

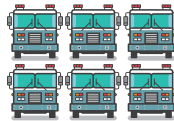
JEFFREY KRAUT

Creating Alliances Among Long Island's 665 Government Entities

Since its founding in 2002, the Long Island Index has facilitated the creation of a unifying future vision for our region by collecting and disseminating data that documents the challenges facing Long Islanders and monitors change. One persistent piece of data stands out: the number 665. That's how many government entities exist on Long Island, including



At **\$750K per truck**, NYC owns **ONE** heavy rescue truck **per borough**, plus one extra for city-wide use.

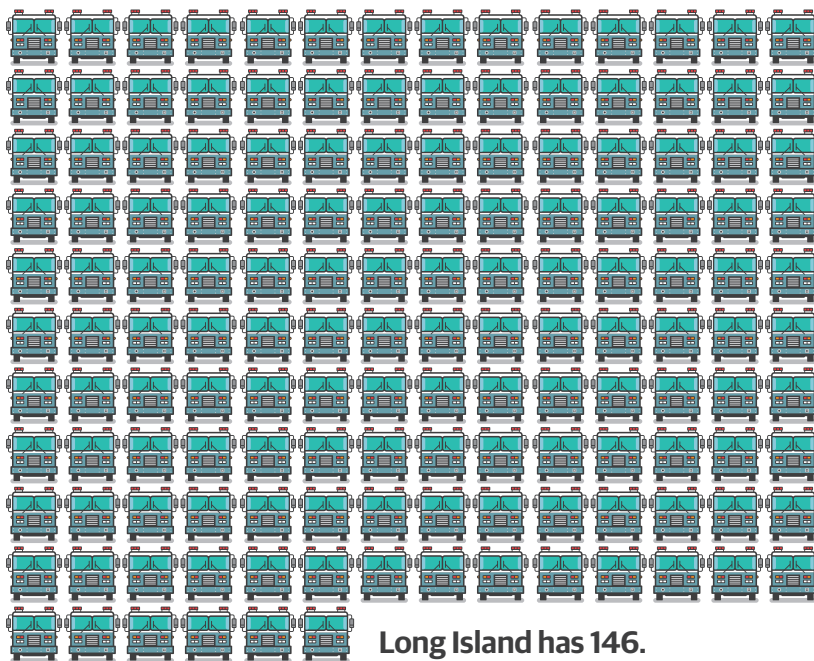


6 trucks =
\$4.5 million.

special districts providing basic services such as fire, police, sanitation, water, schools, and libraries.

Boundaries in government can be good; they define responsibility for our elected officials and create accountability to taxpayers who vote. But too many boundaries create inefficiency and drive up property taxes, which are legendary on Long Island, as duplication of services drives up costs.

A stunning example of that inefficiency appeared in the Index's 2006 report, which revealed that Long Island's 179 fire agencies had more fire trucks and apparatus than the City of New York and the City and County of Los Angeles combined! At the time, Long Island had 146 heavy rescue trucks at a cost of \$750,000 a piece, for a total of \$110 million, while New York City owned six—one per borough and a spare—for a total cost of \$4.5 million.



Long Island has 146.

Source: Long Island Index video, *The Clock is Ticking*, 2010

The prospect of significantly reducing the number of government entities on Long Island may seem dim, but creating alliances and sharing services should be politically palatable and practical.

That approach could produce high-value opportunities to improve services, increase cost-effectiveness, and bend the cost curve of tax increases. The State of New York is encouraging this approach through its Shared Services Initiative—mandating last year that counties appoint working groups of local officials to identify ideas for sharing services, and agreeing to match any Year 1 savings that the towns and counties achieve.

I've seen the extraordinary benefits of sharing services right here on Long Island in my work at Northwell Health, which has evolved from a group of like-minded hospitals that came together to improve care and achieve economies of scale in response to rapid changes in the industry and significant reductions in federal and state funding. Each hospital had a board of trustees that aggressively valued its independence and local focus. But over time they recognized the benefits of sharing knowledge, pooling resources, and improving access—creating a regional health system that now provides the majority of care on Long Island and is the region's largest employer.

New winds of change are blowing from Washington, DC that will increase pressure on all levels of government. The resulting demands of a highly taxed electorate may further alliances among the 665 government entities to reduce costs through economies of scale or improved services.

Fear of losing local control will be advanced as an obstacle to change, but with 665 government entities we need not fear losing local control. Instead we should recognize the shared interests of many of those entities and the rampant opportunity for increased efficiency and improved services. Long Islanders should actively support leaders who encourage cooperation and collaboration. It's essential to reducing the economic consequences of government fragmentation on Long Island.

Mr. Kraut is Executive Vice President, Strategy and Analytics at Northwell Health.

