

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## The Ghost of Cuomo Past

When Governor Cuomo lost his reelection bid to George Pataki and vacated the governor's mansion in Albany, he must have left his ghost behind. Pataki, upon taking possession of the mansion, should have had an exorcism performed, as it would appear Cuomo's ghost has consumed the current governor and has transformed him from a responsible conservative into a raving liberal.

For two and a half years, Pataki obviously valiantly fought this demon. His leadership helped drive down state expenditures and he was able to cut taxes, do away with regulations and bring reform to the workmen's compensation scandal that was driving businesses out of New York.

Pataki came up with the innovative STAR program that will bring school tax relief to seniors, and eventually all state residents in the future. State government is finally living up to its obligation of educating the students rather than placing the burden squarely on the backs of homeowners.

Pataki accomplished many of the things voters had sent him to Albany to accomplish. Voters across New York State were disgusted with former Governor Cuomo's liberal programs and big spending ways.

Voters on Long Island were opposed to Cuomo's bailout of LILCO. They did not want LIPA taking over LILCO—freeing LILCO from its debt—but they wanted lower electrical rates. They wanted LILCO to be made to compete and be forced to be competitive through deregulation.

Pataki hammered Cuomo ferociously on this subject. He pledged to stop LILCO in its tracks; LILCO would not be like the LILCO of the past. Pataki was opposed to the bailout that enriched the stockholders at the ratepayers' expense. His strong stance in opposing the bailout gave him the 100,000 vote plurality on Long Island, which was credited with providing the margin that led him to victory.

Cuomo's ghost must have taken possession of Pataki's mind in the spring of 1997. Pataki ordered LIPA to take over parts of LILCO, such as LILCO's share of Nine Mile Point 2, another turkey of a nuclear power plant. He ordered LIPA to buy the antiquated Transmission & Distribution system; to give LILCO a contract to operate the T&D system without going to competitive bidding. He ordered LIPA to enter into a contract covering 7 to 15 years, paying the operational and maintenance costs of LILCO's power plants, which LILCO will continue to own and operate.

To finance this scheme, Pataki has authorized LIPA to float \$7.6 billion in bonds that will cost \$20 billion to \$22 billion to pay back over the next 30 years. To do this, ratepayers will pay (through T&D charges) an average of \$60 a month before they purchase one cent of electricity. This scheme is the equivalent of putting a \$21,000 mortgage on every ratepayer's home for 35 years.

In addition, because of the way the

deal is structured, it inhibits any competitive power being purchased by businesses or homeowners on the island. Pataki's scheme is nothing more than the transfer of a public monopoly into a state-sponsored one.

Pataki's operatives hold out the promise that the scheme will reduce rates during the first third of the deal by 17%. Financial experts in the utility field, who have examined the LIPA documents, concluded that, at best, the rate savings will realistically be 11%. The State Assembly Committee on Energy conducted exhaustive hearings and concluded the savings may be as low as 8%.

In September 1996, the staff of the state Public Service Commission (PSC) had recommended to the commission that LILCO be immediately ordered to reduce its rate by 5.5%. LILCO at the time was spending 50% more for operation and maintenance costs than comparable utilities in the Northeast. But because of Pataki's LIPA negotiations, the governor ordered this rate reduction withheld. This was the first sign that Cuomo's ghost had taken possession of Pataki.

Last week, Pataki revealed his 1998 budget. Due to the robust status of Wall Street, New York is awash in cash and it appears we will end the year with a \$5 billion to \$7.5 billion surplus.

When Pataki ran four years ago, he hammered home the theme that New York State was horribly in debt, only Louisiana had a worse credit rating. This enormous debt resulted in higher interest having to be paid on bonds which cost all residents needless tax assessments.

Voters got the idea that conservative Pataki would cut spending, cut taxes and, if by some miracle there was a surplus, he would use it to pay down the state's debt. The new demon possessing Pataki appears to have been converted into a liberal.

Pataki announced that he intends to take the budget surplus and spend it on capital works projects and then issue bonds for more debt. His 1998 budget has been heralded by the liberals as a return to the past, and it is.

The budget is almost \$10 billion higher than Cuomo's last budget. This budget has something in it for everyone except the taxpayers. It's not the budget of a conservative. It is neither frugal, nor prudent. It's an election year bag of pork designed more around his reelection than what is good for the state of New York.

Years ago, our state had a slogan, "Buy New York." The demon possessing Pataki has sold him on this slogan lock, stock and barrel, because Pataki is attempting to buy New York State's citizens' votes with their own money, and this foolishness will be felt for years to come.

It's not too late. Pataki and his advisors should summon the best exorcists to Albany and have them cleanse the mansion and Pataki's mind. It's not too late, but time is running out.

And why not?



## Alliance Request Reasonable

This past week, the local group, Community Alliance For Brookhaven National Lab's Accountability, requested that members of their organization be appointed to the new board of Brookhaven's Science Associates.

BSA has taken over the responsibility for running the lab. It was chosen by the Department of Energy as a contractor after a nationwide search.

Recently, the Department of Energy has attempted to reach out to the community after the disastrous revelation of sloppy housekeeping and environmental contamination at the lab.

The Department of Energy has been hosting well publicized, open town meetings, encouraging the input from neighbors and residents concerned about the lab's operation.

A new board comprised of 16 members will oversee the lab's operations. Five of the directors come from Stony Brook, five are from Bettel Memorial Institute and six from ivy league schools who are participating in the lab's operations.

Community Alliance has said, "What about us? We are the people most closely affected by the lab's operations. Let us be part of the process in a meaningful way. Let us be board members where we can see firsthand the decision-making process for a cleanup of the past mistakes and the procedures being undertaken so that they are not repeated."

To *Suffolk Life*, that's reasonable

and it could go a long way to rebuild trust within the community.

The new operators of the lab can't be allowed to fall back on old practices. They must give the community reasonable assurances that they are doing everything to clean up the mess. News releases and press conferences and informational meetings are not enough. Having concerned residents and respected environmentalists from the community involved is important.

If the residents have a reasonable belief that they have the inside track to

**Having concerned residents and respected environmentalists from the community involved is important.**

the cleanup and the safety procedures to prevent contamination of the environment, their opinion of the lab would be improved.

This is common business practice. Most boards of directors have outside directors as observers and questioners. This gives the stockholders an assurance that someone independent is looking out for their best interest instead of being part of the problem.

We know *Suffolk Life* would feel much better about the lab if we had assurance that there were independent members on the board of directors, independent directors that would be free to observe, have unrestricted powers to question and communicate with the community without gag rules.

If the lab truly intends to create a credible bridge with the residents in the community, it should welcome the Alliance's request with open arms.

And why not?

# WILLMOTT & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## There Must Be Financial Restraints

New York State, under Governor Pataki's STAR (School Tax Relief) program, is going to pick up a larger share of the educational costs of the schools. The state will replace the real estate taxes lost by the exemptions that senior citizens will receive under the STAR program. In addition, the governor has substantially increased state aid to most districts.

This new-found wealth can be used in various ways: to add new offerings, increase salaries, or stabilize and cut taxes. If the new state aid is looked at as a "goodie bag" to be spread out amongst the establishment, our children will be no better educated and the taxpayers will see more of their hard-earned tax money go down the drain.

Today, it costs more to educate a child in public school than tuition for a student in many college. There is virtually no accountability or pay for performance in public schools.

Over the last 20 years, we increased our investment in public school education substantially, but we are turning out a product less educated than two decades ago.

It has been unequivocally proven that money is not the answer. Public schools desperately need competition and standards of accountability for both students

and teachers. State aid should be tied to statewide testing in all elementary subjects, testing both the students and the teachers. Those who produce best should be paid best and share in a bigger portion of the state aid.

We know it is an election year and education is a popular vote-getter. We also know that New York State right now is flush with cash because of a robust stock market and strong economy. We hope school boards consider the reality that the economy is cyclical and money that is available now may not be there next year. If the state has to cut back state aid, many districts may be left with programs they can ill afford.

It's time for prudence and a watchful eye by taxpayer organizations. It was the healthy economy of the eighties that led to huge increases in educational costs. Nobody was watching the store because things were good and the establishment knew that and took advantage of it. Now is the time for vigilance.

School boards should explore using this new state aid to cut taxes rather than spending the money on higher salaries or elective programs. It's time for the taxpayers to get a break.

And why not?

## Long Island Representation

Long Island has not been represented on the state's Public Service Commission (PSC) since Ann Mead's term ended more than two years ago.

Governor Pataki, who is responsible for appointing PSC members, and the state legislature, responsible for ratifying those appointments, must support the appointment of at least one resident of Long Island.

The PSC is a five-member state regulatory agency responsible for carrying out a federal mandate to encourage competition between old and new utility companies. This ultimatum will end 60 years of guaranteed utility monopolies throughout the state.

In its mission statement, the PSC claims "Our purpose is to ensure that New Yorkers have access to competitive priced, high quality utility services provided safely, cleanly, and with maximum customer choice ... We will be innovative, fair, and responsive in balancing the needs of customers service providers, and all others."

Yet, the PSC has been told to disregard competition on Long Island because of the proposed \$7.6 billion LILCO-LIPA deal that most ratepayers on Long Island have opposed.

Last January, just before the details of the proposed \$7.6 billion LILCO-LIPA deal were released, State Assemblyman Thomas Barraga of West Islip submitted legislation to amend the state's public service law, requiring that at least one of the two open seats be filled with a representative from Long Island.

Barraga has proposed this measure every year since 1989 in the hope of obtaining more than one seat for Long Island, because the area pays the highest electric rate in the country and has a total population of more than 2.6 million residents.

The PSC board currently consists of John O'Mara, an attorney from Elmira in Chemung County, who is the chairman; Maureen Helmer, an attorney from the Albany area, the deputy chairman; and Thomas Dunleavy, a resident of New York City, is the third commissioner.

The two remaining seats should be filled with one resident from Nassau and one from Suffolk, but we would settle for one Long Island seat, rather than none.

The candidates for the seat should be qualified in the field of utility economics and be a strong advocate for the ratepayers who foot the bill.

Most of our Republican state repre-



SADDAM'S ONLY GAME PLAN

sentatives—with the exception of Barraga and, most recently, Assemblyman Fred Thiele—have been cowering in the shadows of Albany because they have been afraid to stand up for the residents of Long Island. They believe it is more politically prudent to hide behind the concept: "This deal stinks, but it is the only

one available." This hogwash leaves us at the mercy of the PSC.

This is the beginning of an election year for the governor and our state representatives. It is important to Long Island to have a representative on the PSC.

And why not?

## Whoops! There Goes New York

In the not too distant past, the state of Washington was almost dragged under by the utilities. The utilities had issued bonds that went into default because of their endeavors with nuclear power. The defaulted utility bonds almost took the entire state down.

We fear New York could be the next "whoops," again dragged down by a utility company—LILCO. This time, however, LILCO will be in the clear, as it will have sold its responsibilities and liabilities to LIPA.

LIPA (the Long Island Power Authority) is a creation of New York State government. As an authority, it only has one responsibility: to pay back its investors, the bond holders.

The state technically does not have a financial obligation to back the authority with its full faith and credit, but, realistically, the state must back the bonds in order to protect its own financial interest.

The projection of rate savings as proposed by LIPA are seriously suspect. Yet, LIPA guarantees they will maintain a 14% rate reduction for 10 years. LIPA has a responsibility to not only meet this guarantee, but to develop sufficient revenues to pay the interest on the bonds.

A good case could be made that LIPA will not be able to have it both ways.

What if LIPA's projections are wrong and the experts are right? Who will make up for the shortfall?

What if LIPA's 30-year bet against

technology is off base and technology becomes available that can produce electricity on site or in-house at half the cost of what LIPA wants to charge?

What if the vast majority of current LILCO customers jump ship and buy more competitive energy? How will the bonds be paid back?

What if the governor and legislature are forced to pass laws forbidding residents and businesses from using self-generation of electricity that cuts their rates by 50%? Would there be any lawmakers left of the current crop?

What if LIPA can't raise enough money through the sale of electricity to pay off the bonds? Will the governor and the legislature allow LIPA to go into default or will they come to their aid by imposing a new tax on New York State residents to bail them out? Would the voters in New York State stand for it?

What if LILCO and BUG, the new company, prices gas so competitively that it makes no sense to use electricity for air conditioning or heat? Who will make up for the loss revenue?

What if the rest of the nation sees reductions of 15% to 30% on their electrical bills, while New York's rates are fixed at the higher rates, or rates are going up?

What will be the economic drain from the loss of businesses and jobs?

To our way of thinking, it's "Whoops, there goes New York!"

And why not?

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Down, But Not Out

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released a decision last Wednesday approving the proposed LILCO-LIPA deal. It also called for hearings on the rates that LIPA can charge its consumers if the deal is consummated.

At first blush, it appeared to be a victory for LILCO-LIPA, but on careful reading, it appears FERC has not accepted the proposed rate structure and

intends to hold public hearings where testimony will be given and the rate portion of the deal examined.

The FERC ruling did not come as a surprise. Repeated warnings were sounded that the deal was wired from top to bottom. Former Congressman Thomas Downey is now a lobbyist and allegedly

on LILCO's payroll. Downey is a close personal friend of Vice President Al Gore's.

Senator Alphonse D'Amato came out early in favor of the deal and reportedly played an important and influential role in supporting it. D'Amato has obviously forgotten who the people are that put him in office and he may well pay the price this coming November when he is up for reelection.

**The deal may have moved one step closer to completion, but this battle is far from over**

The deal may have moved one step closer to completion, but this battle is far from over. Opponents have dug in their heels and will do whatever they can to try and stop the deal before the economy of Long Island is ruined.

And why not?

## Correction, Please?

*Newsday* editorialized last week that opponents of the LIPA deal should not oppose the Internal Revenue Service ruling which would give LILCO's stockholders a \$2 billion tax break if the LIPA deal goes through. The editorial made it sound like this tax break was good for Long Islanders.

Let us, at *Suffolk Life*, set the record straight.

If the LIPA deal goes through, LILCO and its stockholders, under normal circumstances, would face a \$2 billion capital gains tax. Just like any other American company, LILCO made a profit and the tax is due on it, except now LILCO does not want to pay that tax.

LILCO has asked for a private letter

ruling that would exempt it from this tax, enriching the company and its stockholders by another \$2 billion. If LILCO gets this tax break, it will mean that every taxpayer in America will have to pay \$17.40 more in taxes next year to make up for LILCO's windfall.

This is not fair, it is not just, it is not good for Long Island, and it is definitely not good for America. The IRS should reject LILCO's request completely.

The IRS is under a tremendous cloud of suspicion and a special deal like this will only further the idea that if you have enough money, you can buy and sell the IRS—at the expense of the American public.

And why not?

## Permanent Decals, Not Magnets

Joseph Rizzo, when he was presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislature, introduced a bill requiring all county cars to be identified with decals. The purpose of his measure was an attempt to stop the abuse of car privileges by county employees. He exempted elected officials, claiming they would not vote for the bill if they were included.

One of the first things Steve Hackling did upon becoming presiding officer last month was to administratively rule that all cars assigned to the Suffolk County Legislature have decals, now. He said that as presiding officer this was within his prerogative, and *Suffolk Life* agrees.

Some legislators have balked at this and, instead of using the permanently

affixed decals, are trying to circumvent his order by putting on magnetized decals that can be removed at will.

This is a sham and a disgrace. What are these elected officials thinking of? Are they going to put the decals on when they are attending to county business and then take them off when they are going to Joe's Bar and Grill or for any other inappropriate use of the cars?

Legislators should be setting an example, rather than finding loopholes. Hackling has it within his authority to permanently remove a car from a legislator if the privilege is being abused. If legislators are not following the rules, that is abuse, and the best way to handle the situation is to remove the temptation.

And why not?



## The Circus Continues!

Despite early maneuvers indicating that the Suffolk County Legislature had found religion and was willing to really work together in a bipartisan fashion, this infighting, brat-bickering and political backstabbing circus of elected officials continues at full speed.

Three Republicans and seven Democratic legislators had the wherewithal to silently organize a coup that unseated a very effective Republican presiding officer by the name of Joe Rizzo, who was appointed by the county clerk last year because the legislature could not agree on who should be presiding officer.

But this was different; this new bipartisan coalition met quietly and managed to smoothly overturn the power of the GOP majority elected by the general public.

Whether or not one supports the coup, it was impressive because no one expected it, not even Rizzo, who had made no plans to vacate the presiding officer's Hauppauge suite.

This coalition, lead by Republican Steve Hackling, appeared to be heading in the right direction. It offered Rizzo the deputy presiding officer's position, a position he had held for numerous years before becoming presiding officer last year. This was another smart move that might have curried some favor with the county's political bosses. Think of it, Rizzo representing an olive branch.

However, when Rizzo—and his deputy presiding officer, Republican Joe Caracappa—turned Hackling down, the new coalition retreated across the political aisle, looking for support for a deputy presiding officer within the ranks of the Democrats.

The coalition came up with Levy, who is considered a moderate and sometimes a liberal, with a history of voting in favor of the people of Suffolk County. But that is where the coalition ended—one vote shy of offering the people of this county a Republican presiding officer with a

Democratic deputy presiding officer.

To his credit, Hackling attempted to maintain the bipartisan approach to government which he and his Huntington contingent, Republicans Allan Binder and Paul Tonna, had helped to orchestrate so well. He appointed both Republicans and Democrats to chair the county's various legislative committees.

Unfortunately, politics intervened and the Republicans turned down those appointments. Then, Democrat Maxine Postal, who refused to vote for Levy as deputy presiding officer because she did not get her way when she wanted to appoint a close friend as the legislature's clerk, opted out of her chair appointment, claiming

she had scheduling conflicts.

We were under the impression that these legislators would work full-time as county officials, how could there be a conflict in scheduling if one is a full-time county legislator?

Since no one seems to want to chair the committees, perhaps they are a waste of taxpayers' money, and a waste of time and energy for those on the committees as well as those working with the committees. Perhaps county government does not need these committees after all.

Perhaps the new presiding officer should call the bluff of both Republicans and Democrats by disbanding all committees and let government revert back to dealing directly with elected officials and department heads. Perhaps that will save the taxpayers a lot of money and eliminate a lot of aggravation.

And why not?

**Perhaps county government does not need these committees after all**

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Let The People Vote

Some members of the Suffolk County Legislature are attempting once more to place the LILCO-LIPA issue on the ballot this coming November. The legislature, by a 16 to nothing vote, attempted to place this question on last November's ballot. Republican Legislators Paul Tonna and Allan Binder of Huntington abstained because of potential conflicts of interest.

The legality of the question was challenged and the court ruled that its wording was ambiguous, effectively denying residents of Suffolk County the opportunity of clearly expressing their views on the proposed \$7.6 billion LIPA deal.

The wording has since been changed to meet the judge's requirements and despite some backtracking by a few Republican legislators, a group of Democratic legislators is determined to get the measure back on the ballot.

The proposed LIPA deal was crafted by Governor Pataki and his aides. Pataki has been putting an inordinate amount of pressure on local legislators to convince them to fall into lock-step with his demands.

Last year, all the Republicans on the legislature who could vote to place this issue on the ballot, did so. In our interviews this past fall, prior to the election, each of the Republican legislators pledged to continue to fight the proposed LILCO-LIPA deal. But now some of them are waffling on this new vote.

Legislators Mike Caracciolo, Marty Haley and Joe Rizzo appear to be presenting the strongest opposition to a new referendum. Though they were strong supporters of the first referendum, they are now claiming the new referendum is "disingenuous" because the county is already fighting the proposed LILCO-LIPA deal. They claim the new referendum is "misleading" and "moot" because it is asking the voters if the legislature should continue to fight the deal.

They claim they supported the first referendum because the county was not doing anything at the time. The county legislature then approved spending up to \$800,000 to oppose the deal for this year. There is no guarantee it will oppose the deal next year if the takeover has not happened.

But if the public approved the referendum, the county would be legally bound to continue opposing the deal. If the deal is consummated and the referendum approved, the county would be legally responsible to make sure LIPA provides the "guaranteed" 14% electric rate decrease promised to every ratepayer in Suffolk.

Instead, these Republicans have been Patakied. They have succumbed to political pressure. This is pure politics. These legislators made a commitment to the voters and they can't be allowed to go back on their promises.

The LILCO-LIPA issue is much more than politics, it is going to affect the financial well-being of our children and grandchildren.

The Republicans who showed courage in the past must continue to do so, or they must be forced to resign. We know they are under immense pressure from political leaders, but they cannot abandon their responsibilities to the voters.

We strongly encourage you to contact your local legislators and demand that they live up to their word and vote for the people. These elected officials must not deny us the right to express our viewpoint in the voting booth.

The names, addresses and telephone numbers of the Suffolk County legislators are printed below for your convenience. Contact your legislator now and demand to be given the right to vote on this issue.

And why not?

## Suffolk Legislators

**District 1:** Michael J. Caracciolo (R), Deputy Presiding Officer, 633 East Main St., Riverhead, NY 11901, 852-3200.

**District 2:** George O. Guldi (D), 140 West Montauk Highway, Hampton Bays, NY 11946, 852-8200.

**District 3:** Fred Towle Jr. (R), 640 Montauk Highway, Shirley, NY 11967, 852-1300.

**District 4:** Joseph Caracappa (R), 248 Middle Country Road, Building 1-Suite 3, Selden, NY 11784, 854-2700.

**District 5:** Nora Bredes (D), Suite 5, 48 Route 25A, East Setauket, NY 11733, 854-1500.

**District 6:** Martin Haley (R), 725 Route 25A, Miller Place, NY 11764, 854-1600.

**District 7:** Brian Foley (D), 27 Havens Patchogue, NY 11772, 854-1400.

**District 8:** Steve Levy (D), 22-30 Rail Sayville, NY 11782,

**District 9:** Joe Rizzo (R), 2941 Sayville, NY 11752,

**District 10:** Allan Binder (R), 21

Maple Avenue, Bay Shore, NY 11706, 854-0940.

**District 11:** Angie Carpenter (R), 4 Udall Road, West Islip, NY 11795, 854-4100.

**District 12:** William G. Holst (R), William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, NY 11787-4311, 853-4400.

**District 13:** Michael D'Andre (R-C), 59 Landing Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787, 854-3900.

**District 14:** David Bishop (D), 276 N. Wellwood Avenue, Lindenhurst, NY 11757, 854-1100.

**District 15:** Maxine S. Postal (D), 15 Albany Avenue, Amityville, NY 11701, 854-1111.

**District 16:** Allan Binder (R), 1789 East Jericho Turnpike, Huntington, NY 11743, 854-5100.

**District 17:** Paul Tonna (R), 1996 Deer Park Avenue, Deer Park, NY 11729, 854-1900.

**District 18:** C. Stephen Hackeling (R), Presiding Officer, 143 Main Street, Huntington, NY 11743, 854-4500.



## Alcohol-Free Police

Suffolk County Labor Negotiator Dave Green revealed recently that in the negotiations over the sheriff's contract, he has inserted a demand that when the sheriff's deputies respond to duty they must be alcohol-free.

We were under the impression that this was a requirement all along. Green wants the ability to urine-test the officers at will to determine if they have alcohol in their system.

This does not seem unreasonable to us. Whether they are sheriffs or other police officers, the public should expect that law enforcement officers are free of alcohol.

Although Green's idea is a good one, unfortunately he did not bother to check with Sheriff Pat Mahoney, who is responsible for these employees.

According to Mahoney, Green's announcement caught him totally off-guard. Green has not kept the sheriff informed of any of the negotiations involving his staff and that sounds like a bad management practice to us. Green arbitrates in a vacuum and does not reach out to Mahoney for his opinions or input.

Mahoney further stated that Green does not want to give the department the ability to do the random checks, which is the usual procedure. This reinforces Mahoney's complaint that the Suffolk County labor negotiator has tied the sheriff's hands, preventing him from effectively managing his personnel. Green's staff has no authority to conduct these tests, and that is how it should remain.

But that does not detract from the concept of alcohol-free police, sheriffs and corrections officers.

Many times we have been in the company of pilots and flight attendants who have stopped drinking because they knew they would be flying in the next 12 hours.

One pilot told us that he and his colleagues are subject to random testing and if alcohol is found in their system they can be suspended or, in some cases, lose their license.

Our pilot friend said he agreed with the regulations. "I don't want people assisting me in flying a plane when their reflexes are slow or their mind is clouded because they were drinking the night before." He said 12 hours is a reasonable period to refrain from alcohol when you are responsible for the lives of others. This appeared to be reasonable and gave us a sense of confidence.

So why not impose the same regulations on the sheriffs and police? These people have the responsibility of keeping us safe and making sure the laws are upheld. They drive cars, they are armed, and their minds must be clear.

The total number of hours that police work is similar to the number of hours that teachers work in a given year. They have a lot of time off. Is it not reasonable to expect them to refrain from consuming alcohol for at least 12 hours before their shift begins?

America's attitude toward drinking has changed radically over the last 10 years. The three-martini lunch was commonplace in the seventies and eighties. Today, it is rare for anyone to drink during the day if they are working.

Many people have given up drinking during the week because they want their minds sharp and clear, and those who do have a drink or two before dinner do not drink after, giving their bodies 12 hours to dissipate the alcoholic content and its effects.

We hope the police unions are not opposing this provision. Their members must depend upon fellow officers to back them up and they don't need somebody behind them whose judgment is impaired.

And why not?

Offer Good  
Present Coupon  
On Independent