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Joseph Fritz ^[1]

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As the son of a disabled World War II veteran, Joe Fritz came of age with a powerful example of duty and sacrifice that shaped his own sense of purpose.

As a college student and young adult, he sought out experiences that strengthened and focused his purpose and developed the skills that have made him an effective advocate for others.

After attending high school in Brentwood, Fritz obtained degrees from Suffolk Community College and Hofstra University, where he studied History. It was a tumultuous time in America. Fritz' twin brother George joined the Peace Corps. His brother Nicholas joined the armed services and was later killed in action in Vietnam. Following his family's tradition of service, Fritz became a Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) after graduating from college. As a volunteer, he lived in Appalachia, one of the poorest communities in the United States, where he worked with children, an experience that taught him how poverty shapes and often limits the lives of children and families.

Later, he attended law school at Howard University, where he obtained his Juris Doctor in 1970. Fritz's law professors at Howard participated in the landmark *Brown vs the Board of Education* case argued before the Supreme Court. This case overturned the doctrine of "separate but equal" schools and cleared the way for equality in education for all Americans regardless of race.

Howard University is located in the nation's capital, affording Fritz an opportunity to work with the Bureau of Veteran Appeals in the heart of Washington D.C. There, Fritz witnessed the challenges veterans like his father endured. During this period his brother was killed in Viet Nam.

During law school, Howard awarded Fritz the Reginald Heber Smith Law Fellowship. He chose an internship in the Law Reform unit of Bronx Legal Services. This two-year internship provided him with an opportunity to understand how the dual burdens of poverty and discrimination impact people of color. He often says, "To change the law, you must change the way you think" and credits his experiences in Appalachia and the South Bronx in making him the fierce advocate he is today.

When Fritz returned to Long Island to practice law, he developed a general law practice that addresses a wide range of legal issues, including labor law. In labor's quest for better opportunities and fair working conditions, Fritz fought a Civil Service test in Suffolk County that lacked a key ingredient in the formation of testing. He also practices Real Estate, mortgage finance, matrimonial and criminal law.

Believing in the critical importance of education, Fritz ran for the Brentwood School Board, where he served as Vice President, helping to steward the district's future growth and a budget that now exceeds \$400 million dollars annually. He also served as an Adjunct Professor at Suffolk County Community College and New York Institute of Technology, and has taught the Real Estate salesman & brokers courses at local Real Estate schools.

Fritz has long advocated for Islip Town residents, serving on the Islip Town Zoning Board of Appeals, and speaking frequently before the Town Board, often on controversial issues. Currently, he is participating in a lawsuit that seeks to set aside the zoning change the Islip Board granted for the Heartland Town Square development project, a massive undertaking that calls for 9,000 apartments in the heart of Brentwood.

A long-time Democrat, Fritz has thrown his hat in the ring as a political candidate on several occasions. Ever the advocate for change, Fritz has been a candidate for judge, for Town Supervisor and County Legislator.

Now a candidate for Islip Town Clerk, Fritz sees the role of the Town Clerk more broadly than those who have previously served this function. Although the role is primarily ministerial, issuing licenses, maintaining archival records and preparing birth certificates, Fritz is convinced that a town clerk should also be an independent voice and champion for the residents he serves. According to Fritz, although not a voting member of the Town Board, the clerk can and should be a key influencer of board decisions, advocating for the residents and providing a different perspective on issues.

As a lifelong advocate for children, families, labor and people who have often been marginalized, Fritz is determined to be that independent voice for Islip.

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