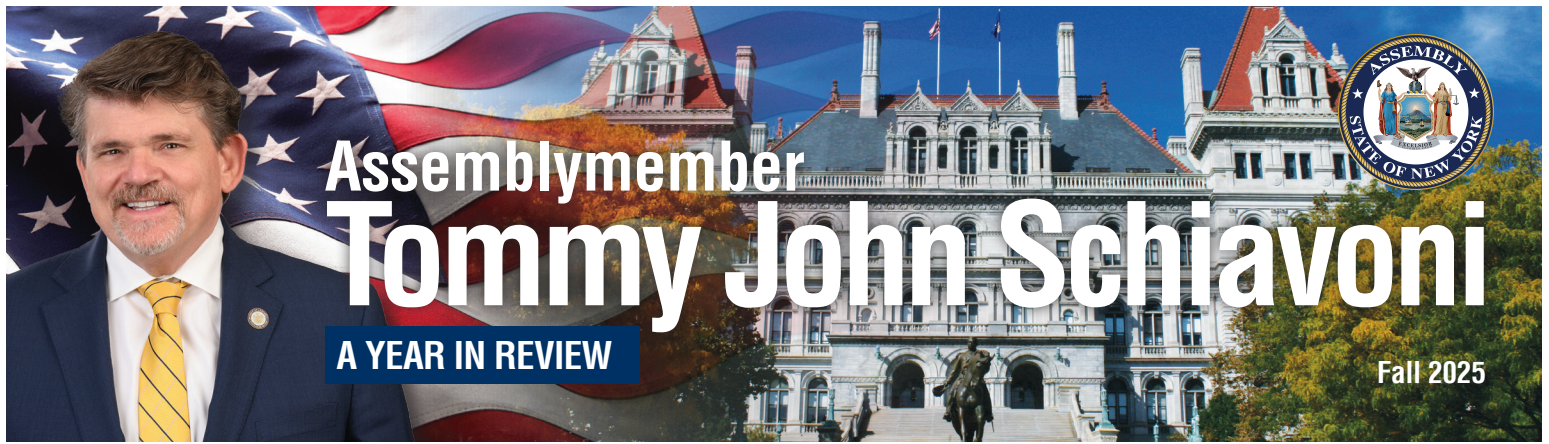




Lower Property Taxes - My First Bill

A.2436 allows the Town of Southampton to enact a homestead exemption on property tax levies by the town of up to \$50,000 of the assessed property value. As the largest town in our district, this exemption is part of a broader strategy to address the cost-of-living crisis by relieving residents of some financial burden. This bill was signed into law by the Governor on February 14th, 2025.



Here I am in the Assembly chamber speaking on A.2436, my first bill to become law.



On my first session day, I received a warm welcome from my colleagues. I am proud to succeed Assemblyman Thiele in carrying on the good work of serving the people of the 1st Assembly District.

Recognizing Our Ocean Rescue Volunteers



The men and women of the East Hampton Town and Southampton Village Ocean Rescue Squads (EHVOR & SVOR) are on 24/7 stand-by, ready to respond to open water emergencies, no matter the weather. Their life-saving services are essential to the safety of East End beachgoers, boaters, fishermen, and all other water recreation enthusiasts. In acknowledgment of their selfless service, and to secure these organizations' futures, I worked with Senator Palumbo to pass bills A.2437 and A.2438 authorizing East Hampton Town and Southampton Village to adopt local laws that make enrolled EHVOR & SVOR members eligible for a property tax exemption. Both bills were signed into law by the Governor on February 14th, 2025.



Addressing Tick-Borne Illness in New York

New York reports over 7,000 cases of Lyme disease to the Centers for Disease Control annually, 500 hundred of those cases come from Suffolk County alone. Yet, this may only represent a fraction of the true number as many environmental and public health advocates acknowledge there is a critical lack of awareness and available data. Tick bites carry the risk of infections and diseases such as Lyme or Babesiosis that can have long-term consequences like arthritis, organ failure, and nerve damage. To bring attention to this issue, I introduced A.6047 requiring the Department of Health to collaborate with the Department of Environmental Conservation to publish an annual report on the state of tick-borne illness in New York. A.6047 passed both houses and awaits delivery to the governor.



The Best Start is a Head Start

Early childhood education is critical for healthy development, but finding the right resources can be costly. Long Island Head Start helps underserved and at-risk communities access these resources through programs that provide social, emotional, language, mathematical, and health development through free preschool, nutritious meals, health screenings, and family support services. When the Riverside Head Start center closed in June of 2024, 88 children were displaced. I am thrilled to report that the Speaker of the New York State Assembly, Carl E. Heastie, has committed \$2.25 million towards the construction of a new facility slated to open fall of 2026. The building will include five modern integrated classrooms, a commercial kitchen, and a playground. This facility will help young learners thrive for generations to come.



As a teacher of 30 years, I understand the importance and impact of early education. I visited the grounds for Head Start's new building with Assembly Speaker Heastie to break the news of the \$2.25 million state investment and to meet with parents, educators, and students to discuss and celebrate the future of early education in Riverside, Southampton. Pictured above is CEO of Long Island Head Start, Debrah Everett-Garcia, after receiving the news of the state investment.



A well-rounded education is more than math and science. A civic education is crucial for preparing future generations to take the reins of leadership. I met with Tess Ashley and Kara Flynn, two students from our district representing the NY League of Women Voters' Inside Albany program to discuss the concerns of our youth and provide a window into the mechanisms of state government. This experience empowers youth to pursue a civic education that fosters knowledge, cooperation, and an appreciation of the democratic process.

Investing in the East End

During my first year as your state representative, I listened to the needs of our communities and secured crucial state funding for local organizations and projects involved in healthcare, transportation, education, agriculture, historical preservation, environmental conservation, and other critical social services that East End residents rely on.

Acknowledging East End Indigenous Communities

In 1910, NYS Supreme Court Justice Abel Blackmar ruled, in a case now known as *Pharaoh v. Benson*, that the Montaukett Indian Nation had gone extinct and revoked their state recognition. In cruel and ironic fashion, seated front row to receive this ruling were more than 30 members of the Montaukett Indian Nation, whose people and culture were—and still are—very much alive.

During this legislative session, I worked with local Montaukett leaders to sponsor bill A.5295 which recognizes and reinstates state recognition for the Montaukett Indian Nation. I am proud to report that this bill passed both the Assembly and Senate and awaits the Governor's signature. I will remain committed to addressing the needs of Native American friends and family across the 1st Assembly District.

*Montaukett history predates the 17th century. Their language has changed over the centuries, as have some of their traditions, but their relationship to Eastern Long Island has not. These Montaukett are some of the few seated in the courtroom during Justice Blackmar's infamous ruling in *Pharaoh v. Benson*.*



The Shinnecock Indian Nation is the largest Native American tribe on the East End. Together with Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes and fellow Long Island Assemblymen Noah Burroughs and Kwani O'Pharrow, I visited the Shinnecock reservation to strengthen the relationship between their Nation and the NYS Legislature. Native American communities and culture are integral to our shared history as New Yorkers. I look forward to continuing to find common ground that enables all to flourish.



I am pictured with leaders and representatives of the Shinnecock Nation Council of Trustees. Their rich culture and history are intertwined with the culture and history of the East End.

A Tour of North Fork Agriculture

As a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, I joined Committee Chairwoman Donna Lupardo to take a tour of produce, livestock, shellfish, and dairy farms on the North Fork. This tour underscored the diversity of East End agriculture and its significance to the local culture and economy.



As part of the tour, we visited Little Ram Oyster Company, a women-owned and operated oyster farm established by Elizabeth Peebles and Stefanie Bassett. As stewards of Gardiner's Bay, I was proud to nominate Ms. Peebles as a prospective appointee for the Marine Resources Advisory Committee which oversees and reports on the state of marine resources and ecology in New York.



Last winter, Crescent Duck Farm—the last commercial duck farm on Long Island—was one of many poultry farms in the United States afflicted by an outbreak of bird flu. After depopulating over 100,000 birds to stop the spread of the virus, the future of this 117-year-old duck farm hung in the balance. Today, we are encouraged that the Crescent Duck Farm is committed to rebuilding its flock under the 4th generation of Corwin family leadership.

Community Outreach Coming to You

This year, I instituted mobile office hours. By rotating between three locations in Westhampton, Greenport, and Montauk, I was able to reach the furthest communities in our district and give everyone an equal chance to discuss the issues that matter to them. Mobile office hours help me to better represent our district in Albany and foster trust and transparency between legislators and the public, providing an opportunity for constituents to meet their representative in person.



Meeting constituents where they are is important now more than ever to build trust in government. Making myself available to the furthest reaches of our district allowed constituents who otherwise may not have had a chance to engage with my office to do so.



Libraries are havens of knowledge, safe spaces for learning, and pillars of social life in our communities. I had the pleasure of meeting with East End Library Directors at the John Jermain Memorial Library in Sag Harbor to discuss legislative priorities and pathways to achieving funding goals. Libraries like John Jermain provide more than just books. They also host cultural events, support local schools, and maintain local history. I am proud to say that the state provided an increase of \$2.47 million for library operating aid in the 2025-26 budget.



Assemblymember

Tommy John Schiavoni

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District Office

3350 Noyac Road, Building B
Sag Harbor, NY 11963
631-537-2583

Albany Office

Room 432 LOB, Albany, NY 12248
518-455-5997

schiavonitj@nyassembly.gov



As small municipalities, the 5 East End towns rely primarily on volunteers for Ocean Rescue, Firefighting, and EMS services. I was honored to join local volunteers and town officials for the grand opening and dedication of a new building HQ for the Southampton Volunteer Ambulance. These men and women devote their time and energy to saving lives, and their service to our district is duly recognized.



As the legislative recess ends and session looms on the horizon, I look forward to serving the great people of the 1st Assembly District and moving us forward to meet the challenges of our day.



As a member of the Committee on Environmental Conservation, part of my job is to attend budget hearings and question agencies about their needs and the use of state funds. One such hearing covered the issue of Horseshoe Crab fishing and conservation. These primordial creatures are part of the medical and commercial fishing industry and a fascinating feature of our unique marine ecology. As the representative of a coastal district, protecting the ecological integrity of our oceans, bays, and other waterways is paramount.