

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Senators: What's Wrong With This Bill?

Senators LaValle, Trunzo, Lack, Johnson and Marcellino have had on their desks, for several weeks, Assembly Bill A9769, authored by Assemblyman Paul Harenberg.

The bill is entitled, "The Ratepayers' Protection and Utility Competition Act of 1998," and gives ratepayers state protection, now and after LIPA (Long Island Power Authority.) It is a carefully crafted bill that gives us some assurance that if the proposed \$7.3 billion LILCO-LIPA deal goes through, it will ensure fairness for the ratepayers.

We are sick and tired of our state senators hiding behind a wall of silence. It is time for each member to stand up and say what is wrong with this bill or sign on as a sponsor.

The legislative declaration and findings stipulate that competition in the electric industry will lead to ratepayer savings, that the current extraordinary rate treatment provided LILCO is burdensome and is rejected, that the Public Service Commission (PSC) policy of excluding Long Island from the competitive proceedings is rejected, and that the PSC should seek to have rates on Long Island, over time, become comparable to the average rate on the eastern seaboard.

The proposed law would require that home conservation plans be open to Long Island ratepayers until June 1, 2003, and that a public awareness campaign to inform the ratepayers about home conservation plans be available until then.

The law would require the PSC to review electric rates in the Long Island service area. Specifically, inquiring whether an immediate reduction in electric rates by LILCO is warranted.

The PSC would also be directed to seek to establish full retail competition within three years, examine how best to equitably distribute the Shoreham debt, and examine other means of lowering LILCO rates.

It establishes a Long Island energy efficiency and renewable energy fund, requires the PSC to monitor and set standards for quality and reliability of service, and provides for the equitable treatment of the LILCO work force.

This proposed legislation defines the Long Island energy and renewable energy fund, and clarifies the intent of the state law

that created LIPA (Chapter 517 of the Public Service Law adopted in 1986) which also permits local government to establish a municipal utility within its borders.

If such a municipal utility were created and received assistance in the form of negotiable instruments issued by LIPA, that utility would be liable for such debt.

The proposed legislation also mandates that LIPA help any municipality establish its own municipal utility company when requested.

More to the point, this legislation—which has no sponsor in the senate—provides additional consumer protection for LIPA's customers and reiterates the intent of Chapter 517, which included the provision that LIPA trustees were to be elected.

The 1986 LIPA Act stipulated boundaries for the 21 election districts for the election of those LIPA trustees. This new legislation requires that the first election for LIPA trustees be held this November, on Election Day 1998.

The proposed legislation further declares that the PSC must review the compensation of utility officers, directors, and high level managerial employees.

It authorizes the PSC to require LILCO to upgrade its transmission and distribution system as necessary to prepare for a competitive marketplace.

The proposed legislation stipulates that these new provisions supersede other laws inconsistent with it, and are severable. If part of this act is struck down in a court of law, the rest of it shall remain in effect.

LILCO rates are among the highest in the nation. The PSC has unfortunately not provided the protection the ratepayers need and deserve.

LILCO has been allowed to charge ratepayers for all of its costs on the abandoned Shoreham plant. This legislation seeks to return a necessary balance between ratepayers and utility investors.

Changes in federal law and regulation now encourage competition in the utility marketplace. Long Islanders have every right to reap the benefits of this change in policy, just like other consumers across this country.

LIPA elections are needed to ensure that Long Islanders are allowed elected representation. The 21 trustee districts created by this legislation, adhere to well-recognized standards and criteria based on

relevant provisions of the United States Constitution, the Constitution of the State of New York, federal and state statutory law, and relevant court cases.

The legislation attempts to respect town and village boundaries, communities of interest, land contiguity and compactness.

LIPA was created because the public lacked the confidence that Long Island residents and business communities within the LILCO service area could be supplied in a reliable, efficient and economical manner by LILCO. This situation still exists.

Since its inception in 1987, LIPA has accomplished

a great deal for the benefit of the Long Island ratepayers. For example, in 1988, LIPA made several proposals to acquire LILCO which the utility chose to decline, and subsequently initiated a proxy contest, successfully placing one of LIPA's trustees on LILCO's board of directors.

Pursuant to the 1989 Shoreham settlement, LIPA acquired and subsequently decommissioned Shoreham, completing the job ahead of schedule and under budget in August 1994.

However, the governor and LIPA have proposed a deal that rewards LILCO by charging Long Islanders for the full cost of its unopened Shoreham plant.

LILCO customers need a strong advocate to fight for fair and equitable rates. An elected board will help strengthen LIPA. These elections will allow the people served by LIPA to elect their own representatives to the LIPA board.

Senators, what is wrong with this bill?

How would you like to get
A significant reduction in your
Payments for electricity?
Put your name on the dotted line,
You will save 20%, they say.

Actually, you need not sign anything. The
Politicians have already signed you away
Regardless of whether the savings are real or
Imagined. Too bad for us if the deal is a
Loser.

Forget the fact that everyone else pays less,
Or that arrival of competition will
Obliterate the need for this bailout, the
Largest bond issue in the history of man.
Say goodbye to dreams of paying

Decent rates for electricity that
Almost everyone else is accustomed to;
You live on Long Island, the land of Monopoly.

Why haven't you sponsored it in the senate? This bill goes beyond partisan politics, it outright protects your constituents.

Failing to sign on as a sponsor and supporter is indicative of your support for Wall Street's vested interest, at the expense of your taxpayers, ratepayers and voters.

Suffolk Life will be glad to donate the space for you to outline why you feel this bill is not in your constituents' best interest, if this is the way you feel.

If you do not wish to take advantage of our generous offer to allow you to explain why you will not support the measure, we and your other constituents expect to immediately see a companion senate bill cosponsored by you.

Silence may be golden in some cases, but with this issue, if you fail to act, it may very well cost you your reelection this November.

And why not?

Republican State Senators

Kenneth LaValle
325 Middle Country Road
Suite 4, Selden,
696-6900; fax 696-2307.

James J. Lack
New York State Building
Room 3B42
Veterans Memorial Highway
Hauppauge,
360-0490; fax 360-0420.

Caesar Trunzo
New York State Office Building

Room 3B41,
Veterans Memorial Highway
Hauppauge
360-3236; fax 360-3386.

Owen H. Johnson
23-24 Argyle Square, Babylon
669-9200; fax 669-9007.

Carl Marcellino
250 Townsend Square
Oyster Bay
922-1811; fax 922-1154

Petition Volunteer

I would like to volunteer my time to help collect signatures needed to force the government to allow me to vote on the proposed LILCO-LIPA deal.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone # _____

Days and Time available _____

Area willing to canvas _____

Send To Suffolk Life, P.O. Box 9167, Riverhead, NY 11901

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Time To Stand Up And Be Counted

The people won an important battle last week when 12 Suffolk County legislators voted to place a referendum on the November ballot, calling for continued opposition to the controversial \$7.8 billion partial LILCO-LIPA takeover deal.

But the war continues.

The next battle is a veto promised by Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney. Since the resolution passed with 12 votes, that number would override a Gaffney veto; and it stretches the imagination that any of these 12 legislators would expose themselves to public scorn and the shame of switching on the issue now. But then, anything is possible in politics.

The Association for a Better Long Island (ABLI), which launched a legal challenge against the ballot referendum last year, has already announced it will do so again.

Last year, a judge yanked the referendum from the ballot on a technicality. Opponents of the deal anticipate the same result this year, not based on valid reasoning, but rather to keep the issue off the ballot because Governor George Pataki, the father of the deal, is up for reelection.

This phase of the battle will be bitterly fought. LIPA's public relations arm, *Newsday*, has already started its editorial push against the new referendum. In an editorial last Tuesday, *Newsday* said: "The present referendum proposal has the same flaws as the earlier one: It would authorize the legislature to fight the LIPA deal, permission it doesn't need since it has already committed \$800,000 of taxpayers' money to do just that. That makes it an advisory referendum and unlawful, because advisory referenda aren't permitted in New York. And it is unfair, ignoring Nassau voters."

Newsday is wrong! The referendums, last year and this, do not authorize the legislature to fight the deal, they mandate it to do so. There is no wiggle room for the legislators to reverse their votes for a judgeship or other political rewards. If approved, the people will have declared, "You will, you must, fight the deal." That's not advisory, that's an order!

"Unfair" because it ignores Nassau voters? Give us a break! Tell that to the legislators in Nassau, not those in Suffolk who are doing what the public wants them to do. A recent poll, reported last week on Channel 12, indicated 84% of the people want the LILCO-LIPA issue put on the ballot. Nassau legislators are arrogantly ignoring the wishes of the people. And so is *Newsday*.

Why is a referendum needed? Do politicians ever go back on their word? Reverse their position? Yield to political pressure? Let's look at the past. Take, for instance, Peter Fox Cohalan, the former county executive who was, for years, a staunch opponent of the Shoreham nuclear plant, worrying about the safety of the people and the impossibility of evacuation. One day, without warning, Cohalan suddenly switched to supporting the opening of the plant.

Gaffney ran for reelection during his last campaign as a "LILCO fighter." Last

year he said the people should have a right to vote on this important issue. He even signed a Certificate of Necessity so the resolution could be voted on in a timely fashion.

That was then. Now, through his spokesman, he claims that because the legislators voted to fund the opposition of the deal last year, "To ask the public to vote on that issue now, after the fact, is misleading." What the spokesman didn't say is that Gaffney has been calling for the legislators to end all litigation against the deal.

Gaffney wants them to roll over and play dead, while a sweetheart horse-trade that gives LILCO a \$2 billion profit on the deal and a \$2 billion capital gains tax exemption slips through. He is in favor of having an 18% share of a troubled upstate nuclear plant shoved down our throats, because that's the way LILCO Chairman Bill Catacosinos wants it.

He agrees to pay, without question or audit, \$4.5 billion more for the Shoreham nuclear plant. That's how much LILCO, which was convicted in the RICO suit after lying to the state Public Service Commission, says we owe.

Gaffney has never asked for an audit

Wishing You A Joyous Easter And Passover

Easter was celebrated in our house as a very religious holiday. This holiday is a time of emotion and sorrow that ends with much joy.

For us, it started before Lent. Our parents encouraged us to do penance in repayment for our transgressions, to give up something we enjoyed. For the adults, it was cigarettes and liquor and we could never tell what else. We gave up candy, desserts or the unmerciful teasing of our siblings.

Church was a must on Ash Wednesday. After mass, the priest would make the sign of the cross on our foreheads in ashes that had come from the burning of last year's palms.

The first few days were the hardest, as we always longed for what we had pledged to give up. We were instructed that when our desires became great, to pray in remembrance of the sacrifices that our Lord had made for us.

Palm Sunday is the week before Easter. It is the start of Holy Week, which is filled with emotion and reflection. The palms are blessed and disseminated to the churchgoers. Many parishioners place the blessed palms behind crucifixes at home or cut the palms to make crucifixes, as a sign of the sacrifices that Jesus made.

Easter week was filled with excitement. We took part in most of the religious services, starting with the blessing of the water that would be used during the coming year.

Friday was the most important day. This was the day our Lord Jesus was crucified, died for our sins, and opened the gates of heaven for all mankind.

The Stations of the Cross were then,

to find out how much we have already paid for that plant. He's not much of a fighter on our behalf. He and his spokesperson know that the referendum would end the Gaffney-type switches of position. That's why they are adamantly against the referendum.

What about the legislature itself? Last year's resolution was approved by a vote of 16 in favor and the usual two exemptions. This year, after the election and under intense pressure from county political leader John Powell, Republican legislators declared opposition to the deal. Five Republican legislators resisted political pressure and voted on the side of the people by voting to put the referendum on the ballot.

But this does not always happen. Legislators in the past have been known to approve an issue in the morning, get called into the woodshed by a political boss, then reverse their vote that afternoon.

The issue at hand is far too important to leave to the whims of politicians and others who are salivating over the financial rewards they will reap from this deal.

This is a time for the people to speak. The public had no input on the infamous

1989 deal engineered between Cuomo and Catacosinos. That deal caused our electric rates to rise to the highest in the nation. A Cuomo aide involved in that deal, Richard Kessel, now a Pataki ally, was a key negotiator in the current LILCO-LIPA deal. We cannot allow that to happen again!

Therefore, the current effort to place the referendum on the ballot via Initiative and Referendum (I&R) will continue. Information will be announced on how you can become involved in protecting tomorrow's future from the actions of the politicians of today.

The I&R effort does not guarantee a victory against the deal. The governor and the Wall Street people have set it up so that the public does not have a voice. They can ignore our petitions and push the deal through.

Our goal is to obtain as many petition signatures as is humanly possible. Our hope is that when they see the strength of our opposition, they will realize the deal, as it currently exists, must be revised.

This is the time to stand up and be counted. Make your voice and your views known!

And why not?

and still are, filled with mystery. It caused us to look inward at our belief in God and in his son, Jesus Christ.

Holy Saturday was filled with pomp and circumstance. During services, the priests would wash each others' feet as a sign of humility. We are taught in the Bible that Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples as a sign that he was one of the people.

Confession was almost mandatory, whether you needed to go or not; and as a kid, there was more than one story made up to keep the priest from becoming bored.

Saturday afternoon was particularly joyful, enhanced by a family friend, Mrs. Annie Weiss. Annie would arrive at our home sometime between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. My sisters and our friends would be called in from the yard to take part in Annie's Seder.

Annie was Jewish and my parents and the Weisses had long ago decided that they would teach all of us the beauty of all religions. I well remember the matzos, grape jelly and grape juice Annie would bring with her. Half the neighborhood would be gathered around my mother's kitchen table and Annie would explain the Hebrew tradition.

She would ask questions dealing with the unleavened bread, the eating of bitter herbs, and dunking twice instead of once. Annie would explain the beauty of Judaism, the sacrifices her people had made.

She took us back in history and brought us up-to-date, telling us of the atrocities of the Holocaust and how this could have been avoided if Jews and Christians had learned more about each

others' heritage. She always ended on the same note, "We are all God's children. God loves us and he wants us to love him through respect for our fellowman."

Most Jewish families carry on the Seder tradition today. It is a time for spiritual renewal and the gathering of family and friends. If you have ever had the opportunity of taking part in a Seder, you know it is a very moving experience.

Finally, Sunday morning activities began early. Church and the celebration of mass was the most important part of the day, because on Sunday morning, we celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus, his rising from the dead and his ascension into heaven.

After mass, it was customary to gather in front of the church. Everyone dressed in their finest. Hats were in style then and some even defied a young imagination. The most important purpose of the gathering was to share the warm wishes and the joy of the occasion.

Of course, after mass, there was a mad dash home to hopefully find that the Easter bunny had been there. It was fun, but it was anticlimatic, because we had already learned the true meaning of the day.

Passover is on Saturday. Why not take Annie's lead and go out of our way to wish each other, Christian or Jew, a joyful celebration? Let us all pray for a more understanding world and respect for our differences, united by our belief in God.

Whatever your religion, we hope you follow your heritage and give praise to God.

And why not?

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Will Gaffney Be There?

A public hearing will be held by the county executive's office on the placement of a referendum on the November ballot concerning the controversial deal between LIPA and LILCO. This hearing will begin at 11 a.m. Friday, April 17, in the H. Lee Dennison building in Hauppauge.

Last year, County Executive Bob Gaffney was in favor of giving the people an opportunity to vote on this issue, which will put ratepayers in debt for more than \$23 billion over the next 30 years. Gaffney's actions angered Governor George Pataki, the father of the deal, so much that he wouldn't talk to Gaffney.

The county executive was so upset that this year he came out strongly against the referendum proposal, copping out with some rhetoric voiced by a spokesperson about how it was now too late for the people to speak, and how the public's right to speak meant nothing because the deal was a "done deal."

Fortunately for the people, 12 legislators withstood political pressure and voted for the people's right to be heard on this issue. The approved referendum resolution, however, is subject to a public hearing by the county executive.

If Gaffney has the courage to face the public, he will conduct the public hearing himself, rather than hide behind some underling.

The public deserves an opportunity to voice its view on the proposed \$7.8 billion deal that Gaffney has blindly accepted, despite the fact that it will place a huge financial burden on ratepayers for decades.

But Gaffney does not want to be confused by facts. He doesn't want to explain why he is willing to accept 18% of a troubled upstate nuclear power plant, which is part of the deal because LILCO chairman, William Catacosinos, demands that LIPA take it off his hands.

LILCO, according to the terms of the deal, will retain ownership of all its other generating facilities, although LIPA has the option to purchase these outdated facilities in the future.

In other states, Massachusetts for example, utilities are selling off generating facilities and using the proceeds to reduce rates. But not here; in New York, LILCO

gets to pocket the profits.

If Gaffney has the courage to conduct the public hearing himself, he would have the opportunity to explain why he is so willing to accept a deal that would give LILCO \$4.5 billion more in Shoreham costs, on top of what has already been collected for the ill-advised nuclear plant.

There has never been an audit to show how much the ratepayers have already paid for the plant in "Construction Work in Progress" (CWIP) and "Financial Stability" payments granted by the state Public Service Commission. Or how much of the plant's costs have already been included in the LILCO rates.

There have been estimates, but never any official figures, that ratepayers have been forced to pay \$8 billion towards the reported \$5.5 billion cost to construct the Shoreham facility.

The \$4.5 billion figure LIPA has included in the deal comes from LILCO. That is the same LILCO that was convicted under the RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) statute for lying to the PSC about the cost of Shoreham. Gaffney, who ran for reelection under the guise of being a "LILCO Fighter," is wimping out now and is simply accepting LILCO's word without verification.

A recent poll indicates 84% of the people want the opportunity to vote on the deal. Apparently that hasn't bothered Gaffney one little bit, because he continues to insist he will veto the referendum resolution.

If indeed he does, it will show he is more concerned about Pataki's feelings than he is about the right of the public to have a say in this most important issue.

Could there be a judgeship in Gaffney's future as a reward for such political favor?

The date is Friday, April 17, at 11 a.m. The place is the H. Lee Dennison Building in Hauppauge. If you have some strong feelings about being placed into financial hock with this multi-billion dollar gift to LILCO and Wall Street, you will want to be there to let Gaffney know how you feel, if he has the courage and moral sense to appear.

And why not?



dents would be able to expand their recreational opportunities at almost no cost to themselves:

The reciprocal permit system would open up the opportunities and the East End to all its residents. It makes sense. Its time has come again and again.

Many of the candidates running for election promised that, if elected, they would move to place a bill before the

municipalities to accomplish this goal. There is still time to implement the plan. The bathing season is a good two months off.

Let's do it. Let's open up at least the East End for all residents to enjoy. The West End municipalities would also do well to consider a mutual pass system with their contiguous neighbors.

And why not?

The Way To Go

Sheriff Patrick Mahoney met with the Suffolk County Legislature, requesting funding of \$288,000 to create double bunking at the Suffolk County jail.

Currently, the guests at the Riverhead Hilton, also known as the Suffolk County jail, are accorded single-occupancy rooms. The sheriff can accommodate 1,300 guests, but is currently housing more than 1,600. Detainees are sleeping on cots in the halls and other public areas.

The county was recently given permission to double bunk detainees as a way of alleviating overcrowding. This overcrowding has been a persistent problem at the Suffolk County Correctional Facility, as well as many other jails throughout the state.

At one time, it was considered inhumane treatment to require two guests to share the same room. It was pointed out to the bleeding heart liberals who felt that way that when Uncle Sam calls for military service, the accommodations often require double bunking, except for basic training, where there are as many as 16 men or women to a barracks room.

Hard-working, taxpaying citizens who are able to scrape together enough money to send their kids off to college are dismayed to find that the accommodations they have purchased are for four kids in a 10- by 12-foot room with bunk beds.

As children, many of us envied our more affluent neighbors whose children had bunk beds. Bunk beds were then a status symbol many families could not afford.

Two detainees sharing a room, using

bunk beds, cuts the need substantially for housing. Today, it costs \$110,000 per cell—part of the reason why it costs so much to keep prisoners in jail.

Mahoney is right on the money, but you will never guess who is objecting. Remember Conservative Bob Gaffney before he became county executive? Since his appointment to the top slot, Gaffney's blood has turned from cold to liberal red. He has been aided and abetted by the municipal unions whom he crawled into bed with for contributions and support.

The correctional officers oppose Mahoney's move because it is not as labor intensive as creating another jail. It is estimated that another jail would cost Suffolk County taxpayers \$25 million to build, plus the cost of staffing the new jail with more guards, medical help, administrators, cooks and bottle washers.

Housing prisoners together not only cuts down on the number of cells needed, but allows the sheriff to manage more efficiently by using existing kitchens, dining rooms and other support services.

Mahoney appears to be on the side of the taxpayers, but is finding resistance from the county executive's office. There is a political battle going on between Mahoney and Gaffney.

Instead of fighting each other, they should be fighting together to get the best bang for each buck paid by the taxpayers. On this one, Mahoney is right, and Gaffney should be supporting him rather than opposing him.

And why not?

Reciprocal Beach Permits

From time to time over the past 25 years, we have written editorials encouraging the five East End towns, if not all 10 towns in Suffolk, to enter into a reciprocal beach permit system.

For example, a resident of Southold buys a beach permit in Southold and is entitled to use all the Southold Town beaches, but can also gain access to all town beaches in reciprocal towns.

Likewise, under this system, residents of Southampton would find themselves with access to the Sound beaches that they are now denied. Doesn't this make sense? More than 80% of the East End residents want to form Peconic County out

of the five East End towns. Supporters of Peconic County argue that they have strong support from the residents. What about the town boards?

A perfect demonstration of this support would be for the five East End towns to enter into at least an experimental reciprocal beach permit system. Each town that joined the system would be allowed to use the other towns' beaches and their beaches would be used by the other towns' residents. Last year, during our interviewing process, we questioned many candidates about this scenario. They were unanimously in favor of it because they could see how their resi-

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No Guts, No Glory, No Gaffney

The County Executive of Suffolk, Robert Gaffney, as required by law, called for a public hearing on the legislature's proposal to give the residents of Suffolk County a vote on the proposed LILCO-LIPA issue.

The hearing was held Friday, but Gaffney did not have the guts to show up. This speaks directly to the character of the individual, his lack of fortitude and the courage of his convictions.

Last year, Gaffney issued a certificate of necessity that allowed the Suffolk legislature to vote on the issue and put it on the ballot. Because of that, Gaffney was put on the governor's short list.

In order to get back into the governor's good graces, Gaffney has become a supporter of the LILCO-LIPA deal, even though it bails out the very company Gaffney promised to bury when he ran for reelection.

Gaffney has said he plans to veto this year's bill by the legislature which calls for a vote by the citizens. We don't agree

with Gaffney, but that is his prerogative. He is the county executive. He did, however, have an obligation to listen to what the residents of Suffolk County had to say on this vital issue, because that is the basis of our democracy.

Gaffney knew that if he presided over this meeting, he would be forced to hear the people of Suffolk County speaking their minds. He did not have the courage to do so.

If he was an honest man, he would have endured the public's voicing its views. Whether people agreed or disagreed with him, his courage would have earned him their respect. Instead, he hid—and lost his chance for glory.

The next time Gaffney runs for election, whether for county executive or a promised judgeship, remember he is not a man of principle. He would not face the people. He let you down and does not deserve either respect or a following.

And why not?

Preserving Land While Giving Away the Farm

While walking through the muddy fields of Cutchogue earlier this week, County Executive Bob Gaffney promised to spend more than \$5 million of his capital budget to preserve Suffolk's diminishing open space, and its vanishing farm industry.

This is a grand public relations stunt, especially since Gaffney is promising to preserve our farming industry while he appears hell-bent on giving away the farm by supporting the proposed \$7.8 billion LILCO-LIPA deal without even giving the public a voice.

Preserving open space and the farming industry is a noble gesture, because there are only about 30,000 acres of farmland left in Suffolk. Since the fifties, we have lost more than 100,000 farm acres to development.

Over the past 20 years, more than \$26 million has gone into preserving just under 10,000 acres through county, state and local preservation programs. This type of preservation is important to Long Island for a number of reasons, not the least of which is its nearly \$3 billion tourist industry.

But none of this is worth a wooden nickel if business and residential cost for electricity is drastically increased over the next five years.

The proposed LILCO-LIPA plan will indeed decrease LILCO's current rate of 17 cents a kilowatt hour for the first couple of years because the rate decrease will be paid through the \$7.8 bond, but the deal also allows LIPA to arbitrarily increase its rates by 2.5% each year. This is consid-

ered a front-loaded deal that ratepayers are going to pay for.

Independent energy experts throughout New York State and other parts of the country have warned that these excessive rate increases will occur after only a few years.

These same energy experts have advised LIPA and state officials that the technology is available to open Long Island to competitive energy options.

But LILCO Chairman Bill Catacosinos has apparently convinced state and LIPA officials that there is no competition available for Long Islanders, despite proposals from numerous private energy-oriented companies, advocating various energy products ranging from solar and wind power to the generation of electricity through turbines in one's basement.

Catacosinos and the state have also ignored the fact that before this infamous deal was proposed, the state's Public Service Commission (PSC) was ready to order LILCO to cut its rates by 5.5% because the utility was charging a 50% higher rate on its maintenance costs than any other utility in the North East.

In addition to that, there is an anticipated 2% to 3% rate reduction expected from the Brooklyn Union Gas-LILCO merger recently approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Catacosinos, LIPA and the state have also disregarded the fact that there is a 1% to 2% rate reduction that would have been realized through a gross receipts tax reduction and the \$180 million LILCO owes its ratepayers after it



was found guilty of fraud under the federal RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.)

That amounts to a 9% to 10% rate reduction with no deal at all.

LILCO currently charges 17 cents a kilowatt hour for its electric service. Even if we use LILCO-LIPA's fantasy rate reduction of 20%, Long Island will still be paying more than 14 cents a kilowatt hour after this deal goes through. This is still 50% higher than other areas throughout the state and country.

If the PSC followed through with its original plan to order LILCO to cut its rates by 5.5%, we would have had lower rates since 1996. That, coupled with the BUG merger benefit and the gross receipts tax reduction, would have automatically provided a 9% to 10% rate reduction, bringing the 17 cents down to about 15 cents a kilowatt hour.

Competition can be expected to knock off another 6 to 8 cents per kilowatt hour, bringing Long Island more in line with the rest of the state and country, which pays an average of about 6.5 cents per kilowatt hour.

Forcing LILCO to deal with a competitive market is the only way Long Island will obtain realistic electric rates. Anything short of that is simply a political solution to a difficult economic problem. This can be done without investing \$7.8 billion to bail LILCO stockholders out of poor investments.

With the money that would be saved by Long Islanders, perhaps the county and state would be in a better position to spend the \$15 million needed by Suffolk to purchase the development rights to the area's remaining 30,000 acres of farmland.

And why not?

Why Are We Paying Subsidies?

The federal government has been enmeshed in the tobacco issue for most of this session of congress. Big tobacco companies finally admitted some responsibility for the ills it has brought upon smokers. They have almost admitted that tobacco is addictive, that they have known it all along and that they are responsible for much of the sickness that smokers have suffered.

Politicians in Washington were filled with glee at the prospect of a big tobacco settlement. They anticipated governmental coffers overflowing with the green stuff.

During this debate, one issue seems to be overlooked and it is ludicrous. Every American in the United States is helping tobacco growers by paying subsidies. Yes, that's right, our taxes are being used to encourage and pay farmers to grow tobacco.

Isn't there something wrong with this picture? The surgeon general has been saying for years that tobacco consumption can be detrimental to health. You

should not smoke. Why, then, are we paying tax subsidies to the farmers who grow the toxins? Isn't this hypocritical?

Maybe the hypocrisy is one of the reasons the upcoming generation is smoking more than its predecessors. Why should they believe the government when the government is subsidizing the growth of tobacco?

We now understand that if the tobacco settlement goes through, taxpayers will be expected to pay for a superfund that will reward farmers for taking their acreage out of tobacco production. They will be enriched with another form of subsidy for doing the right thing for the wrong reasons.

If Washington is serious about addressing the tobacco problem, let it cut all subsidies to tobacco farmers for the right reasons. That way, maybe there will be less production, less supply and demand, thus driving up the price of cigarettes and cigars and deterring people from smoking.

And why not?

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Our Last Chance For Democracy

It took less than 60 seconds for Governor Pataki, Senate Majority Leader Bruno and Assembly Speaker Silver to put Long Island residents into 35 years of indentured servitude.

The big three in Albany, without the slightest bit of discussion, approved the sale of the bonds that will be used by LIPA to take over LILCO's transmission and distribution system, their upstate clear power plant and the questionable Shoreham debt. The only one of the big three who even bothered to show up for the vote was Silver. Aides to Pataki and Bruno cast their bosses' votes.

Is the LILCO-LIPA deal finally over? Not quite.

The Suffolk County Legislature passed a bill calling for the citizens of Suffolk County to vote in this November's election on whether they want the LILCO-LIPA deal.

Proponents claim the vote will be too late. Once the bonds are sold, there is no going back.

However, several lawsuits are expected to be filed that may stop the sale of those bonds. One of particular interest is being filed by energy activists ICE and the Hauppauge Industrial Association over LIPA's intention of charging all Suffolk County ratepayers for Brookhaven and Shoreham-Wading River's debt under the certiorari suit for LILCO's Shoreham nuclear plant.

At first blush, it would appear the residents of the other nine towns are being treated unfairly and, in any case, it is questionable if any court of law will allow that to happen.

In the meantime, the Citizens to Stop

the LILCO Bailout group is going ahead with its petition drive to force the issue on the ballot through Initiative and Referendum, regardless of Gaffney's expected veto.

The citizens *must* have a say. This is the only fair and just closure to such an unpleasant and frightfully expensive plan. The citizens never had a say in creating Shoreham. The citizens never had a say in—and the state legislature never approved—the three-year Cuomo deal that raised Long Island's electric rates to the highest in the nation. The citizens never had the opportunity of voting for the LIPA trustees.

The original intent of the legislation and the authors of the bill that created LIPA was that the authority be operated by an elected board of directors representing only Long Islanders. Both Cuomo and Pataki stole this right from us by demanding that the state legislature allow them to appoint their own, handpicked flunkies.

During the next few weeks, volunteers will be calling at your home or place of business to ask you and your family to sign petitions to initiate a referendum that will give you a vote.

This is our last chance to save democracy as we know it. The courts will be hard-pressed to throw out a referendum that is a direct result of the citizens' petition for a vote.

Whether you are for the deal or against it, you should be demanding your constitutional right to cast the vote according to your beliefs.

Let the drive begin!
And why not?

They Have A Right

Students have a right and a responsibility to come to school prepared to learn. That same right is theirs when they attend any school-sanctioned event. This can only be done if the students are sober.

The Sayville School District has taken a bold step by considering the use of breathalyzers next year to test students for alcohol. Civil libertarians have already screamed out in protest that this violates students' rights.

What about the rights of the sober students who have their classes or other activities disrupted by drunks? What about the rights of the administrators and teachers who have a responsibility to keep the kids out of harm's way?

What about the responsibility of the school board to uphold not only school law but civil law? How can the board, in good conscience, allow students to enter school premises when they are intoxicated and in danger of hurting themselves or others?

Alcohol and drug abuse takes a dev-

astating toll on people of all ages.

Suffolk Life suggests that the Sayville School District go through with its courageous act, make the school alcohol-free and, as long as the district is taking such a bold step, go the extra mile and do random drug testing as well.

These initiatives might provide some early warning signs or encourage stronger parental involvement where this disease is concerned.

Parents may not like to find out that Johnny's breakfast was a bottle of Sneaky Pete or a Bud, but at least an early warning would be there so that remedial action can be provided before the problem gets totally out of hand.

Tough problems require tough solutions. We applaud the Sayville school board for considering this measure instead of waiting to read about the consequences of doing nothing, leading to more kids getting killed, which, tragically, has happened in this and every other community.

And why not?



Beware Of The Authority

Politicians have known for several years that the sewer districts would be in financial difficulties by the year 2000.

When the South West Sewer District was created—through deception and corruption—the cost overruns had the potential of bankrupting homeowners and communities.

To forestall this likelihood, a county-wide sales tax was imposed. The funds from that sales tax were to be used to allow a temporary bridge between costs and user contributions for service.

It was intended that the recipients' contributions would gradually increase and eventually be brought up to a point where the users of the sewer districts would be paying their full share of the cost, without any subsidies. But the modest annual increases needed to wean users of the sales tax subsidy were never enacted.

Politicians typically stuck their heads in the sand, hoping the problem would either go away or that they would move up the political ladder fast enough so they would not have to face this doomsday issue.

Well, doomsday is rapidly gaining on us. Most homeowners in the various sewer districts throughout the county may well face additional sewer assessments from as little as \$100 to as much as \$1,000 annually.

There are numerous ways the county

can approach this problem. The most popular concept currently being discussed is the development of a sewer authority. This is politically expedient, but fraught with danger for the citizens, ratepayers and taxpayers of Suffolk County.

Authorities take on a life of their own. The commissioners, who run the authority, are appointed by the politicians. Once appointed, they are not answerable to their creators or the public. Their sole responsibility is to collect income sufficient to cover the cost and fund the bonds they issue. Their responsibility is not to you, it is to Wall Street.

Politicians find safe harbor in this, because they can say they have no control over rates. Rates, the politicians will say, are imposed by the authority and therefore they are not responsible for them.

Authorities have powers of eminent domain and this gives them the ability to build bloated bureaucracies, condemn land, and generally act as if they are above the law.

Citizens should be aware of this Trojan horse, it is no savior. On the contrary, an authority can become another huge taxing entity over which the public has no control.

Watch yourselves. You may be led down a very slippery path that only Wall Street will ultimately benefit from.

And why not?

Another State Screw-Up

Since January, the state has allowed emission testing stations to double the fee for inspections. The logic behind this measure was that the stations had to spend \$40,000 for new equipment in order to conduct car inspections in accordance with state regulations.

Many of the stations did not have the new equipment due to manufacturers' inability to meet the demand. The state allowed these stations, which had ordered the equipment, to continue

inspecting the cars using outdated equipment, but also allowed them to charge the new, higher fees. Some testing stations are not receiving the new equipment until November or December of this year.

The state should change these regulations and require stations that have not had the new equipment installed to charge the old fees.

Talk to your assembly representatives and senators about this.

And why not?