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NO KINGS Day of Defiance on Flag Day in Riverhead

Riverhead. More than 1,000 local residents voiced their vehement opposition to autocratic rule by the Trump administration this past Saturday at a NO KINGS rally in Riverhead organized by the Riverhead Town Democratic Committee, the Southampton Town Democratic Committee, and a coalition of pro-democracy partner organizations.

The Riverhead rally was part of a nationwide NO KINGS Day of Defiance on which millions of citizens peacefully participated in more than 2,100 marches, rallies, and mobilizations across the country in support of democracy, the rule of law, due process, freedom of speech, and an independent judiciary — all in opposition to a presidential power grab unprecedented in our history. The events took place during Donald Trump's \$45 million taxpayer funded military parade in Washington, D.C. celebrating his 79th birthday.

Attendees at the Riverhead event held signs demanding respect for the U.S. Constitution, the rule of law and individual freedoms, and voicing their anger about cuts to Medicaid and the Veterans Administration, illegal deportations without due process, the corrupt monetizing of the presidency, and the failure of Congress to do its job to stop Donald Trump from accumulating all powers -- legislative, executive, and judiciary -- in his hands.

Speakers at the Riverhead rally included NY Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado, U.S. Congressional Representative Dan Goldman, historian, author and former CNN anchor John Avlon, NY State Assemblyman Steve Stern, NY State Assemblyman Tommy John Schiavoni, former DOJ prosecutor and former NY State Special Assistant Attorney General Dave Calone, Pastor Tisha Williams of the First Baptist Church of Bridgehampton, Southold Councilman and Democratic candidate for Suffolk County Legislature Greg Doroski, first-generation Mexican American college student Jon Lopez, and Shinnecock Nation member Denise Silva-Dennis.

Speaking in Riverhead, Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado clearly described the dangerous state of our democracy: *"We're here because democracy is under attack — not just in Washington, but also in communities like ours. When immigrant families are targeted by armed raids and fear becomes a tool of governance, that's not law and order — that's control through cruelty. We say no to tyranny, no to fear, and no to any leader who thinks they can rule like a king."*

Congressman Dan Goldman emphasized that our country is a democracy belonging to its citizens - - not a monarchy ruled by a king: *"America is a democracy, not a monarchy, no matter how much the current occupant of the White House wishes otherwise. Donald Trump is methodically and steadfastly working to undermine the rule of law, dismantle our democracy, terrorize immigrants, eliminate all forms of accountability, and abuse the power of the presidency for his political and personal gain. This weekend, Americans across the country are standing up to say enough is enough, and to remind the country that our government belongs to the people, not to a man who would be king."*

John Avlon called out the administration's assault on our democracy, the rule of law and the Constitution: *"The United States has rejected kings since our founding. We are citizens not subjects. But this president keeps assaulting the US Constitution, dividing our nation and destroying our reputation as a beacon of freedom and democracy. We are proud patriots and we will not let the American experiment die on our watch. We will defend freedom, democracy and the rule of law. We will stand together as fellow citizens and say #NoKings! We will not let it happen on our watch."*

Assemblyman Steve Stern condemned the drastic cuts by the administration to VA services and employees as a breach of the country's promise to take care of its veterans: *"As the Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee of the New York State Assembly, I am proud to stand with our veterans and their families to strongly and vehemently denounce the Trump Administration's devastating and disgraceful cuts to VA services and VA employees who serve the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much to protect our great nation."*

Southold Town Councilman Greg Doroski emphasized the important role of local law enforcement in defending the civil rights of community members against violations of those rights by the federal government: *"I implore our federal partners to return to responsible, collaborative practices that respect both the role of local law enforcement and the civil rights of every person in our community . . . We must all do our part to uphold the rule of law, protect the civil rights of all individuals, no matter their immigration status and reject political violence. It is my firm belief that just as the co-equal branches of government are vital to the strength and longevity of our democracy, so is the active role of local governments in defending the rights of our community and the freedom of our friends and neighbors."*

The Riverhead rally was a peaceful demonstration not marred by any violence. The organizers expressed their sincerest appreciation to the Riverhead Police Department for ensuring that traffic and crowds were safely under control.

The East End Democratic Committees intend to continue organizing peaceful protests to reject authoritarianism and show the world what democracy looks like: people, united, refusing to be ruled by a monarch. No one has the luxury of sitting out politics anymore. As part of a nationwide movement, local citizens must show this president that defying federal court orders, attacking our civil rights, disappearing people off the streets, slashing essential services, and handing billions to his cronies is unacceptable in America. Enough is enough.

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