

NY Pols OK Increased Monitoring of Hempstead Schools

BY TIMOTHY BOLGER - JUNE 21, 2019



The Hempstead School District's troubles run deep.

New York State lawmakers passed a bill this week that increases oversight of the long-troubled Hempstead School District, which is plagued by corruption, low graduation rates, and crime.

The state Senate and Assembly passed a measure that authorizes the state commissioner of education to appoint a panel of three monitors to oversee the district, requires the school board to enact a conflict of interest policy, as well as develop plans to improve the schools' academics and finances. The bill now goes to Gov. Andrew Cuomo for his signature.

"This is a huge problem for New York State," freshman Assemb. Taylor Raynor (D-Hempstead), the bill's sponsor, told the state legislative chamber Thursday while getting choked up. "We have, if not the worst, one of the worst school districts in the United States."

The school district until recently had a 37 percent graduation rate, which ranks among the worst in the nation. School officials, who held a news conference this week vowing to fight the oversight,

said they have made improvements that has gotten the graduation rate up to 60 percent, which is the national average.

The school board had hired Superintendent Shimon Waronker, who has turned around troubled New York City schools, but then a new school board majority was elected, it suspended Waronker, and accused him of corruption.

Waronker and his attorney, Frederick K. Brewington, have been critical of the district's previously state-appointed special adviser Jack Bierwirth, whose recent report on the district indicated "substantial progress" has been made in Hempstead schools.

Among the members of the school board are a former Hempstead village police officer who was forced off the job after [pleading guilty to theft](#). Some the many issues facing the school district include a lack of bus service for its high school students, who are forced to walk more than two miles to and from school, often across busy intersections and through dangerous neighborhoods.

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Timothy Bolger is the Editor in Chief of the Long Island Press who's been working to uncover unreported stories since shortly after it launched in 2003. When he's not editing, getting hassled by The Man or fielding cold calls to the newsroom, he covers crime, general interest and political news in addition to reporting longer, sometimes investigative features. He won't be happy until everyone is as pissed off as he is about how screwed up Lawn Guyland is.