WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Selling The Nine Mile Point Two Elephant

It has been reported that the Long Island Power Authority may sell its 18% interest in the Nine Mile Point 2 nuclear power generating plant, located near Syracuse, New York.

Many of us questioned why LIPA was buying this plant as part of the LILCO takeover. It has a horrible safety record. It produces some of the most expensive electricity in the United States. It was LILCO's bad investment that LIPA got stuck with, and it never made sense to acquire the facility in the first place.

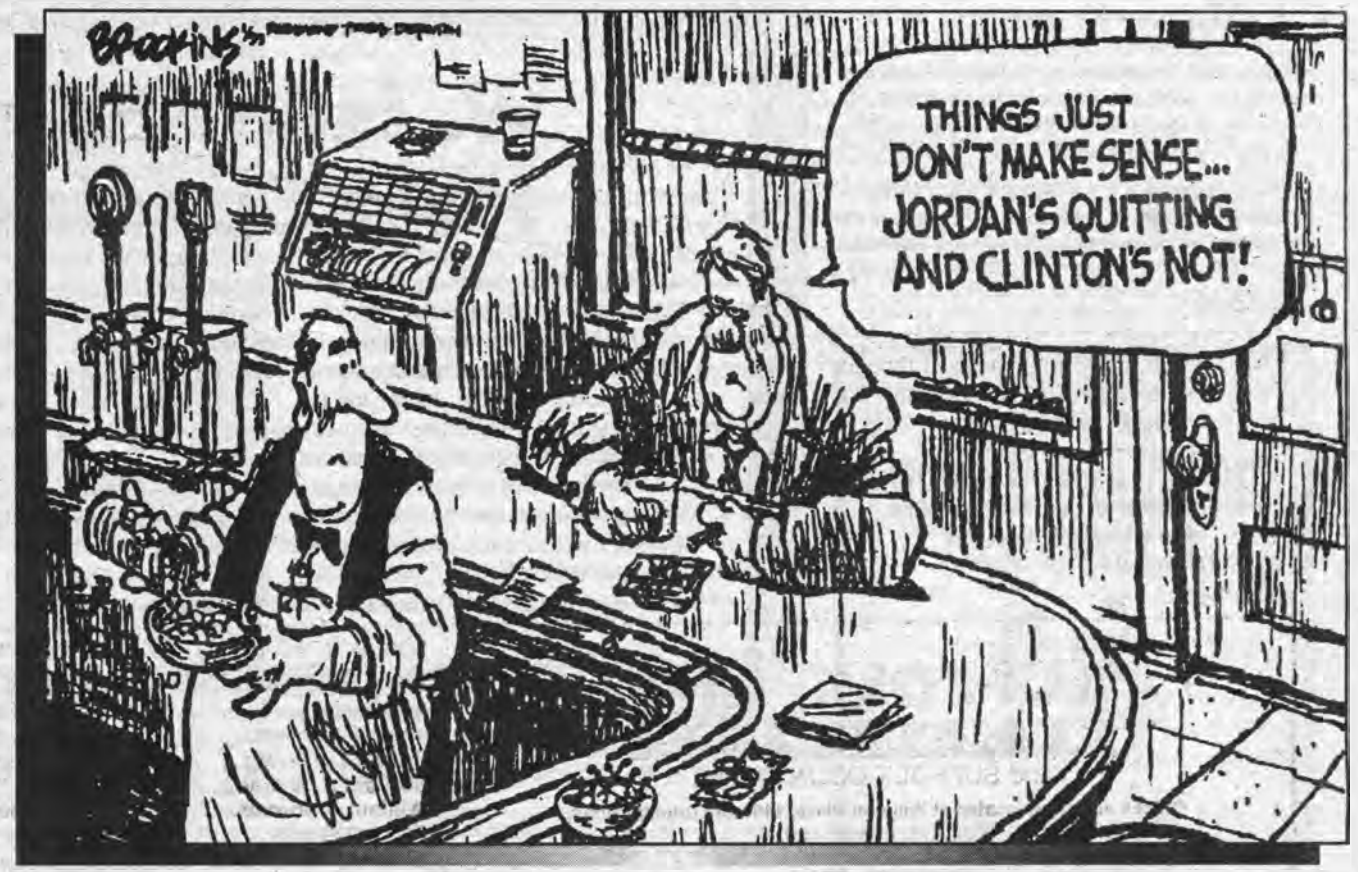
It is reported that the prospective buyer, the New York Power Authority, will be paying a fraction of the original construction cost. As usual, if LIPA enters into this deal, the ratepayers will be stuck with the loss.

While this is outrageous, it is not entirely bad because under the original LILCO agreement, the ratepayers are being forced to buy 18% of the costly energy produced by that plant. It is estimated the electricity coming out of the plant costs 13 cents a kilowatt hour. To put this into perspective, some of LILCO's older electrical plants were generating electricity at 2 cents to 3 cents a kilowatt hour.

Electricity can be purchased on the open market for 3 to 4 cents a kilowatt hour. That is 10 cents a kilowatt hour less than what we are forced to pay by being part of the Nine Mile Point 2 consortium.

The difference in cost for electricity may make up for the loss in the investment LIPA made in Nine Mile Point 2. It is unfortunate LIPA Chairman Richard Kessel and company allowed former LILCO president Bill Catacosinos to insist that LIPA acquire the plant. Nobody ever said the LIPA deal was negotiated fairly and honestly. It is just a shame that we are stuck with paying for it.

And why not?



Supporting State Tuition Tax Credits

State Senator Kenneth LaValle is introducing a bill that would give 100 percent tuition tax credits to New York State residents. This will enable many people to obtain higher education. Tuition payers would reduce their taxable income by the amount of college tuition that they pay.

The program will cost the state $275 million per year. This is a lot of money, but in the context of a $70 billion budget, it is pocket change. College educations often raise havoc with parents' and students' finances. Any break that they can get is needed.

We strongly suggest that as long as Senator LaValle is addressing higher education, he should also address tuition tax credits for primary and secondary education, and extend this tax break to those families who have placed their children in private schools.

Why not allow these families to deduct the cost of private school tuition from their income taxes. There is a growing trend in the state for private school education. Many parents feel the public school system is not providing the quality of education or addressing the specific needs of their children. Some parents object to the curriculum and the social constraints that are being forced upon their children.

If tuition tax credits are good for the college bound, they should be good for the primary and secondary schools.

And why not?

Innocent Until Proven Guilty

We do not have any sympathy for drunk drivers. When they are nailed, we have nothing against the assessment of heavy fines, court-ordered rehabilitation and insurance penalties.

However, New York City's administration recently suggested that police should seize and impound the cars of drivers who have been arrested for drunk driving.

As it turns out, Suffolk County already has such a law on the books, but it has never been enforced because police say it would be too unwieldy to confiscate these vehicles.

The basis of the American justice system is that one is innocent until proven guilty. Very often, it takes six months to bring a drunk driving offense to trial. If this law is imposed, an accused would have his or her vehicle impounded during this period, and would be responsible for the impoundment charges regardless if he or she is found guilty.

To us, this does not seem fair or constitutional. New York City is acting appropriately by rethinking this law, and Suffolk should take it off the books.

And why not?

Stop Subsidizing Beach Houses

James Witt, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has proposed putting the brakes on federal flood insurance. This federally financed insurance program subsidizes the insurance of homes located along beaches and flood plains. It is a good program, but it has been abused and has encouraged unwarranted building on fragile pieces of land.

This past fall, a homeowner was quoted in a national publication as saying he had rebuilt his house three times, and intended to rebuild it a fourth time, even though it was located in a hard-hit coastal storm area. His reason for not worrying: flood insurance covered most of the cost of rebuilding.

It is this kind of abuse Witt is going after. He wants to buy out vulnerable homes before disaster strikes, stop issuing insurance on homes that have been devastated, and substantially increase insurance premiums on homes that have not been retrofitted to reduce or prevent storm damage.

He is not proposing a drop dead today program, but one that would gradually be implemented, and will either grandfather in or buy out those existing flood-prone homes.

Congress should seriously consider taking a look at this proposal, for the program as it exists today is a blatant waste of taxpayers' money.

And why not?

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

A Disturbed American

We are proud to be an American. We love this country and its form of government. We love the laws, and the law of the Constitution that governs us.

We believe in the Ten Commandments. They are a blueprint for how we should conduct our lives. They specifically spell out what we can do in the eyes of God and what we cannot.

During the Clinton affair and his impeachment trial, we have been silent. We have always looked at the office of the president as something to revere. The president of the United States, regardless of whether we voted for him, is our president. We admire most of the men who have become president. Some were better than others. Some took philosophical, social or political positions we agreed with; some did not.

Because of this great America, we have been able to disagree and argue with a given president on issues and philosophies. The right to open protest in this country has become a major part of our history.

Before the sixties, life was fairly simple. There was right and wrong and little room for anything in between. The sixties brought about a revolution in the United States, both in our personal lives and our government.

The Vietnam protesters took government out of Washington, D.C., and put it on the streets. The demonstrators ended the war in Vietnam and brought about the end of former President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

The sexual revolution created an atmosphere that "everybody was doing it". You did not have to be married, and if you were married, it was okay to be with someone besides your spouse. The institution of marriage began to crumble, with more people today becoming divorced than ever before. Even our vocabulary has changed, and with it, we have lost much of our family values.

As a journalist, we have noted that truth is not as revered as it once was. It seems to have become commonplace that if you tell a lie and get away with it, it is not a lie.

When innuendoes of Clinton's indiscretion started to circulate, we figured it was more of a personal matter than a public one. What he did in the confines of his "bedroom", with whomever he chose, was his own personal business and responsibility.

When those innuendoes changed to front page stories, and oral sex became the topic of the day, we became ashamed and alarmed for our president. We became fearful for the good American citizen, for the mothers and fathers who had to explain to their young children what oral sex meant; for even though the president said his action was no big deal, it is.

After months of public disclosure, we still believed the president when he went before the cameras and said, "I did not have sex with that women." We were probably in denial, but wanted to believe him, if for no other reason than to end this mess.

Then when the president finally admitted he had the affair, we wanted to forgive him, and again, get on with the real business of America. But when he began to wiggle and wobble, appearing to blatantly contradict himself in speech after speech, we lost all faith in him and in his office.

Were the cynics right? If you had enough power, then you were above the law and could do anything with impunity?

When the nation's House of Representatives took up the impeachment proceedings, we were dismayed that so many Democrats and Republicans, following partisan lines, were not adjudicating this matter in a fair way. Most every Democrat is acting as if it were okay for Clinton to lie and obstruct justice, because it was only over a sexual matter.

The oath of office Clinton took, with his hand on the Bible, now appears to mean nothing. His sworn testimony during the grand jury hearing suggests that it is all right to lie because the issue concerns sex. Apparently, truth has no importance. Our Constitution has been relegated to being just another historical document.

We were not surprised that Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives. We anticipated that the Senate would not allow itself to sink into partisan muck.

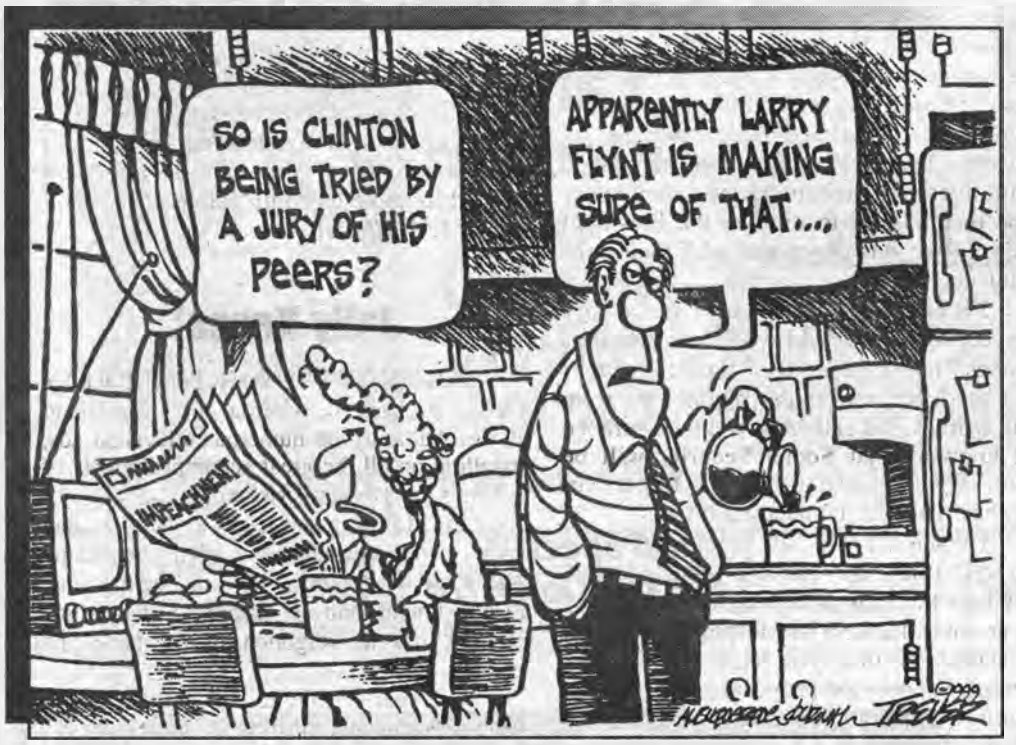
Clearly, Clinton did lie under oath. More important, he looked every American in the eyes and lied to us.

Clearly, the Senate, at the writing of this editorial, will not have the courage to uphold the Constitution. It will come up with some wishy washy compromise that no one will be satisfied with. After it is finished with its "declaration of shame", this country will be left with no rational law and order.

The Constitution and the Justice system is in shambles because one man has proven he is above the law, and because Congress would not act responsibly. This is disturbing to us as Americans.

For the first time, we do not have the confidence we once felt for our system of justice, or for the Constitutional protections given every man, women and child. We are no longer equal.

And why not?



Islip Alive

Islip Town Supervisor Peter McGowan took a gamble a few years back when the Islip-MacArthur Airport was languishing. Major airlines were pulling out, leaving Long Island with limited aviation choices. Fares out of MacArthur were astronomical when compared to fares out of Kennedy and LaGuardia. This was particularly the case for short hauls to New England, upstate New York and Washington, D.C.

McGowan saw the future and gambled that a renovation of the airport would change the future use of this facility. The new terminal facility, as well as other improvements, are almost complete.

Because of these improvements, Southwest Airlines announced it will be flying out of MacArthur starting March 14. Southwest has a reputation of extremely competitive fares with a no frills but courteous service. It was nicknamed "The Peanut Airline" because, instead of serving lunch on an hour-long flight, it gave passengers a bag of peanuts and a can of soda. Southwest has rapidly grown, and it is a pleasure to see it come into Islip. Its arrival has spurred other airlines to take a second look at this gem of Ronkonkoma.

Almost three million people live on Long Island, and most would prefer to go to MacArthur because of the convenience and the ease of getting in and out. Parking is far more reasonable and it is free to Islip residents. The only hold back has been the number of airlines and the rates they charge for the Islip connection. Since Southwest's announcement, other major airlines have expanded their schedules, and are seeking gate space.

Spirit has taken over many of the defunct Carnival/Pan Am routes, and is again offering non-stop service to Florida. Carnival, in its heyday, when service mattered, flew at full capacity most of the year on these routes.

McGowan's gamble is paying off. Islip-MacArthur Airport should be the pride and joy of all Long Island. It is good to see public officials willing to gamble on the right project that serves the needs of the people.

And why not?

Limit On Unused Days

Supreme Court Justice Robert Doyle ruled in a recent court case that a municipality can limit the number of unused sick days, vacation days and compensatory time civil servants can accrue. This is good news for the taxpayers.

Under many contracts, civil service employees benefit from generous sick-day policies and vacations. Some employees have been allowed to accrue these days over the lifetime of their employment. When they retire, they cash these days out, and their last year's salary reflects this extra income, making their pensions substantially higher.

At one time, government workers were paid significantly lower salaries than the private sector. Generous benefits became a way of compensating these employees. Today, salaries for many government positions exceed those of comparable jobs in the profit-making industries. Generous benefit packages are no longer needed to attract employees into government.

In most businesses, sick time is for sick time, it is not an accrued benefit that has a dollar value. Most private industries offer two to four weeks of vacation. Municipalities offer as much as six weeks of vacation, and then allow that time to be accrued and paid out at retirement. This gives the retiring workers a huge cash windfall, inflates the amount of money they made in the last year of employment, and raises the amount of their pensions over the rest of their lives.

Doyle was right to put an end to this abuse. His decision has rightfully armed municipalities with a bargaining tool for contract negotiations.

And why not?

WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

LIPA's Refund Grab

It is time for newly elected Attorney General Elliot Spitzer to honor his campaign promise to review the LILCO-LIPA deal, starting with the recent certiorari refund grab being orchestrated by LIPA Chairman Richard Kessel.

Kessel has been threatening the Suffolk County Legislature, hoping to convince them to give in to his illegal demand for $625 million from Suffolk taxpayers.

The following words are contained in Section 1020-q(3) of the New York State Statute which created the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA).

"No municipality or government subdivision, including a school district or special district, shall be liable to the [any] authority or any other entity for any fund of property taxes originally assessed against the Shoreham plant.

"Any judicial determination that the Shoreham plant assessment was excessive, unequal or unlawful, for any of the years from nineteen hundred and seventy-six to the effective date of this title [January 15, 1987] shall not result in a refund by any taxing jurisdiction of taxes previously paid LILCO pursuant to such Shoreham plant assessment.

"The authority shall discontinue and abandon all proceedings, brought by its predecessor in interest, which seek the repayment of all or part of the taxes assessed against the Shoreham plant."

Despite these words, and the clarity in which they specifically preclude LIPA from collecting a tax certiorari judgment from over-assessments of the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant, LIPA is demanding the Suffolk County Legislature approve its plan to collect $625 million from Suffolk taxpayers.

Otherwise, LIPA threatens, it will demand full payment of a court judgment in excess of $1.4 billion.

What is there about the words "discontinue and abandon" that LIPA does not understand?

LIPA Chairman Richard Kessel, who is making the threats now, fully agreed back in 1995 that the LIPA statute prevented it from collecting any tax refunds for tax overcharges caused by over-assessments of the Shoreham facility. Back then, he was attending a special meeting of two Legislature Committees in an attempt to sell the legislators on former Governor Mario Cuomo's LILCO takeover plan.

When the subject of the tax certiorari was brought up, Kessel had this to say: "There is currently, ... pending in State Supreme Court the Phase II of the tax certiorari case. I asked Rich Bonafield, our counsel, where that case was at this point ... Based upon our statute, and this is a statutory requirement, we would be required to drop that litigation ... upon acquisition of the company."

"That is primarily by statute," he added, "although, again, I want to give you the overall philosophy of the LIPA board, the current LIPA board, is that we don't believe that the LILCO ratepayers should receive any benefits at the expense of Suffolk County or Brookhaven taxpayers or any other taxpayers. I think the worse thing we want to do on Long Island is, in effect, lower someone's electric rates temporarily only to raise someone's property or sales taxes... "

Kessel now claims LIPA is entitled to the money because the court has ruled on the matter: a $1.4 billion judgment, which includes LIPA's own claim for refunds on PILOT payments, and interest on the tax overcharges. He has been quoted as saying, "That's a judgment, that's money owed to LIPA and the ratepayers. And we can't just say we are going to ignore money that's owed."

But like all of Kessel's statements, that was then and this is now. In negotiating the LILCO-LIPA deal, he and his negotiation partner, former LIPA Chairman Frank Zarb, ignored the more than $60 million that LILCO was paid by Suffolk County for a judgment in Phase I of the tax certiorari case.

That money was owed to the ratepayers, but LIPA gave it away to close the deal. LIPA also ignored other outstanding certiorari cases filed by LILCO in both Nassau and Suffolk. The total for Nassau County was $404,124,430, while the certiorari claims against Suffolk totaled $114,088,229. That's almost $300 million more being forgiven in Nassau than in Suffolk. This is money that was included in Suffolk electric rates.

Why is Kessel threatening Suffolk, while at the same time he benefits Nassua County where he lives and has had political ambitions?

Suffolk County's Legislature won two important victories in the courtroom of Supreme Court Judge John J. J. Jones last week when he dismissed two LIPA motions in the current legal action against LIPA's tax certiorari claims.

LIPA sought a change of venue in the case, switching the case from Suffolk to Nassau. Since LIPA had found the Nassau judicial system to be more sympathetic to its claims, LIPA officials apparently wanted the matter heard before the same judge who had sided with it in other matters.

It was a Nassau judge who prevented Suffolk voters the opportunity to have a say in the LILCO-LIPA deal. But Suffolk Judge J.J. Jones dismissed this new change of venue attempt. LIPA also sought a dismissal of the entire legal action. That, too, was denied by Judge Jones.

That denial gives a strong indication that Judge Jones will view this case based on the legitimacy of the statute rather than the politics of the case.

Unfortunately, while the judge's rulings show the legitimacy of the case, Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney is not a partner in this legal action. Gaffney is hell-bent on caving in to LIPA, settling the issue for the $625 million that LIPA demands, even though he has no authority to do so.

Gaffney has been a partner with Governor George Pataki and LIPA since the deal was first announced. He won reelection as a strong "LILCO fighter," but has turned out to be LILCO's best friend.

It now seems he is willing to encumber the ratepayers for $625 million to which LIPA is not entitled. That money will ultimately cost Suffolk ratepayers $1.2 billion, with interest included.

Gaffney's strong alliance with LIPA could be very harmful to the people of Suffolk County. Instead of fighting for the people, as any elected official should, he continues to put politics above the public interest.

Like Kessel, his words cannot be trusted. What he says today, will likely change tomorrow.

In addition, Suffolk Legislature's Presiding Officer Steve Hackeling, who flip-flopped on the LILCO-LIPA deal, is also involved in negotiations with LIPA.

Instead of a united front by all Suffolk officials against this tax certiorari case, we have individuals going their own way, giving the impression that LIPA is correct in its effort to ignore state law.

Gaffney and Hackeling's actions could turn victory for the people into serious defeat. We think New York State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer should investigate this entire matter.

Someone needs to stand up for the people. Spitzer spoke out against the LILCO-LIPA deal before it was consummated, and he has promised to look further into the huge bonuses given to former LILCO Chairman William Catacosinos and other top LILCO officials. He should put this refund grab at the top his list.

And why not?

Health — Follow the Money

Several years back, *Suffolk Life* got involved with the Breast Cancer Coalition. We knew of several different women who had been afflicted by this disease. In particular was an associate of ours, a woman who was in her early thirties. She was diagnosed with breast cancer and was dead within a few months.

Lorraine Pace, who is a breast cancer survivor, noted that a number of women in her community had contracted the disease. She approached us about publishing a survey, in the West Islip edition of *Suffolk Life*, to ascertain the number of cases in the community.

We published the survey on the front page. The edition has a circulation of under 10,000 that generated 6,000 replies from the community. This was the start of the Breast Cancer Coalition. It became apparent from the responses that there were specific, geographical areas with a higher rate of breast cancer than others. This grass roots effort has spread through most of Suffolk.

Suffolk Life contacted former U.S. Senator Al D'Amato who later obtained federal funding that allowed for professional organization and research. What immediately became apparent was that the state was five years behind in recording and publishing statistics to the Breast Cancer Registry. In this day and age of instant communication, five years is ridiculous and not acceptable.

Last year, the state Legislature approved $1 million for a mapping project. Governor Pataki vetoed the legislation. This year, he included the money in the governor's budget, taking the control of the project out of the legislature. Under his plan, the mapping project will take two years and will be done on a countywide basis.

The breast cancer advocates and many legislators have cried foul, and they should. Cancer has appeared in clusters right down to streets or parts of villages. It is suspected that environmental problems may be the cause, but we cannot be sure until these geographical areas have been defined and analyzed. They will not be defined if the mapping is done on a countywide basis because it is just too large a demographic area.

In addition, the Pataki plan calls for using the medical center of detection as the center of the diagnostic area. This will not provide useful information as people travel distances for medical care, often far away from their homes or their work places.

Where a person lives or works is likely to have a correlation between how that person was exposed to elements that may have caused the cancer.

You might ask yourself, why do radical differences exist between the legislative plan and the governor's? Follow the money. If the legislative plan is followed, specific sites that might be environmentally contaminated would be more easily identified. If these sites are proven to be a cause, or a possible cause, they will have to be cleaned up. This is big money.

If one suspects that one owns such a site, would it not behoove that person to make contributions to one party or the other, to one politician or another, to eliminate the probability of legal liability? It has been suggested this is exactly the motivating factor behind the change in plans.

No tradeoff can occur on the breast cancer issue. Money and politics should not affect this issue. No one should be allowed to sell a person's right to protection against the possibility of breast cancer.

The Pataki administration is wrong, dead wrong, on this issue.

The governor must hear your opinions and your concerns immediately. This is about our health and the health of our mothers', wives', sisters' and our daughters'.

Let us not allow the governor's office to pull another fast one.

And why not?

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WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Require Four Years For Cops

The Suffolk Legislature agrees that county police officers should obtain a four-year college degree, but the legislators have gotten lost in a plethora of gibberish about not wanting to be too hard on anyone.

Two weeks ago, the legislature's Public Safety Committee presented five proposals to raise the standards for county police officers.

Initially, Legislator Dave Bishop and Presiding Officer Steve Hackeling proposed that, in order to be hired as a police officer, candidates would need a four-year degree. The proposal retains the current requirement that, in order to obtain promotions, officers must pass various exams offered by the state's civil service department.

Currently, no educational requirements exist for police officers, despite the fact the job has become much more high tech and psychologically demanding. Because it understands that high tech training is necessary to conduct police business, the Suffolk County Police Benevolent Association has strongly endorsed a four-year college degree requirement.

But that is not good enough for some legislators:

Young police officers should be given a break, according to Legislator Angie Carpenter. She would rather require a two-year degree with a mandate that police officers have to obtain a four-year degree within five years.

Legislator Michael D'Andre wants a two-year degree for hiring and a four-year degree for any promotion.

Legislator Mike Caracciolo, a former Nassau County Police Officer, objected; recommending that Suffolk only require a two-year degree to be hired. He apparently believes that furthering a police officer's academic education is inconsequential.

Finally, Legislator Steve Levy recommended that Suffolk put no educational requirement on hiring police officers. He believes it is more meaningful if the county hires less educated candidates while requiring a four-year degree for any promotion.

The ridiculous aspect of this debate is that everyone agrees that having an education is better than not having one, but some are afraid to impose that requirement.

The average annual salary for Suffolk's 1,783 police officers is $83,043. Sergeants are paid $96,984; detectives $102,988; detective sergeants $106,909; lieutenants $107,218; detective lieutenants $112,308; captains $111,978; deputy inspectors $115,215; inspectors $122,290; deputy chiefs $125,454; assistant chief $126,659; chiefs of division $132,848; and the chief inspector $134,791.

The Suffolk County Police Department is one of the highest paid law enforcement agencies in the nation. This subsequently attracts thousands of candidates from throughout Suffolk and from outside the county.

With that much attention, we should be able to hire the cream of the crop.

Making a four-year college degree a prerequisite to becoming a police officer in Suffolk is a no brainer. Forget all the other gibberish. We should get what we are paying for. It should also be required that at least two of those years are dedicated to police science and human behavior programs.

The taxpayers of Suffolk are paying top dollar, and they expect top quality police officers with a sound education.

And why not?

Reworking The State's TAP

Governor George Pataki targeted the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for reform when he revealed his 1999 budget. He wants to raise the amount of money that students contribute toward their education from 10% to 25% of the cost.

The yearly tuition at a state university is $3,400; students pay $340 and the taxpayers pay the rest. This $3,400 a year is a huge bargain for an education. An equal education in a private university runs between $10,000 and $20,000 a year — some schools are even higher.

New York State's public college tuition is kept artificially low because it is subsidized through tax dollars. This is the way it should be.

On top of low tuition, many students receive additional assistance through TAP, which was designed to offset the cost of college for those who qualify financially.

An unanticipated problem has emerged with this program. Some students take the minimum number of credits and often extend their college years well beyond the traditional four-year program. This is costing taxpayers extra money. In his budget presentation, Pataki proposed the correction of this situation.

As a carrot, he has offered to refund students their full 25%, if they increase their class loads to 15 credits and complete their education within four years. To us, this is very sensible and prudent.

Democratic Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, however, has vigorously criticized Pataki's tuition proposal. He prefers the present abused education tax structure because it benefits his core constituency in the city. TAP was designed to help lower income families, many of whom live within Silver's Assembly district. But leaving things the way they are would negatively impact Suffolk County's residents.

We are all for helping the less advantaged to obtain a reasonable education, and TAP helps to accomplish this. But is it too much to ask that those being helped complete their educations in a timely fashion and share in that cost — especially since the governor has provided an avenue for them to have that cost reimbursed if they complete their education within four years?

How many parents who pay for their children's tuition, and how many students who pay their own way, can afford to unnecessarily extend their education expense to five or six years?

Partisan politics should not be involved with this issue. Pataki's tuition proposal is good government for the right reasons. Silver should put his politics aside on this issue.

And why not?

Fliers Bill of Rights

The U.S. Senate has been holding hearings on establishing a Flier's Bill of Rights. Congress intends to pass legislation that would establish a flier's right to know if and why a flight is canceled or delayed.

Under the proposed legislation, the airlines would be responsible for promptly conveying this information to the passengers.

In addition, the proposed legislation mandates that fliers would be entitled to know all ticket prices on all flights. They would be allowed to cancel reservations within 48 hours of flight time without losing the full fair already paid.

It is unfortunate that these items, and others, must consume the busy schedule of the U.S. Senate. Some airlines have grievously offended their passengers by not adhering to these types of common courtesy or common-sense policies.

The late Carnival Airlines was one such offender. We personally experienced problems, and have received numerous letters from readers expressing their frustration with the lack of communication from Carnival officials when the airline was operating.

In one particular situation, we boarded a plane in Florida around 8:30 a.m. We sat on the ground until almost 11 a.m., without so much as a hint of explanation. Finally, when we took off, the pilot came on and said that Islip-MacArthur Airport was engulfed in fog conditions. He gave no indication there would be any problems with landing in Islip or that we would have to land elsewhere.

Upon arriving in New York airspace, he proceeded to circle for almost 45 minutes, again, with no comment. Finally, the pilot's voice came over the speaker announcing that Islip was fogged in and they were going to attempt to land at another airport. By then, many passengers were concerned and frightened. Their fear was caused by a lack of timely communication and the absence of common courtesy.

We ultimately landed at Bradley Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, and, again, sat on the tarmac for almost an hour.

If the pilot had let us know we would be delayed because they had to find room to park the plane, the delay would have been better understood.

When we were finally allowed to leave the plane at Bradley, we again received no information other than we would be given a voucher for lunch and we should report back to the gate every hour. Many passengers abandoned this flight, and rented cars to drive back to Islip.

When inquiries were made about renting a bus, they were met with deadpan faces. Finally at about 10 p.m., we were rounded up to board the plane, and told that we were being flown to Kennedy where a bus would take us to Islip.

Once aboard, it became apparent that the fog was clearing, and miraculously, the plane landed in Islip before the town's 11 p.m. landing curfew.

If the airlines officials had attempted to keep the passengers appraised of the situation, they would have avoided the near riot that took place.

Some airlines do an exceptional job of communicating and rewarding their passengers for inconveniences. If other airlines had emulated these practices, they would not be facing federal laws governing their operations.

It is pathetic that Congress has been forced to intervene in customer service areas of private industry, but people who use the airlines should be extended basic courtesies through common-sense policies. The Flier's Bill of Rights is a positive step in that direction.

And why not?