

Plan To Deputize Private Citizens Faces Lawsuit From Nassau Dems: 'This Is Not The Wild West'

Long Island Democrats and civil rights attorneys are fighting back against a plan to deputize private citizens, calling the move illegal.



Nassau County Legislator Seth Koslow speaks at a press conference in Mineola on Wednesday, Feb. 5.

Photo Credit: Facebook/Legislator Seth I. Koslow



Q: Do you support deputizing armed citizens for mobilization during emergency declarations?

- **Yes** 39%
- **No** 61%

A lawsuit filed by Nassau County Democratic legislators against County Executive Bruce Blakeman in New York Supreme Court on Wednesday, Feb. 5, seeks to block what they say amounts to an “illegal, taxpayer-funded militia.”

Blakeman’s plan calls for deputizing private citizens as “special sheriff’s deputies” during emergency declarations. If activated, members would be paid \$150 per day.

Democrats blasted the move, arguing it lacks transparency, oversight, and legal authority.

“Bruce Blakeman’s militia is not about public safety—it’s political theater at the expense of Nassau County residents,” said Nassau County Legislator Seth Koslow, the ranking member of the Public Safety Committee. “We already have a highly trained police department and emergency responders. This militia is a reckless abuse of power.”

The lawsuit, filed by the law firm Kelner & Kelner, Esqs. and the Free and Fair Litigation Group, alleges that under the law, only trained law enforcement officers from other agencies can be deputized in a true emergency. Instead, Blakeman's administration is handing out badges and weapons to private citizens with minimal training and little oversight, Democrats argue.

"We will not allow Bruce Blakeman to put lives in danger," said Democratic Legislative Minority Leader Delia DeRiggi-Whitton. "This is not the Wild West, and he is not some sheriff in an old-time Western. Nassau residents deserve real public safety—not anonymous civilians with badges."

Specifically, the plaintiffs claim that Blakeman's administration has refused to disclose:

- Who is being recruited
- What training they receive
- What weapons they will carry
- How much taxpayer money is funding the initiative

Legislator Debra Mulé, a member of the Public Safety Committee, said formal Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests have gone ignored.

"Even the county budget hides how much money is being funneled into this program," Mulé said. "If this militia is such a great idea, why is he hiding it from the public?"

Blakeman has defended the initiative, calling the lawsuit politically motivated and mischaracterizing the volunteer force.

"It is a disgrace for bringing this frivolous action and defaming the volunteers, many of whom are retired military and law enforcement, who have agreed to pitch in, in the event of an emergency," Blakeman [told CBS New York](#).

“They would not take the place of the Nassau County Police Department. They are not militia. They are good citizens who are willing to volunteer in the event of an emergency.”

The lawsuit demands that the court:

- Declare Blakeman’s plan illegal
- Block all public funding for the program
- Force the administration to comply with public records laws

What Do You Think? Do you support deputizing armed citizens for mobilization during emergency declarations? Sound off in our poll above.