significant impact on the local industry, especially in areas such as Montauk, which Mr. Schneiderman represents. In a press release issued by Ms. Kabot's office about the meeting, Mr. Schneiderman is quoted as saying that the South Fork is home to New York State's two largest commercial fishing fleets: one in Montauk and the other at the Shinnecock Inlet in Southampton.

According to Ms. Kabot's press release, Ms. Gillibrand said that federal laws imposed on New York State fishermen—which they say unfairly limits their quotas—are absurd.

Mr. Schneiderman characterized the senator as enthusiastic and eager to jump in to the fray.

Last week, the East End Supervisors and Mayors Association approved a resolution sponsored by Ms. Kabot outlining the "significant and continuing negative consequences to commercial fishermen and related industries."

Ms. Kabot said Tuesday that she was impressed with the new senator.

"She's stepped into the role of senator with a lot of enthusiasm and has hit the ground running," the supervisor said. "I was glad to see her show such an interest in Long Island, and was impressed by her eagerness to learn about East End issues."

Speaking to the issue of coastal erosion, which was also discussed Friday, Mr. McGintee, according to Ms. Kabot's press release, told Ms. Gillibrand that he needs more sand, given the significant shoreline erosion along Montauk's business district.

According to Lynn Ryan, Mr. McGintee's executive assistant, the East Hampton supervisor is planning to meet again with the senator, in Washington on Thursday, to discuss the coastal erosion issue in more detail. New York State Senior Senator Charles Schumer and U.S. Representative Tim Bishop will also be part of that discussion, Ms. Ryan said.

Erosion in Southampton Town, which Ms. Kabot said is most significant in Sagaponack and west of the Shinnecock Inlet in Hampton Bays, was also brought up at Friday's meeting with Ms. Gillibrand. Regular dredging is essential in those areas, Ms. Kabot said, with the spoils being deposited on the beaches most in need of re-nourishment.

According to Ms. Kabot, the hot button topic of immigration was also discussed with local officials calling for federal help.

"The town has significant concerns about the large numbers of undocumented persons living and working in our area," Ms. Kabot said. "There's increasing school enrollment, a growing burden on emergency rooms, and escalating costs for police services and code enforcement actions."

Mr. Schneiderman said he brought up the issue of H2B visas, which allow U.S. employers to hire immigrants for seasonal work if citizens do not respond to the employment ad. Many, including U.S. Representative Tim Bishop, argue that expanding the H2B program would offer a legal alternative to the immigration problem. According to Mr. Schneiderman, Ms. Gillibrand said she would look into the H2B issue.

In Ms. Kabot's view, the immigration issue in Southampton impacts the quality of life in many neighborhoods due to overcrowded and unsafe housing conditions.

"The town embraces humanitarian efforts," she said, "but federal attention is needed."