

In the name of God

Religion is one of the most powerful influences in most of our lives. It is said more people have been killed in the name of God than any other reason over the history of the world. Intolerance is the culprit. Most of us believe in God although our religions may radically differ.

This coming week is Holy Week, a week of sadness and joy. It so happens it is a religious occasion for Christians and Jews alike.

For those of us in the Christian faith it is filled with sadness, for we are reminded of the cruel and inhuman death of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Many of us ask, how could God send His only Son amongst humans knowing that He would be so inhumanly treated and would die in such a horrible manner?

This sorrow and sadness three days after we observe Christ's crucifixion, brings upon us our most joyful celebration in the Christian year, the dawning of Easter. We celebrate Christ's rising from the dead and His ascension into heaven. Christ sits at the right hand of God and judges us in life and death. We celebrate the gates of heaven being opened so that those who have lived worthy lives can find eternal life in God's place.

Upon His death, Jesus left behind His disciples, who faithfully recorded His acts, words and deeds. These writings are found in the Bible, the textbook for life. The book that gives all the answers on how we should act and treat ourselves and our fellowmen.

Those of the Jewish faith do not believe that Jesus Christ was the

Messiah. This does not diminish their belief in God, they draw their strength and their road map for life from the Old Testament.

One of the stories pertains to Moses leading the Jews, and fleeing Egypt, fleeing torture, death and persecution. The Jews had no time to prepare for the exodus. Food and drink were scarce. Miraculously, in the middle of the desert, they were able to create unleavened bread called matzohs, which sustained them and aided them in their escape. During this exodus, Moses revealed to his followers the Ten Commandments that had been handed down by God. The Ten Commandments have become the basis of most religions.

Jews throughout the world will celebrate Passover, an eight-day celebration, with Seders. A Seder, one or two days of festivities, a gathering of the family, features a meal with traditional foods, most noticeably included is the matzoh. The ceremony can be a simple supper or an elaborate feast depending upon the traditions and the circumstances of the family.

The youngest child reads the four questions pertaining to the occasion. The elder male will read or give the responses. It is a joyous occasion for it is a celebration of the escape from death and persecution. Sad because it commemorates the intolerance of man to man.

Today, there are still countries in this world where you are forbidden to practice any religion. There are some countries where only the state religion is allowed to be practiced.

Thank God we live in a country that not only tolerates religion, but encourages its practice. We all have a right to practice the religion of our choice. With this right comes the responsibility of respecting those who believe differently than we do. Tolerance. Isn't this what our God wants of us?

We take this opportunity to wish all of our Christian friends a Happy Easter and our Jewish friends a Happy Passover.

And why not?

Easter Bunny made me do it!

Hip, hip, hop, I heard the thump of little feet. I looked out the window; there was the cutest little Easter bunny you ever saw.

Hold it, I'm an adult. I am not supposed to see Easter bunnies. What's that on his head, an Easter bonnet? As he came closer to me I realized it was a fire chief's hat, propped between his two big, pink ears.

I must be hallucinating. I'm awake, but am I dreaming? Is this some cyberspace illusion? What is this all about?

As these thoughts flew through my mind, Peter Rabbit came directly

toward me. Instead of joy, I detected anger. He said to me angrily, "You didn't do it. You forgot. Don't you realize you have put your family in jeopardy? I'll leave you no eggs this Easter."

What would my children think if the Easter Bunny did not come? With this, the big, fat, pink rabbit reached into his pack and said, "I will leave you no eggs, but I will leave you a gift more valuable, my ever faithful battery."

I bent over and took his offering. Thoughts went through my mind of the Easter Bunny not being able to go on to all those children's homes. Why had he left me his source of power? What was he trying to tell me?

A gong went off in my head. Hey, you idiot! It's been six months since Halloween, the last time you changed the battery in your fire and smoke detector. The rabbit's battery may go on forever and ever and ever, but not the one in your smoke detector.

You put that plastic contraption up on the ceiling and promptly forgot about it. If you want the thing to work and maybe save the lives of your loved ones, change the battery and keep it going, going, going.

Dingbat here only has to be reminded once. The Easter Bunny made me do it.

And why not?

To benefit those who want to learn

Ousting the disruptive students

Governor George Pataki's bill giving teachers the authority to oust disruptive students from classrooms for five to ten days has come under attack. Strangely, the loudest opponent is the New York School Board Association.

The criteria for suspension is relatively limited: . Commits an act against another student, a teacher, or a district employee. . Possesses or threatens to use a gun, knife or other dangerous weapon (already a federal law which requires a student to be suspended for one year). . Damages or destroys the personal property of a teacher or district employee. . Damages or destroys school district property. . Refuses a request from a teacher or an administrator to refrain from behavior that disrupts the academic process.

These are the checks and balances: . Principals can be given authority to suspend disruptive

students. Under the current law, this is limited to superintendents and school boards. . A teacher must provide a student who does not pose an ongoing threat of disruption with a reason for removal and a chance for an informal opportunity to discuss the removal first. For all other cases, a student must receive notice and have the opportunity to be heard within 24-hours of their removal. . The student's parents must be notified immediately. . A principal may overturn a teacher's decision if it is not supported by substantial evidence or if removal is arbitrary, capricious or in violation of law.

This all sounds good to us. The most consistent cry we have heard from teachers is about how one or two disruptive students can disrupt the education of the rest of the students. Numerous teachers have expressed their frustrations of having their hands tied and not being able to control their classes.

One teacher expressed her sorrow of having a class of bright, eager kids she wanted to teach, but she was required to spend over half her time dealing with only one student.

Where there are checks and balances and the principal of the school is brought into the process and the process can be appealed, we do not see any liability in giving the teachers the right to be disciplinarians and have the tools to work with.

The school board association fears the legal ramifications. They are afraid school districts will get sued. They don't like the teacher being the accuser, jury and judge. With the checks and balances that are in the proposed Pataki bill, we fail to see how this holds water.

Talking about lawsuits--don't the school boards realize that the parents of students impacted by unruly behavior can sue the school board for failing to provide an environment for

the students to be taught in a safe and non-disruptive atmosphere?

Teachers who decide to suspend a student would have to be on pretty safe grounds to do so. They will have to have documented their decisions very carefully. If they are the type of teacher, and there are some, that are arbitrary and capricious, they shouldn't be teaching. But, that brings up another sore subject, tenure, which guarantees a teacher's lifetime employment no matter how bad they are.

Teachers must have the authority and the tools to ensure an environment in which students can learn. Disruptive students must be dealt with forcefully.

We support Pataki's initiative. It's time for the rules and the battlefield to be changed for the good rather than to protect the minority who feel that fear and intimidation rule.

And why not?



It's not a matter of choice

The legalization of abortions has been one of the most volatile issues facing America for the last two decades.

In *Roe vs. Wade*, a Supreme Court decision legalized abortions during the first trimester. They left it up to the states to allow abortions during the second and third trimesters. New York is one of these states that allows abortions right up to the bitter end.

On each end of the spectrum, there are about 10% of the people who

are 100% pro-lifers and 100% abortionists that support the right of women to choose, without any other qualifications.

According to polls, the majority of residents can tolerate abortions in the first trimester. As the viability of the fetus increases, their support drops off dramatically.

Congress recently passed a bill banning partial birth abortions. These are abortions that are performed in the later part of the pregnancy. The

procedure requires the child being taken alive out of the mother feet first, its skull crushed, the baby killed and its brains suctioned. The bill allows for abortions of this nature if the mother's life is in danger.

President Clinton has indicated that he will veto the bill when it comes before him, maintaining that the mother's emotional and physical health have not been taken into consideration.

Prior to *Roe vs. Wade*, pro-abortionists argued that the health of the

mother should be cause for an abortion. Many pro-lifers argued only the mother's life should be given consideration. If the baby would cause the mother's death, the baby could be sacrificed to keep the mother alive.

Upon the passage of *Roe vs. Wade*, the argument changed from life to health, physical health, then mental health and whatever the pregnant woman and her doctor deemed a justifiable reason for extinguishing the baby's life and performing the abortion.

There is a big difference in the minds of most people between a first trimester abortion and an abortion performed when the child has all the characteristics of a fully formed human.

Over 70% of those polled are opposed to partial birth abortions. Members of Congress, reading the will of the public and having examined their own conscience, voted to ban these abortions. The President appears ready to disregard the will of the majority and veto Congress' determination.

A call, a letter from you to the President, might help him change his mind. It's for the kids. Do it.

And why not?

The sex offenders win

On behalf of 6,000 convicted sex offenders, the New York Civil Liberties Union sued the state for the overturn of Megan's Law. The sex offenders won.

We, the people of New York State, no longer have the right to know where sex offenders are living, even if it's the house next door, after being released from prison, even if they pose a danger to our children.

Megan's Law came out of a tragic New Jersey sex crime against a child. A convicted sex offender had been released from prison. Unbeknown to the community, he set up shop as a neighbor and proceeded to repeat his crime of sexually molesting, then murdering, a child. The community was outraged. The New Jersey Legislature passed a law, named after the victim, requiring the proper officials be notified when convicted sex offenders had been released and were locating in the community. New York did the same.

The Civil Liberties Union filed suit claiming that the law violated the rights of these sex offenders. The hell with the rights of parents to protect

their children. Their rights don't count. U.S. District Judge Denny Chin ruled the law is a form of punishment, and could not be applied to those arrested before the law was passed. Police registration of released offenders is still permitted, however.

The recidivism rate of child sex abuse is horrendous. No matter what treatment they receive, offenders have a record of repeating their offenses when freed. The communities must know of their presence so that their children can be warned and protected.

We have heard the arguments that the released offenders have done their time. They have paid society back for their offenses. They should have a clean slate and be able to reenter society as normal citizens.

The psychologists, the social workers, the probation department, the police and the courts don't even try to guarantee that these people will not revert back to their former behavior. Without protection or guarantees about this past behavior, society has a right to know of their presence.

Governor George Pataki, incensed

by this ruling, has promised to appeal and place the full force of the state behind this appeal.

Some crimes can be forgiven, others can't, particularly when there is a better than even chance that the offenders will repeat their violent actions. Any and all steps must be taken to prevent this from happening.

And why not?

First strike, out

We finally found something we can support President Clinton on.

Last week, he introduced regulatory measures that will oust residents from federal housing projects who are involved with drugs, vandalism and other socially unacceptable behavior. We must remember that this is an election year but, this as a given, it was the kind of attitude we hoped would come from the White House.

We know a number of people who have been forced to endure the wanton disregard for others, and not only are their hands tied, but so are the hands of the managers of these projects. As a result, the projects become slums. Life is ruled by intimidation. If these new rules are imposed, housing projects can be recovered to serve the people they were intended to serve.

That's good news.

And why not?

Or the attendant?

Whatever happened to the soda jerk?

Remember when there was an egg cream—a shot of chocolate, a dash of milk and seltzer water? The kid that dispensed it at the corner drugstore was probably a minimum wage earner at his first job.

Remember when gasoline was always pumped by an attendant? Generally, these attendants were kids working after school, or older men supplementing their retirement. Both were paid minimum wage.

Today, on Long Island, these jobs are gone. Although the federal minimum wage is \$4.25 per hour, the economy of the market says that the starting wage is \$5 to \$6 per hour.

There is a move afoot in Washington to federally mandate the minimum wage at \$5.15 per hour. We watched Senator Ted Kennedy on the McNeil Hour claiming that a 20% in-

crease in the minimum salary will not mean the loss of any jobs. We beg to differ, using the two examples above of jobs that were, that aren't anymore.

Supporters of increasing the minimum wage claim that an increase will not have an effect on the other salaries in the scale. We again disagree. Some 90% of the sneakers manufactured are made overseas. Why would a manufacturer pay United States workers \$2 in labor costs when he can accomplish the same thing for 12 cents, halfway around the world? Salaries are determined by the marketplace, not the government.

When the federal government starts tinkering with wages in this country, they better be ready to impose tariffs on our boarders. If not, they better be ready for increased unemployment to the point it won't make any difference what the minimum wage is. We live in an international economy today.

Right after the Kennedy piece, we watched a segment on the Mexican produce flowing into this country. Florida farmers pay regulated wages and are subject to time-consuming work rules. They are closing down their farms. They can't compete paying \$60 to \$70 per day for labor with Mexican farmers who are paying \$3 per day. Two-thirds of Florida's agricultural output in green groceries and tomatoes is considered noncompetitive in today's marketplace.

Raising the minimum wage may be a pay-off to the union bosses, but it is not going to help new people coming into the work force who have limited skills and work ethics. As automation and the changes in marketing eliminate these low-skilled jobs, a push by the federal government can wipe them out.

We are pretty much immune to

the effects of the change here on Long Island because the laws of supply and demand, and the underground economy, have established the prevailing wages. When was the last time you tried to hire someone to help you around the yard for \$5 per hour? Housecleaners would just laugh at you. Babysitters get paid this kind of wage and that's off the books.

Pontificating Kennedy doesn't have a strong case to call upon. He has probably never worked a day in his life for profit and can only imagine what it is like to be at the bottom of the ladder.

Higher wages won't come until people have skills and abilities. The most important thing to new workers who want to succeed is finding a job they can be hired for. Why deny them the opportunity?

And why not?

Monday is Earth Day

This coming Monday we celebrate the wonders of our earth. Mother Nature has endowed us with incredible assets that have allowed mankind to make a better life for himself.

In converting these natural resources into man-friendly products, we have upset some of the balance of nature and created problems. One of the main problems has been our wanton disposal of half-used goods. Goods that still can be used by refurbishing and recycling. In the past, it was too easy to just take what we no longer needed and throw it out.

Suffolk Life has always been con-

scientious about our environment and being conservation minded, we have attempted to find alternate uses for what would be considered our disposables and waste products.

The building we occupy was recycled. For many years on Long Island the trend was to knock down older buildings and build new ones. We took over this building, which was a former Billy Blake, and rebuilt it to our needs. When we gutted the building, we attempted to save and reuse as much as we could. A lot of the lumber salvaged from the building was given to employees and friends who were building homes or adding onto existing structures.

When we were installing our camera rooms, we established recycling systems for not only chemicals but waste water. There is not a drain in the building, outside of the sanitary facilities, that discharges out of the building. Chemical waste is processed and any reuseable components are extracted. Waste ink is recycled instead of being thrown out.

Since 1972, we have used recycled newsprint. Today, over 95% of Suffolk Life is printed on recycled paper. The waste paper that is generated in the start up of printing operations is gathered and sent back to be remanufactured. The roll wraps, kraft and cardboard are reused. We even gather and recycle correspondence, computer paper and other office produced paper. These all are tangible things that we do on a regular basis because of our commitment to our communities and world.

The one avenue of recycling we are most proud of is in human relations. We have brought a number of people into the Suffolk Life family

who had been exceded by larger corporations who were downsizing. We have brought a number of people into the operation who were retired but were looking for an opportunity to be useful. Sometimes this requires fitting the jobs and the hours to their strengths and abilities.

We have also taken a chance with people who might have taken a wrong step in their youth and desperately needed an opportunity to learn a trade and rehabilitate themselves.

Some of the things we do are not aesthetically pleasing nor would be considered the politically correct thing, but it is part of our commitment to making our town, our county and our world a better place to live.

Earth Day reminds each of us as individuals to look around us and see what we can do to be a better citizen of the world. When we all do our part, we will have a better earth that will last a lot longer.

And why not?

Like the rest of us

Most of us, when we enter the workforce, have a 45-year stint in front of us before we are eligible to retire or can retire.

Suffolk County Sheriff Deputies are attempting to push through a bill which would allow them to retire after 20 years of service. They want parity. They want the same thing the police have.

For years, becoming a Suffolk County Deputy Sheriff was considered a political plum. You got the job because you knew someone, not because of what you knew. Sheriffs have been put under civil service and have obtained their jobs through competitive exams. For the last exam, the county had over 3,000 responses from a single ad which had been placed in Suffolk Life.

It will cost Suffolk County taxpayers \$11.7 million over the next decade if the legislature votes for this giveaway. According to County Executive Robert Gaffney's office, which is vehemently opposed to this change, this will cost us \$63,000 per deputy. If the deputies decide not to retire and stay on for additional years, they will receive sweetness

amounting to one-sixtieth of their salary each year.

Currently, a deputy who retires after 25 years, and is 65 years old, will receive 50% of their three highest years' salary. These years can include overtime, which many deputies mysteriously accrue just prior to their retirement.

Suffolk County taxpayers cannot afford these golden parachutes. We can't afford the cost now and we can't afford to burden our children with it in the future.

We strongly encourage taxpayers to contact their county legislator. Reports indicate that a majority are willing to succumb to the pressures of the lobbying efforts by deputies and their union, which is politically active. Whether it be payback for the political support that they received from this union last November or fear of retaliation in the future, they are going in the wrong direction.

Simply, it is up to you. Get on the phone. Contact your legislator now or pay the bill in future tax liabilities.

And why not?

Line item veto

The Senate and the House of Representatives passed, and President Clinton signed into law, a measure giving the President the right to veto specific spending items that are in the budget. This is good news for America. It puts a control on the runaway spending Washington is noted for.

We well remember President Reagan throwing down a two-and-a-half-foot document in frustration and crying out to the public for a line item veto. The budget, in those days, was a take it or leave it situation. Congress can pile into the document all kinds of fat, waste and even corruption. Congress knew it was there. The President knew it was there. Yet, the President only had one choice, sign it or veto it. Of course, the President was forced to sign it.

The next President of the United States will have line item veto powers. If so disposed, they can cut the fat, the waste. If Congress doesn't

like it, they can override, which gives us checks and balances. It looks like the average American won for a change.

And why not?

LIPA takes on LILCO

LIPA and LILCO are actively involved in negotiations for the takeover of LILCO by LIPA.

LIPA has petitioned the Public Service Commission, asking it to order a reduction of LILCO's rates. They have asked and have offered documentation to support a 4.5% across-the-board cut now, and an annual reduction of 2% in future years. They have brought into question LILCO being allowed a rate of return on the \$4.4 billion decommissioned Shoreham nuclear power plant.

LIPA questions the prudence of LILCO paying \$1.78 per share dividend which is a yield of 10%, far above the average yield for other electrical and gas companies in the state who pay their stockholders an average of 6%. LIPA wants these excessive dividends to be used to reduce debt.

LIPA also has criticized LILCO for their intention to keep the tax rebate from the certiorari suit. LIPA points out that the payment of this tax was as-

Authority attempted to have a bill passed last year that would allow them to purchase some of this power.

Currently, the Suffolk County Water Authority spends 26.6% of their annual operating expenses on electricity. Erie County Water Authority spends only 18%.

Last year's bill didn't make it and it has been reintroduced by Senator LaValle and Assemblyman Harenberg. The bill numbers are Senate bill S2909-B and Assembly bill A4854-B. If the bills pass, it will reduce the cost of water for ratepayers and taxpayers.

This is a win, win situation for the residents of Long Island. We urge you to drop a postcard or directly call Senator LaValle and Assemblyman Harenberg, offering your support.

And why not?

assessed in the rate. It should be immediately returned to the ratepayers. This is not LILCO's; they are not entitled to it.

LIPA offered substantial documentation that indicates that LILCO would not be financially hurt in the market if the Public Service Commission requires them to act prudently and responsibly.

LIPA is sounding better every day.

And why not?

Public power for public good

Support this bill!

School budget votes on May 21

On Tuesday, May 21, residents throughout Long Island will be asked to come out and vote on their preference for school board members and the proposed school budgets that the boards of education have developed.

This is probably the most important local election you are asked to take part in. Currently, 60% to 70% of your real estate tax bill or rent goes to fund schools.

School taxes have jumped tremendously over the last 10 to 15 years. In some communities they have increased in such proportions that the residents are no longer able to maintain their homes, particularly, those residents on fixed incomes.

Young couples getting started in life find rents choking and the possibility of purchasing a home out of their reach. It's not the asking price, it's not the down payment, it isn't the payments for principle and interest, it's the tax burden they are expected to assume.

County and town taxes are approximately 15% each. Special districts pick up a few percentages more. School taxes are the rest.

School budgets are developed by those elected to the boards of education by the voters within the districts. The boards have great latitude in developing budgets. The state mandates that the local communities offer curriculum that allows every child to achieve a Regents diploma. The cost of these mandates and requirements average between 44% and 48% of the entire school budget. The balance of the budget incurred covers electives and additional curriculum, sports and extra-curricular activities approved by the school board. The state funds most of these mandates through state

aid. In most communities on Long Island, this amounts to 38% to 42% of the entire budget. The balance of the budget is raised through assessments on real estate.

The school budget is folded over into the real estate tax bill you receive from the town which also includes the town and county portions of our real estate taxes.

The budget includes the curriculum selected by the school board over and above what is required by the New York State Regents. These electives cover the

taxes is the main reason why our cost of living is no longer affordable here on Long Island.

The Long Island Business News in an investigative series on education reported that 75% of Long Island school board members have a direct connection to the educational establishment. Members or people related to them by blood or marriage are employed as teachers, administrators, educational support staff or vendors doing business with schools. In other words, 75% of Long Island school board members are the foxes in the hen house. The decisions they make

voices to be heard. These groups were immediately attacked as anti-education by the school unions. In some districts, the tax payer organizations prevailed, and they were able to gain a foothold. It generally takes two to three elections before the majority can be changed. Even when the taxpayer boards have taken control, they have been saddled with settlements made by the old boards with labor that ties their hands and hampers meaningful reform. With labor contracts in place, the only alternative is to cut programs, entitlements or curriculum. Each program has its own constituency and vocal support group.

Long Island residents are paying for Cadillac educations. The cost of tuition, educating a child, averages between \$11,000 and \$12,000 per year. This is twice the nation's norm, 40% to 50% more than what our surrounding states are spending.

High per pupil costs does not equal high quality results. The highest per pupil costs is found in the Roosevelt schools, and the failure to provide a quality education is notorious. Spending still greater and greater amounts of money is not the answer for a better education.

Many parents and grandparents as well as people with no direct interest in the schools have asked, are we getting are moneys' worth? Are our children achieving a superior education based upon the very high investment we are making? Are there better ways to fund education? How long can we afford to continue investing, unproportionately, our assets and not see a return?

On May 21 candidates will be, asking for your vote and participation in the elections. School board candidates do not run under party labels. Their philosophies, beliefs, are not easily identifiable.

This year all school board elections will be held on the same day throughout Long Island. To help better educate the voters this year, Suffolk Life will print questionnaires with the candidates' answers on May 15.

We invite all school board candidates to take part in this process. We will endeavor to get the questionnaires to all candidates immediately after the names of the candidates have been announced.

Unfortunately, some school boards have adapted the attitude that the addresses and telephone numbers of the candidates is privileged information and therefore, finding these candidates may be next to impossible. Whether the school boards have adapted these rules out of concern for privacy or to keep the candidates inaccessible to the press, we do not know, but we have our suspicions.

If you know of someone running or if you are a candidate and do not receive a questionnaire by April 26, please contact our office and we will get a copy to you immediately.

All questionnaires must be returned no later than May 8. The questions and the candidates' answers will give the voting public an opportunity to know the candidates' positions. This process is similar to the process which has become immensely popular with the public and has enabled them to more wisely chose their political candidates.

Let's make this year's school board elections an election by the people.

Please mark May 21 on your calendar. It's the day you can have your say as to the quality and the funding of your schools.

And why not?

School boards have the power to cut the cost of education across Long Island by up to 50%. Any school board can cut back its curriculum to the state mandates. It is up to the school boards.

gamut from additional languages, advanced mathematics, full day of kindergarten to courses in dance and the performing arts. Once the school boards offer additional curriculum, the offerings are covered by state rules and regulations. School boards use this excuse to claim that the budget is 85% to 90% mandated. If they do not offer a subject or a course, they do not have to follow mandates.

School boards have the power to cut the cost of education across Long Island by up to 50%. Any school board can cut back its curriculum to the state mandates. It is up to the school boards. On Long Island, we have become used to utopia. Unfortunately, Utopia has a price tag, and it must be funded through real estate taxes. The high cost of real estate

affect the salaries, the contracts and the purchases.

School board members serve without payment. Members are required to put in hundreds of hours per year in district meetings as well as sub-committee hearings, budget development meetings and negotiations.

School boards have traditionally only attracted parents of students or people with connections to the establishment. When non-vested people become school board members, they often find themselves as part of a distinct minority. They have trouble raising their voices and often are ignored by the majority.

A half dozen years ago, Tax P.A.C. and other citizen activist groups were formed to try to give support to the community representatives and allow their

Jobs for the victors

To the victor goes the spoils is a well known phrase in the world of politics. What it means, simply, is that those who win elections get to divide up all the goodies, more commonly known as the patronage jobs government has to offer.

Never has this been more apparent than in recent instances of job swapping being done on the county and town levels, and in another instance where a formerly powerful state senator winds up on the payroll, (\$200,000 worth) of a powerhouse Albany lobbying firm. Former New York State Senate Majority Leader Ralph Marino, who was stripped of his power and position for supporting the wrong candidate for governor, apparently had enough influence left to earn the big bucks.

Closer to home, here in Suffolk County, even more blatant examples of "you wash my back and I'll wash yours" came in the form of job grants between Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney and Brookhaven Supervisor Felix Grucci. First, Gaffney's wife was given a Brookhaven Town job as a special assistant, at a salary of \$42,000 a year. Then Grucci's daughter gets a special county job at a salary of \$35,000, which is \$12,000 higher than the entry level salary for that same position.

Now it may well be that both have all the qualifications necessary for the positions they have been given. And it is somewhat understandable that they are

given preference, if equally qualified, because of their political ties. It may not be fair that those political connections squeeze out equally, or perhaps more, qualified individuals, however the patronage and "spoil" system is designed to be rewarding rather than fair. If we want fair, we have to change the system and ban nepotism in all branches of government.

Totally unfair to the taxpayers is the fact that in far too many instances the patronage positions for the politically connected come with a higher than normal

This generous giveaway of taxpayer dollars is wrong, a thumbing of the nose at the taxpayers. Political jobs are one thing, politically elevated salaries are another.

starting salary, just as it did in these two instances. This generous giveaway of taxpayer dollars is wrong, a thumbing of the nose at the taxpayers. Political jobs are one thing, politically elevated salaries are another.

If your name is Gaffney, Grucci or any of the other high profile political names in Suffolk County and your kid or your wife or any of your other relatives want a job in government, they should start at a salary that is at the bottom of the rung and work their way up the ladder the same as others must do.

There may be peace at home, but we don't think Gaffney or Grucci can feel very good about themselves after these latest revelations. Greed never did much for your self-esteem or your public image.

In another troubling incident, the daughter of a judge was recently given a position in the office of District Attorney James Catterson. Was it mere coincidence that the judge, Michael Mullen, had granted a request by Catterson that a special investigator be named to probe the controversial car leasing matter which

was spotlighted in the headlines for months? Or was it, by chance, an action of gratitude?

If you don't mind taxpayer dollars being given away for pure political gain for the politically connected, you won't mind the job swapping that goes on in the wonderful world of politics. If, however, you believe that a political welfare system is wrong and should be abolished, you might want to make that view known in strong fashion.

And why not?