

# Is this the change you really want?

One of the changes President Clinton has proposed is to slash the funds for fraud investigations of welfare.

We suppose this is the kind of change that all Americans have been dying for. The kind of change that those who voted for him made their number one priority. It definitely is the kind of change those who have been ripping off the welfare system through fraud, debauchery and outright theft could not wait any longer for.

Under the current system, the feds reimburse the states which do the policing. Clinton has proposed to cut this funding in half, leaving the states to foot the federal government's contribution or cut back on the investigations.

Most states are hard pressed to make ends meet and, even though they know that people are outright stealing welfare funds, they will not have the will or the resources to increase the state's funding to weed out such waste.

During the past year, there have been a host of television shows and written reports documenting how easy it is to rip off the system, and how few checks and balances exist. Immigrants coming to this country can pay as little as \$50 for an illegal Social Security card and false identification. Armed with what appears to be certifi-

cation, they apply for welfare, sometimes at multiple offices, and sit back and watch the checks roll in. Yes, sirree, the streets are paved with gold in the United States.

There is a gal out in California who was dubbed the "Welfare Queen" for her scheming ways. By using multiple aliases and applying to different welfare offices, she was able to generate enough revenue to buy a Beverly Hills mansion and to have a stable of 13 cars, including a Rolls and a Mercedes. A fraud that is more common is to borrow kids from a friend or neighbor and declare them as dependents.

## Speak now or pay later

# Today is the day to call!

Today is the day to call your United States congressmen and senators. Your congressmen are George Hochbrueckner (CD 1, 689-6767); Rick Lazio (CD 2, 854-4100) and Gary Ackerman (CD 5, 423-2154). Your senators are Alfonse D'Amato (212-947-7393) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (212-661-5150).

Your federal representatives are about to vote on the largest tax increase ever imposed upon Americans. President Bill Clinton will tell you it's a debt reduction bill. It isn't. By every

Nobody bothers to check if they are legitimate dependents or not.

The schemes and the guises are notorious. Yet, the local municipalities' ability to ferret out this thievery is minimal. The states, the counties and the towns are ordered to make welfare available, but are thwarted everytime they try to put in a protective measure to stop the abuses.

Here in Suffolk County, a request was made for state approval to put in place a fingerprint imaging system in an effort to catch welfare cheats. Failing in receiving state approval, county officials vow to implement the system

without state approval in an effort to save taxpayers' dollars. That's good government, weeding out waste by frauds to better serve the taxpayers.

Clinton's decision to cut the states' allocations for welfare fraud investigation is not only ludicrous, it is punitive and will be counterproductive. As more crooks find it easier to get in the system, money will be taken from those legitimately in need.

Is this the kind of change you want? Is this the kind of change those who supported Clinton can feel proud about? We doubt it.

And why not?

stretch of the imagination it is a pure tax and spend bill. Although the altruistic aim in five years is to cut the federal deficit by \$500 billion, there are no guarantees in the bill that the federal debt will be cut by one cent.

Back in 1990, President Bush agreed to raise taxes to reduce the federal debt. He got snookered by the Democratic Congress. Instead of a reduction, they increased the federal deficit by \$50 billion.

This new tax increase will be the final nail in the coffin of our shaky

economy. It will strip businesses of needed investment capital. It will lead to further layoffs and no new hiring. It will increase your cost of fuel, making it more expensive to drive, heat your home or pay your electrical bills. It will increase taxes on Social Security, diminishing our senior citizens' ability to survive.

During the last few months that this bill has been debated, Congress has shown no will to cut, particularly cuts that might gore their favorite ox. The President is still suffering from a severe case of delusions of grandeur--a wonderful, economically strong America created by stripping away the country's capital, the only asset that produces profits that generate taxes.

We as citizens must do our part to stop this onslaught on everyone. The sum and substance of the bill is very simple: if you make more than \$30,000 in combined family income per year, you will pay more taxes and give the government more money to spend.

Call your congressmen and senators today. Let them know of your opposition and that you will hold them individually accountable if they vote in favor of this bill.

And why not?

# Let's have term limitations

A measure to put on the ballot for Suffolk residents' approval, which would limit the number of years elected county officials can serve, was recently defeated.

Seventy-five percent of Americans want limits on terms on their elected officials. The majority of Americans and, we believe, Suffolk residents, want their legislators to serve no more than three, two-year terms, or a total of six years. They do not want their county executive to serve more than two, four-year terms.

The Suffolk County Legislature, by a vote of 11-6-1, turned down a proposal which would give the public an opportunity to ballot, to express its opinion. This is wrong. This is selfish. This is self-serving.

We hope the reason they turned the bill down was that the original version was a sham as it allowed legislators a total of 12 years in office. Six years is what the public wants.

The legislators have an opportunity this month when they reconvene to still put this measure on the ballot.

They should. Those legislators that fail to vote for a six-year term limitation are not worthy of re-election. They should be taken out in November.

If the legislature fails to bring this up for a vote, or fails to pass it, we will run our "Not Wanted For Re-Election" poster once again and we will include those legislators who have felt that their opinion is more important than that of their constituents, there-

fore making them public enemy number one.

Once again, we must commend the Brookhaven Town Board for addressing this issue on the town level. That board will hold a public hearing on August 10 and give Brookhaven residents an opportunity to voice their opinion before the measure is put on the ballot this November. Show up and show your support.

And why not?

# Right place for rehabilitation

The vast majority of people who find themselves incarcerated in jail awaiting trial, or back in jail because of other offenses or violation of parole, have alcohol or drug problems.

Suffolk County Sheriff Patrick Mahoney announced he is going to institute a rehab program for alcohol and drug users. In the past, there were no official rehabilitation programs. Jail took the perpetrator off the street but did not address one of the prime causes of being there.

Many calls have come into this office in the past from drug users who

wanted to go straight but lacked the money for private institutions, and faced a waiting list of up to 18 months to get into a program such as APPLE (A Program Planned for Life Enrichment) or others run on a not-for-profit basis. You could tell through their voices that they were desperate people, and desperate people do desperate things.

The downside of the sheriff's program is that most drug users can't be forced to change. If they wholesale people into the program, their success rate will be minimal. If they are selective and make not only getting in but

staying in intense, they should be able to save some lives and reduce crime when those who successfully complete the program go back into society.

This is the second innovative program Mahoney has come up with during his tenure as sheriff. Three years ago, he sent the prisoners out to clean up the highways. The altruistic aim of this program was good, but we wondered about the cost effectiveness of it, due to the number of sheriff's department personnel that were involved in guarding and supervising the prisoners. But at least it was a step in the right direction.

And why not?

# Politics as usual, not change!

The fate of President Clinton's deficit reduction proposal is still unknown as this is written. The House, by a slim two-vote margin, approved the plan, and the Senate was still debating the proposal. While the outcome of the actual vote is still unknown, the uncertainty of the fiscal reality of the proposal is most troubling.

The budget bill is 1,800 pages. It was not completed until last Wednesday. We doubt that any individual congressman or senator has read it. Most certainly, we doubt if they comprehend what is in the bill.

The bill just does not simply deal with raising taxes. It deals with special tax breaks for individuals, corporations, organizations and those who can afford the right lobbyist or those who made the right contribution.

We do not for one moment believe all of the Democrats who voted for the bill in the House (the Republicans were solid in their opposition) or those yet to vote in the Senate know the full ramifications of its impact on the people. Their ballots were cast on the basis of pure, raw politics. First, they did not want the president of

their own party to fail, and, secondly, they wanted to show that "the Democrats can govern." Sure, the rhetoric about the need for "change" and the dire consequences of the nation's deficit make it sound as if they had the people's welfare in mind, but we doubt it.

If the reasoning behind and the explanations about the impact of one part of the reduction proposal, the 4.3 cent gasoline tax hike, are an example of what is still to come, big trouble looms ahead. In their zeal to hit the taxpayers with another burden, politicians and others, *Newsday* among them, have fed us the line that gasoline costs in this country are very low, and we can surely afford more. There have been estimates about the total impact of the added tax: some say the average person, with average driving needs, will only pay \$40 to \$50 more a year because of this increase.

That may be if you use your car only to go to church on Sunday mornings. If you drive more, you'll pay more. If you don't have the benefit of public transportation, as many in Suffolk County don't, that bill will go much higher. If you don't work

around the corner from your house and have to drive many miles to work, you'll have to dig deeper.

Then, the dominoes start to fall. Everyone winds up paying the tax. The truckers who haul needed supplies, the utilities, the municipalities, the school districts, bus companies, everyone who depends on a motor vehicle, truck or car will wind up paying more. Most will pass on the added cost of their operations in the form of higher prices, higher energy rates, higher taxes. All except the taxpayer. The taxpayer can't pass on these added costs.

The impact on senior citizens with an income about \$42,000 will wind up paying over \$1,000 more in taxes. They worked all their lives, paid their taxes faithfully, put some money aside for their golden years, saved some, contributed to pension plans, earned some interest, all to live a little more comfortably. Now the government digs into their pockets to take more. Not only while they are alive, but in estate taxes for their loved ones when they die. To add insult to injury, the government wants this larger share retroactive to the beginning of 1993.

The slim margin of victory vote,

218 to 216, in the House puts the full responsibility of the impact of this legislation on the shoulders of each and every Democrat who voted in favor. If any one, local congressman, George Hochbrueckner or Gary Ackerman, for example, had voted no, the outcome would have been a tie vote, 217 to 217. Thus, they fully bear the responsibility of the impact. They will have to answer to the voters.

Hochbrueckner and Ackerman will tell you that they voted for the bill to reduce the national debt. Yet, they will be hard-pressed to tell you why they voted for the bill that raises taxes retroactively but does not apply one cent of these new taxes to debt reduction until 1997.

The monies raised by these new taxes will not go into an untouchable, dedicated fund. They will be piled back into the general fund and kick off a spending spree by Congress, the likes of which has never been seen before.

The American public, in general, is totally confused about the national debt and how it personally affects them. We all understand when our own personal debt gets too high; we have to either take another job or cut back on our spending. This is not the way government works.

This bill is a mockery. It creates additional taxes, the equivalent of taking a second job, but it does not guarantee that any of the income will be used to reduce the debt. Without a guarantee, knowing Congress's passion for squandering our hard-earned money, you can bet the congressman's sweet bippy, they will spend it rather than pay what we owe.

The rhetoric surrounding this bill was monumental, on both sides of the issue. Most of it was political nonsense. There was one exception: a call for a special session to deal with the deficit only. A line-by-line examination of the budget, an honest effort to weed out the waste. In the open, so everyone can see who has the sacred cows and how they protect them. This idea didn't fly because it made sense, not politics. Hochbrueckner and Ackerman owe it to the public to explain why they did not use their votes to force this action.

Those who say the passage of this tax measure represents "change" are conning the people. Perhaps one day it will be known how many votes were "bought" with promises of federal dollars for pet projects, special subsidies for favored industries or promises of political gain in exchange for a vote.

This is change? Not in our book. In our mind it represents everything that is bad about politics, about government. It is a story of greed, of politics as usual, of the kind of mentality that has put this nation so much in debt.

Change will come when the taxpayers take their anger to the polling booth and oust those who sold their constituents down the river.

And why not?

# Support the volunteers

Summer is the traditional time that our fire and ambulance volunteers run fund-raisers. They solicit the financial support from the people they serve year-round.

On Long Island, the tradition of volunteering for fire and ambulance services is still strong. Thousands of our neighbors willingly give of their time to perfect lifesaving methods and then respond in our hour of need. The calls come in the dead of winter and in the dark of night, often in the middle of a hot Sunday barbecue when the volunteers are enjoying the luxury of spending time with their families and their friends.

The volunteers put their own lives in danger, fighting fires or getting people out of wrecks that could explode.

Each volunteer goes through hours of laborious training. Sure, it's a thrill to be on the scene of a fire or an accident. There is self gratification in knowing that through their efforts, others are being served and lives are being saved.

The ambulance corps and fire departments are a fraternity. In addition to the lifesaving missions, most organizations continue community service by sponsoring and being involved in youth activities, including Little League, Drum and Bugle Corps, and other groups and activities. These activities are not funded through the tax district that provides the fire houses and the equipment. These are funded through the donations made by appreciative residents of the community. Yes, some of this money goes to pay

for the social affairs, the food and drink after a fire and, sometimes, convention expenses where the volunteers gather to learn and share in new methods and technology.

We encourage all residents to support these fund drives. The drive may be in the form of a carnival, a bazaar or a barbecue. Some departments go directly to the residents in door to door solicitation.

The best method we know of is to sit down when you are paying your bills and write a check to your local fire department or ambulance corps. With the check, send a note, telling these volunteers how much you appreciate what they have done for your community. A word of thanks goes a long way.

And why not?

*That's nice! That's great! That's stupid!*

# That's Brookhaven Town

Shirley is a community in the Town of Brookhaven. It is often neglected and seldom gets its fair share of the town's public works or improvement projects.

Recently, Revilo Street, a stretch of two to three miles, was repaved with asphalt. That's nice. The street looks great and the entire area appears improved.

More good news! Within six

weeks, utilizing a federal grant, the residences along Revilo will, at long last, be hooked up to public water. That's great.

Before the residences can be hooked up, however, Revilo Street will be ripped up to lay the mains. That's stupid.

Did you ever wonder why it costs so much to live in Brookhaven Town? Why the taxes are so high? Doesn't

anybody talk to anybody in Brookhaven? Isn't there any coordination between the supervisor's office and the superintendent of highways? Probably not, because that's Brookhaven. Stupidity personified. One hand doesn't know what the other is doing. We will bet the elected officials can't chew gum and play sports at the same time.

Oh well! It's only your taxes. Who cares?

And why not?

# A blueprint for economic survival

In an effort to shape the future destiny of the East End of Long Island, a number of business leaders and environmentalists recently urged Governor Mario Cuomo to establish a blue-ribbon task force to develop options and alternatives for the economic and environmental future of the East End. The governor has fulfilled that request.

The idea is sound. The people of Long Island must be involved in their own destiny. We live the problems, we know what they are caused by, we have some good ideas on how to bring about the relief we need. Therefore, we suggest the creation of another fact and solution finding group, a blue-ribbon task force to restore the fiscal integrity of Suffolk County.

The "Mission Statement" for the East End group declares, in part, with: "...presenting the governor with specific recommendations for improvements and modification to existing state law and programs which would help preserve and enhance..." the area's economy, and "identifying improvements to laws and programs at the local and federal levels which the governor should support..." to benefit the area.

First, let's explore some of the key problems. They include high taxes, the skyrocketing cost of education, the highest electric rates in the nation, the multi-layers of government that lead to duplication of services, and state mandates.

Talk to local officials and they will repeat, over and over again, that state mandates are bankrupting local and county governments. The state mandates a pre-kindergarten program, sets up the rules and regulations, promises to share in the financial burden, then cuts its financial contribution. The state passes legislation to close landfills,

which the state years ago pushed the towns into building, and then sits back and does nothing while garbage disposal costs rise out of sight. That's just two examples of the mandate fiasco. There are many more.

Here's a recommendation to improve and to modify, governor: don't mandate until or unless you are willing to foot the bill. The major modification has to be in state thinking, governor, yours and the state legislature's. Don't mandate recycling, as the state has, unless you are willing to establish recycling centers on a regional basis in order to handle the recycled material. If you don't care enough to be involved with the financial burden your mandates create, don't waste your time in creating them. If local governmental officials had any backbone, they would refuse to buckle down to state edicts. They would, as Nassau did, initiate court action to block such costly, pass-the-buck to the locals, mandate requirements.

There's a lot of improvement and modification that can come in the educational system, governor. You have permitted the educational bureaucracy, including your own State Education Department, to run rampant. While the cost of education has soared, the quality of the educational system has declined. Though student populations decline in many areas, the budgets go ever higher. We need a total revamping, governor, starting right at the top, the State Education Department. That's something you should support, governor. In fact, it's something you should insist upon.

There are good teachers and there are bad. Develop a system to reward the good, those who have a meaningful impact on the lives of the children they teach. Be sure they have the proper tools to work with. Focus on the waste within

the educational system to insure there are sufficient dollars to offer the programs of value to the education of our youth. Support the elimination of tenure, or, at the very least, call for a revision of the tenure laws to streamline the removal process for those not meeting expectations. Work to develop a regional salary scale that would recognize cost of living factors but eliminate the "we need more because they get more" demands for parity which pit one district's salary level against another's.

Stop playing around with state aid for education. Reform the educational formula which currently penalizes "paper rich" areas, which does nothing more than put added financial burdens on the taxpayers. Stop talking about formula reform. Do it! Put lottery dollars in a dedicated fund for educational purposes, instead of putting them into the state's general fund where they wind up being used for political purposes.

Governor, you know that our area suffers with the highest electricity rates in the nation. You know it because your deal with LILCO to close the Shoreham nuclear power plant is a primary cause. That, and your lack of action, by edict, threat of removal, or through consumer-oriented appointments to the Public Service Commission, to ensure that this agency represent the people and not the utilities. Re-examine the utility's rate of return which increases its profits while the ratepayers go broke. Put an end to the fiasco which permits LILCO to raise its rates because the customers have conserved, as they are urged to do. In the private sector, when sales go down, business must look within to cut costs. In monopolistic utilities, they simply charge more for their product. In government, taxes are raised. The ratepayers are also the taxpayers, and they are

being gouged by both.

Our area has, for too long, been shortchanged by the New York Power Authority (NYPA), which has doled out low-cost power to upstate communities, school districts, municipalities, even to out-of-state agencies and cities. Out of the approximate 8,000 megawatts of power handled by NYPA annually, Long Island gets less than 600 megawatts. That's hardly an equitable share. The excuse has always been that there was no way to bring the low-cost power to Long Island. There is now. The new under-Sound cables make this possible. But there is now an easier way.

NYPA is, as you surely know, is building a generating plant at Holtsville. As a state authority, NYPA pays no taxes on this plant. The electricity, according to a high-ranking LILCO official, is not really needed at this time. We propose the total output of NYPA's Holtsville facility be utilized as a low-cost power commitment to Long Island. That electricity should be earmarked for use by school districts and municipal buildings to bring some tax relief to the taxpayers.

But! At the same time you must take steps to cap what LILCO can charge as a "wheeling charge" to send that electricity through the LILCO system. LILCO's current wheeling charges convert low-cost power into high-priced juice. Support legislation that would limit that charge. Give the ratepayers, and the taxpayers, a break!

You must also bring about a serious attitude adjustment at the PSC to eliminate, as we said before, the policy of giving LILCO rate increases because the ratepayers use less electricity. NYPA has boasted a lot about energy savings possible through a program of energy efficiency in designated schools. The more energy that is saved, the more it winds up costing. LILCO produces less, but makes more. That policy protects LILCO. It doesn't help the people.

The Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) was created as a hope for future control over our own energy destiny. It has not lived up to expectations, mainly because you, governor, stuffed many of the seats with your own picks, such as former State Consumer Affairs head Richard Kessel as chairman. Kessel, as you know, is more interested these days in running for Nassau County executive. The law creating LIPA provided for election by the people of LIPA trustees. That election has been stalled, time and again, in Albany. If the people are to have control over their own destiny, they must be able to fill the LIPA board seats, not the politicians. Support the LIPA elections. Give LIPA back to the people so they have a voice in meeting their future energy needs at a price they can afford to pay.

As we said, governor, your East End Task Force is a good idea. Hopefully those named will reach out to the people in the communities to come up with their proposals for the future, rather than promote special pet projects or goals.

"Nothing is as good as getting the locals to tell you what they need," you reportedly said at a recent meeting of the East End group. We agree. But it is imperative you select task force members wisely, look for new faces and points of view. And when the recommendations are made, question them and ensure the facts presented are accurate. If they are, act. We've had plenty of lip service. We need action if we are to survive.

And why not?

## Campaign reform controversy

Legislator Steve Levy (D-Sayville) has had a measure enacted that is being touted as a campaign reform act. The measure calls for placing on the ballot, for voter approval, an amendment that will allow the county government to spend taxpayers' funds for candidates seeking election.

The object of the bill is allegedly to eliminate the effects of Political Action Committees (PACs), special interest groups and lobbyists. Currently, Levy and his supporters are locked in debate with the county executive over the wording of the amendment.

The county executive wants the wording of the amendment to plainly indicate that taxes will be used to run campaigns, and if voters approve this measure, they will be taxed for this expenditure. We do not have a problem with this being spelled out, neither should anyone else who is interested in good government. The reform measure itself, however, we have grave difficulties with.

Candidate participation in the public financing program is voluntary, not mandated. Because of the voluntary nature, candidates who can raise more money from PACs or special interest groups will not have limitations placed upon them. The bill still allows candidates to accept contributions ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,500, and spend up to \$1.2 million on campaigns if a primary is run before the general election.

A thousand dollars may not be a lot of money to some people, but to many legislative candidates it's enough to

make them stand up and take notice, and virtually ensure that they will keep in mind the contributor's requests. This limit can even be gotten around. For example, let's say "XYZ" law firm wants to secure a very lucrative contract with the county. The firm is limited to making a \$1,000 contribution, but this does not stop the partners, their wives, their children or the firm's employees from making individual contributions. Political candidates and those charged with fund-raising know the source of most contributions, and you would have to be blind to ignore the affiliations of the individuals. Technically, they would not be breaking the law, but the intent of the bill would be circumvented.

There is nothing in the law that prevents labor unions or special interest groups from marshaling their membership to support or defeat a candidate. The members with a special vested interest can be encouraged to make individual cash contributions or, more importantly, act as volunteers, providing in-kind services (phone calls and other actions), that would not have to be recorded on behalf of a candidate.

The measure, as it now stands, is going to be costly. It provides equal funding for primaries and the general election. It provides funding for every candidate from every party who can meet the threshold requirements.

Because there are so many variables, it is difficult to place a firm estimate of the taxes that will be required to fund the intent of the bill. We do know that for a county executive/legislative race,

the cost will not be less than a half-million dollars and can exceed \$2 million or more if the right set of circumstances come into play.

These are tax dollars that, if spent here, will not be available for any other purpose, including putting food onto the shelves of food pantries or acquiring environmentally sensitive land. Once the money is spent here, there will be less available for police protection or to meet the county's ever-growing payroll demands.

Levy is a good legislator. With the help of Common Cause, Tax PAC and numerous other civic-minded organizations, he drafted this legislation. Unfortunately, good intentions are not enough. This bill falls far short of true campaign reform. It does not limit, in the way the public would prefer, either campaign fund-raising or campaign expenditures. It does not take special vested interests, the PACs, or the unions out of the loop. The only thing the bill really does is provide an opportunity for the politicians to stick their hands in the taxpayers' wallet one more time.

Fortunately, you will have an opportunity to vote on the final adoption of this bill when you go to the polls November 2. The bill should be defeated for the right reasons. The backers should then regroup and redirect their energies in developing a meaningful campaign reform measure that drastically limits the amount of money that can be spent on campaigns, and the length of time a campaign can go on.

And why not?

# Are board members above the law?

School board members have been charged on numerous occasions with displaying an arrogant attitude toward the taxpayers of their school districts. A prime example of pure arrogance, not only toward the taxpayers but to a Supreme Court order, came last week in the Middle Country School District.

Here's the story: the Middle Country School District has been an angry battleground for some time now. A bitterly divided board of education, split 5 to 4, clashes constantly. A group of angry residents, concerned about district happenings, attends each meeting and raises controversial issues.

One such issue led to their filing court action against one of the board members, Virginia Galgano, who, they charged, was guilty of a conflict of interest because she voted for a contract which benefited district retirees. Gal-

gano is a retired district employee and, the residents charged, benefited from the contract she voted upon.

Supreme Court Justice William Underwood ruled that "Sufficient cause appearing, it is ordered that defendant shall be and hereby is temporarily restrained and prohibited from taking any and all actions as a member of the board" until the return date of the order to show cause action (August 26).

At a board meeting on August 16, Galgano voted on district matters. The temporary restraining order (TRO) was totally ignored as if it had not been issued, although board members knew of its existence and were reminded of that fact by the residents' group. Their comments were also ignored.

The next day the residents secured from another Supreme Court justice a contempt citation against Galgano. The

district then had two of its attorneys go to court last Thursday in an effort to have the TRO vacated, claiming that "an emergency might arise" which would require action by the board. With Galgano restricted from voting, if the usual board split prevailed, the board would not be able to act, the district's attorney claimed.

The judge, Supreme Court Justice Mary Werner, had the office of Judge Underwood contacted to determine if he could hear the matter on Monday. Upon hearing he would, Judge Werner returned the action to vacate unsigned.

Some questions: why would a member of a board of education deliberately defy an order of the court? One excuse given on the night of defiance was that her actions were based on a legal opinion from the district's attorneys. If that were the case, why did the district spend taxpayers' dollars to send two attorneys

to a court in an attempt to have the TRO vacated? Wouldn't those dollars have been better spent for the education of the children?

This matter deserves an investigation by State Commissioner of Education Thomas Sobol. Is it proper for a member of a board of education to defy a legitimate court order? Is it proper for a board of education to record that vote? Doesn't that make it an accomplice in the defiance? Are board members above the law? Are they permitted to choose what they will obey and what they will not? What other moral and ethical issues will they ignore in the performance of their duties?

This is not a judgment of who is right or who is wrong on school district matters. It is not a judgment on the guilt or innocence of the conflict of interest charge. It is up to the court to make that decision.

The residents of the Middle Country School District have an important decision to make. If they don't care about potential conflicts of interest or how the board spends their tax dollars, they should stay home, ignore the whole thing and let the board of education do what it pleases, when it pleases and how it pleases. But if they believe board members should obey the law, should act in an ethical fashion and concentrate on the educational welfare of the children and end such arrogant defiance, they should be at the next school board meeting and let their views be known.

And why not?

# Bad laws deserve to die

Suffolk County Legislator Thomas Finlay (R-Brentwood) authored a bill that imposes an additional \$100 application fee upon those who have failed to pay their county real estate taxes on time. This so-called application fee is nothing more than another tax, by another name, which is imposed upon the already-established late fee of 1% per month and a \$20 advertising fee charged to delinquent taxpayers.

When residents went to pay their late taxes, they were astonished to find that this new tax had been added, since most had not been informed about this additional penalty. Brookhaven was the only town in Suffolk that warned landowners of this new tax.

Most individual property owners who do not pay their real estate taxes on time simply do not have the money to do so. They knew when they made this decision that they would pay a penalty and would be required to pay interest. When they went to redeem their property and pay the taxes, they cried out in protest over the additional fee imposed.

Finlay has conceded that the bill is unjust in some instances, and has offered a solution that would eliminate the penalty if one of the owners is over 65 years of age, or one of the owners is a veteran, or if the landowner's gross income is under \$14,000 a year.

These are Band-Aids, when surgery

is needed. The third penalty should be entirely eliminated for residents owning two parcels of property or less. Speculators who routinely use the system for their own advantage should pay the penalty. The citizens struggling to make ends meet should not be faced with additional taxes because they can't pay their current taxes. This just doesn't make sense.

As taxes have increased dramatically in Suffolk, many landowners who pay

their own tax bills were caught by surprise. Some residents have seen their taxes jump \$500 to \$1,000 per year. They didn't budget for it and had no further savings or discretionary income to take the taxes out of at the end of the year. They should not be additionally penalized.

Stop fooling around, repeal the penalty on residential properties held by individuals. Bad laws should be killed, not massaged.

And why not?

# Inoculate your animals

A rabid raccoon was discovered on Long Island, in Queens, recently. This followed the first death resulting from rabies in this state in the last 39 years.

Rabies can spread up to 50 miles from its original source within a one year period of time. One of the first lines of defense is inoculation of all household pets. Many people have their animals routinely inoculated, including the rabies vaccine, but others don't. A rabies inoculation normally costs \$45.

The county has rounded up a group of veterinarians who have agreed to inoculate all animals against rabies for \$12.50 as a public service. The veterinarians are concerned about the spread of the disease among domestic, as well as

wild animals. Call the Suffolk County Health Department for a list of the participating veterinarians.

We encourage all pet owners who have not already had their animals inoculated to do so immediately. Parents should warn their children to avoid coming near or touching an animal, particularly a wild animal that appears to be sick or possibly hurt from an accident. Even if an animal appears to be peaceful or dead, do not go near it. These are wild creatures who, by instinct, strike out at humans when they are ill or hurt.

I know this firsthand. Coming home from kindergarten one day, I found an injured squirrel. I tried to aid him and he bit me on the finger, and then

promptly died with his teeth firmly planted. It was a harrowing experience and the treatment was just as bad.

Rabies can kill a victim who has been infected. Oftentimes, the animal that has inflicted the wound is able to escape. If it is impossible to determine whether or not the animal that bit the victim was rabid, the treatment is long and painful. With rabies in the area, there will be no other choice for the victim or the medical practitioner than to begin the anti-rabies treatment regardless of whether the victim has been contaminated or not.

Take this warning seriously, as we all are victims of our circumstances.

And why not?

# Hundred thousand dollars for what?

On August 10, Brookhaven Town held a public hearing for citizens to voice their opinion regarding term limitations for Brookhaven's elected officials. This was good. Public hearings bring the citizens into the process.

The measure will be on the ballot for the citizens to affirm or deny. That's even better.

It felt good for us to recently applaud the Brookhaven Town Board for this move, until we started to hear reports that Supervisor John LaMura and the town board had spent \$100,000 on an advertising campaign to inform the town residents, allegedly, about this hearing.

This November we will hold local elections. LaMura will be running for reelection. Was the \$100,000 spent to publicize the supervisor or to call to the voters' attention the public hearing? Why spend \$100,000 of taxpayers' money when a public notice and the attention from the news media would have given the public sufficient notification? Wasn't this expenditure a blatant waste of the taxpayers' money? Isn't this what bad government and bad politics are all about?

The political misuse of town funds, time and equipment for political purposes is an abuse that is not strictly a Brookhaven Town happening. Most po-

litical offices are used to enhance the election fortunes of the incumbent. It has long been the target of criticism on virtually every governmental level, and despite vows that the practice will cease, it doesn't. There should be strict guidelines set forth at every level which would restrict such actions. But since the incumbents do the setting, actions never follow the rhetoric.

The increased flow of newsletters, candidates appearing in an increased number of photographs which flow into newspaper offices, in television commercials, and in a host of other ways, waste taxpayer dollars in campaign exposure efforts being disguised as govern-

mental actions.

The recent Brookhaven spending spree is just an example, although a very expensive one.

How can LaMura go to the people between now and November and say, "I have prudently run your government, making every tax dollar work for you." Won't his opponent be justified in saying LaMura made every tax dollar work for LaMura at the public's expense?

If LaMura keeps shooting himself in the foot, the logical question the voters must ask is how many feet does he have left?

And why not?