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## OUR TOWNS

### Judge nixes Suffolk anti-gang measure

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A State Supreme Court justice struck down a controversial crime-fighting policy from the previous Suffolk County administration that sought to ban alleged gang members from associating with one another in parts of Wyandanch.

In a decision issued Thursday, Acting Supreme Court Justice Jeffrey Arlen Spinner "dismissed, with prejudice" plans to prohibit 37 suspected gang members from gathering within a 2-square-mile "safety zone" in the hamlet.

Civil rights advocates and an attorney for some of the men have criticized the strategy of seeking injunctions against them as unconstitutional and extreme.

Although the judge did not elaborate on his decision, advocates routed it as a victory against pre-emptive measures restricting "freedom of movement" guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution's Fifth Amendment.

"The government can't simply arrest a person for being someplace," said Corey Stoughton, senior staff attorney for the New York Civil Liberties Union in Central Islip, which



PHOTO BY RICK KOPSTEIN

Justice Jeffrey Arlen Spinner didn't elaborate on decision.

had filed a legal brief against the county's program. "It's almost as if Suffolk County was trying to create a pre-crime unit because they thought some people were likely to commit crimes."

Former County Executive Steve Levy announced the strategy last year as an effective way to take back the streets. He could not be reached yesterday for comment.

His successor, County Executive Steve Bellone, has previously said he would not pursue the Wyandanch policy.

"I believe that anti-gang efforts should be centered on community- and intelligence-led policing," Bellone said yes-



PHOTO BY ED BETZ

Then-County Exec Steve Levy announced strategy last year.

terday. "Supreme Court Justice Spinner's dismissal of the gang injunction supports my request for a discontinuance."

Valerie M. Cartright, senior attorney with the Hempstead law office of Frederick K. Brewington that is representing six of the men, said their clients expressed relief but "these actions to dismiss the complaint do not absolve the county of any prior wrongdoing."

Those men's rights, she said, were violated.

"This action should never have been commenced," Cartright said. "These young men have been defamed by being linked to criminal activity with no basis."