

Round Two: Rizzo and Gaines do battle again

After winning election two years ago, incumbent faces challenge for County's 9th Legislative seat

by Charles R. Leib

Both men running for Suffolk County's Ninth Legislative District seat say they get most of their ideas from the community, and believe keeping taxes down is the most important issue facing their district, and the county.

Seventeen-year incumbent Joseph Rizzo (R, C, RTL-Islip Terrace) and his opponent for the second straight election, Reverend Ryland Gaines (D-Central Islip), say their constituents bring their problems of high taxes right to their front door.

"The only complaint I get is taxes," Rizzo said. "We have rolled back the county sales tax by one-quarter of one percent this past year and we plan to do the same in the not-too-distant future."

He added that in his 17 years experience, he has only voted in favor of the county's proposed budgets where there were no tax increases and voted in favor of the county's recent sales tax rollback. Rizzo said he believes his sponsorship of Proposition 13, which places limits on county property taxes, has been highly effective in saving his constituents from higher taxes. "I will continue to work to keep the property taxes status quo."

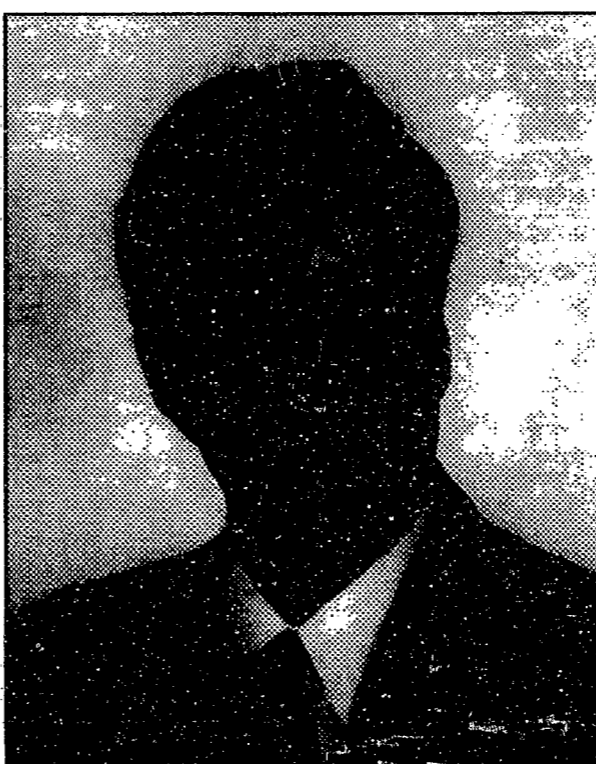
Reverend Gaines, Pastor of the Jesus is Lord Fellowship Church in Brentwood for the past 17 years, said he feels the county sales tax rollback will go up, not down, with the current legislature. "It is all smoke and mirrors," he said. "It's nothing but a political ploy."



Joseph Rizzo

"To help keep property taxes and sales taxes down," Gaines said, "the county has to find new ways of bringing in revenue." He suggested opening up capped off county landfills to be used for target ranges and biker trails. "They have been found environmentally safe, so why not use them for additional revenue? We have to explore all avenues to help find additional revenues."

Rizzo, a retired New York City Transit Authority employee and current Deputy Presiding Officer of the Legislature, believes the takeover of LILCO is a must. "I've always been in favor of economic competition," he explained. "If and when LILCO is taken



Reverend Ryland Gaines

over, I am hoping the current LIPA Board will be effective in bringing lower electric rates to the county."

Gaines agrees. "I want to see private competition brought to Long Island as a result of any LILCO takeover," he said. "Creating competition is the only way to bring down current rates."

Rizzo wants to abolish the county's affirmative action policy. He said he believes the idea of quotas is discriminatory, a policy he believes goes directly against equal opportunity.

"The police cadet program is a perfect example," Rizzo said. "The idea that minorities get first preference over whites is wrong and those same cadets get sent to college on the taxpayers' bill is also wrong." Rizzo attempted to have this program abolished, but it never made it out of committee for a vote.

Gaines said the whole of society is based on preferential treatment. He added that more bias would be created within the community if the policy is

defeated. "If Mr. Rizzo thinks there is a problem with this, change it so it is right, but don't abolish it," he said.

An issue that Rizzo had pushed but failed was to make English the official language in the county. The legislator said he believed the county could save a lot of funds by not printing county government materials in both English and Spanish. "It failed in the legislature but when my constituents were polled on this issue, they were 88 percent in favor of abolishing the two-language system."

Gaines is adamantly opposed to the idea, and said it would be robbing people of their heritage. "We have a very diverse nation right now, so cutting off a part of our communication could only hurt us," he said.

Additional items on Gaines' agenda included beefing up the county's police force by seeking additional federal grants, and bringing more business to the county by way of advertising the benefits of Suffolk throughout the nation.

Born in Brooklyn in 1927, Rizzo moved his family to Islip Terrace in 1954. He is married, has five daughters and is a World War II veteran. He founded the North Great River-Islip Terrace Republican Club and is also a member of the American Legion.

Reverend Gaines has lived in Suffolk County since 1967 and has served in the US Air Force. He is married with four children and three grandchildren. He was formerly employed by the New York Telephone Company and holds memberships in a number of civic, educational and community organizations.

The county's Ninth Legislative District includes all of Central Islip, Islip Terrace, Oakdale, West Sayville, Great River, most of East Islip and a small portion of Bohemia. ■

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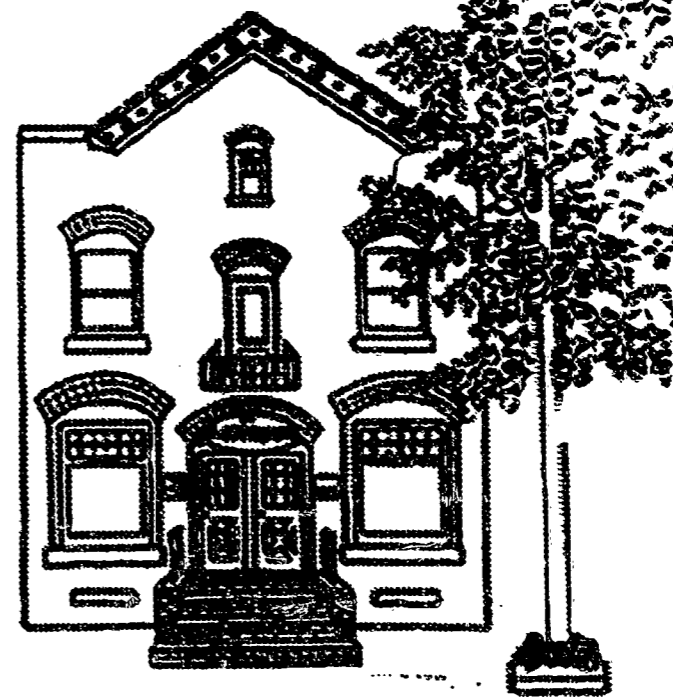
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