

# Nice, but it is not enough

Out-of-county tuition, an added burden upon county taxpayers to help pay the tuition for students who choose to attend an out-of-county community college rather than the college the county already supports, Suffolk County Community College, came into the news this past week from two directions.

First, the Suffolk County Legislature reversed an action taken during the administration of former County Executive Patrick Halpin, which put the burden of out-of-county tuition costs upon the shoulders of the towns, instead of the county which had paid those costs in previous years. Then came words of praise from two state legislators who applauded that action. While we agree that the county action was correct, we would suggest the Albany legislators need to do more than applaud, they need to act to resolve the problem.

The out-of-county tuition for students who decide their own community college does not provide the education they seek is a state mandate which has outlived its time. Its origin, we suspect, is back in the days when some counties did not fund a community college of their own, and imposing upon those counties the requirement they pay for tuition for those students to out-of-county colleges was, in fact, leveling the playing field for the students who had no place to go within their own county. But Suffolk County already has a college, which is supported, in part, by taxpayer dollars. If a student chooses to attend another college in another county where the curriculum is more to that student's liking, or the sports program is more advanced, or the campus more modern, that stu-

dent should have a choice: attend the college provided by the county, or pay the bill.

Suffolk County, before the financial crunch in the days of the Halpin administration, had always paid the bill. Then, in a reverse twist, imposing an edict similar to the mandates they complain the state inflicts, the county decided to put the burden upon the towns. They had another option: they could have provided the leadership to oppose the double burden of paying for a county college, and also helping foot the bill for another county's tuition costs if a student elects to go out of the county for the education desired. But the county took the easy way out—transfer the cost elsewhere, just as the state does.

Think about it: If Harvard or Yale

provides the courses a student wants, and the state university does not, should the taxpayer help foot the bill for the tuition of those colleges? Is it fair to the taxpayers who are struggling to fund a college education for their own children?

Soon after the action by the legislators to accept these costs, State Senator Owen Johnson (R-Babylon) and Assemblyman Robert Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst) sent a joint press release applauding that action. They claimed that "through their intervention" the state budget "will provide over \$4.5 million of additional state revenues annually to Suffolk County to help offset chargeback costs resulting from the unusually high rate of out-of-county community college attendance among resident students as compared to the rest

of the state."

Nice, but not enough. The county's bill for out-of-county tuition comes to about \$7 million, legislators have claimed. If the state really believes students should be able to pick and choose, passing the costs on to taxpayers, let the state pick up the whole tab. If the state is unwilling to do that, eliminate the mandate.

It is our hope that state legislators will act themselves to resolve, not simply applaud, the transfer of these costs. The real solution to this problem is not who on the local level will foot the bill. It is accepting the liability for the demands we make. Additional state aid is nice, but total relief is better.

And why not?

## Let's get some answers

Suffolk County legislators are escalating their battle with County Executive Robert Gaffney over his signing of a leasing contract for county cars with a Maryland firm by threatening legal action to have the contract declared void. The taxpayers wind up the losers however this battle ends. Taxpayer dollars will be spent to defend Gaffney against his decision to send county dollars out-of-state at a time when the local economy needs bolstering.

Gaffney's insistence in proceeding with his plan to lease 1,700 county cars from the PHH Vehicle Fleet Management Inc. of Baltimore, Maryland, de-

spite the controversy it has raised, is puzzling. Add to that the fact that a bonding requirement in the initial bid specifications, which caused local automobile dealers to refuse to bid, was later withdrawn at PHH's request, and the puzzle looms larger.

While we agree with the legislators' contention that a study should have been done first to determine the real savings of leasing vs. purchase, and that local dealers should have been given every opportunity to put together a leasing package so that the money could be spent here to bolster our own economy, the idea of spending taxpayers' dollars for

one branch of government suing another is troublesome. We favor a proposal advanced by Legislator Herbert Davis (R-Shirley) that a bipartisan panel be formed, with subpoena powers if necessary, to explore the entire matter. At the same time, a study into the matter should be conducted to examine the validity of the claim the county will save lots of money through this leasing scheme.

There are many questions that have been raised, many more that need answering. Coming up with adequate answers would be in the best interests of the taxpayers.

And why not?

### Point of view:

## Immorality and Cuomo high jinks

By Bob Schulz

The dictionary defines the word "immoral" as the complete disregard of the principles of right and wrong. How does our governor fit this picture? In an assault on the taxpayer's purse and the State Constitution, Governor Cuomo:

...forced us to borrow \$245 million to buy Attica prison from ourselves—a prison we built and paid for in 1931. The Division of Correctional Services "sold" the prison to the Urban Development Corporation (UDC)—you know, that public corporation established to build low cost housing. UDC was authorized to issue the bonds to "buy" the prison. Were they going to kick the prisoners out and turn Attica into low cost housing? No! The little people of this state will pay \$585 million over the next 30 years, through the governor's friends on Wall Street, to wealthy investors who bought the tax-free Attica bonds and who won't pay any taxes on the \$240 million in interest income they will receive from the overtaxed little people in the state. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...forced us to borrow \$30 million to buy I-287 from ourselves—a highway we built and paid for years ago. Same deal. Tax-free, 30-year bonds. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...forced us to borrow an additional \$4.7 billion during the last three years, to pay part of the current operating expenses of our school districts. The trouble is, we and our children will pay \$10 billion over the next 25 years to retire

that debt. So, our kids are neither bright nor "free" when they leave school. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...used public money to sway the results of a bond act proposition on a statewide ballot. He was forced to put the question on the statewide ballot—he needed our approval to borrow \$1.9 billion. He told us the money was for environmental programs when, in fact, he was going to use the money to balance the budget—to pay for his addiction to spending. The money was going to be used to "reimburse the state for past expenditures." That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...used our money to influence the results of the election—to sway the results—to entice our "yes" votes. He told us "a vote for the bond act would be the ultimate selfless act." Leaders in South American dictatorships do that. It's illegal here. It's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...tells his Wall Street buddies, "Okay, boys, here's the deal. You buy bonds I get authorized to sell and I'll pay you interest—tax free." His closest friends, his closest advisors, his biggest campaign contributors are debt merchants, people who are only too happy to help him bury us in public debt. I call it Mario's megalomaniac money or Cuomo crazy cash. It's crazy, "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...used our money to pay the cost of preparing 50,000 copies of a newsletter that did nothing except bash the opposing political party. He then had the

newsletter run through the postage meter in the office of one of his commissioners so that the taxpayers would pay the cost of shredding his political gospel. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...is in the business of corporate welfare—big time. It's the reverse of Robin Hood. He takes from the poor and gives to the rich. Last year alone—he handed out \$285 million in grants to his friends in private corporations while telling us he was doing it in the interest of the economy and the taxpayer. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...is forcing the ordinary, non-aligned taxpayer of this state to subsidize the multi-million dollar salaries of professional baseball players by paying for the places they do their business in—their stadiums. This in spite of the fact that debt service on these playgrounds is nothing but an added burden on people who are already overburdened with taxes and public debt. It's "immoral" and unconstitutional. Let Steinbrenner and the ball players build the stadiums. They've got all the money.

...is now encouraging local governments to follow his lead—to borrow to fund operating deficits rather than make government more accountable, productive and efficient. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...has tried to silence his most effective critic by asking a judge to terminate various lawsuits the critic had filed against the governor's "immoral" and unconstitutional acts and to keep the critic from initiating any more lawsuits

against him. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional. And I know it because that critic was me.

...cheated the people by failing to properly inform the people that he had authorized the placement on the statewide ballot last November of three propositions which were designed to loosen certain debt-limiting restrictions then found in our New York Constitution. Those in government were quietly told—they knew enough to pull the "yes" lever. The rest of us were kept ignorant. He deprived us of our right to know about and to debate proposed amendments to our State Constitution. Some five million voters went to the polls. Only one million people voted for the propositions to increase state and local government's power to incur more debt than they otherwise could. That's "immoral" and unconstitutional.

...has done everything in his power to circumvent the State Constitution that he has three times sworn to uphold.

I have been asked my thoughts about Howard Stern's candidacy for governor. Many people think Howard is "immoral." That may be—but at least what you see and hear is what you get.

Remember this: the most pernicious form of tyranny is that which disguises itself as a benefactor to its victims.

— Bob Schulz is president of ACTA, the All-County Taxpayers Association, a statewide grass roots group dedicated to bringing the government back under the control of the New York Constitution and the people.

# The color blue is fading

At one time, the police were held in the highest esteem. They enjoyed good community relations. They walked the beat. They knew most people and most people knew them.

This was in the day and the age before unions took control. Police, during this era, were not highly paid. But, they were civil servants and enjoyed perks and benefits that the average worker, who was better compensated, did not. The police organized and found little resistance from the public or the politicians to their demands for higher salaries and increased benefits. The term was set.

Complicating the situation is the

fact that if the elected officials and the union cannot come to an agreement, a settlement is mandated upon the municipalities through binding arbitration. The arbitrators use parity with neighboring police districts as consideration in making settlements. This piggybacking has resulted in the Suffolk County Police becoming one of the highest paid police forces in the United States.

The recent settlement with the police, some believe, was way out of proportion in relation to Suffolk County's economy and the taxpayers' ability to fund. This has bred a lot of discontent from taxpayers who can no longer af-

ford their homes, and are being forced out of them. It has also brought into question a lot of the policies surrounding the police.

Newsday, to its credit, recently published a six-day investigative report revealing widespread practices by some police officers of claiming disabilities because of a "work-related" mishap resulting in injury. The articles alleged that there is a group of doctors who persistently sign off on claimed injuries and a group of lawyers who regularly are involved in winning cases for these officers.

The series by Newsday, which deserves applause, revealed that officers

who had claimed severe back and orthopedic injuries were regularly taking part in strenuous activities after they had won their cases. This series alleged government-approved fraud.

Two years ago, we were told by an insider in the department that close to 25% of the officers who are close to retirement were out on workmen's compensation or disability. You might ask yourself why a cop would prefer to go out on workmen's compensation or disability while, within a relatively short period of time, he will be eligible to retire at an early age with a very hefty pension. Workmen's compensation or disability awards are tax free, pensions are not.

Newsday's allegation should not come as a shock to many of our elected officials who must have known about these abuses, but failed to do anything about them. They are not willing to buck the powerful police unions. They find it easier and more convenient to ignore the situation and let the taxpayers pick up the bill.

The situation cries out for change. Those who abuse the disability system have placed themselves in a position of being looked at as lawbreakers and have, unfortunately, created another scenario for the public to hold police in disregard and low esteem. This is a problem of a few bad apples, who, because of their disregard for right and wrong, have done an injustice to all those in the police ranks who work hard at doing their job and earning the respect of the public.

Reform should come both from within the department and a change in the laws. The police who are still proud and consider the uniform true blue, should put peer pressure on those who are shirking their duties and bleeding the system. They should demand that the union itself step forward and condemn this practice and weed out, through peer pressure, those whose ethics are below the standard you might expect from a police officer.

Our legislature and the governor should, both by regulation and by law, tighten up the laws to prevent abuse before an overreaction causes cops, who are legitimately hurt, not to be compensated. Few people object to the legitimate need for taxes, but when they see abuses they become ugly and all kinds of reactions can be expected.

It's time that this abuse is cleaned up for the benefit of the taxpayers who foot the bill and those in police ranks who are impacted by the deeds of those who abuse the system.

And why not?

# The English misconception

Recently, on our Alaskan cruise, we shared our table with a couple from England. Needless to say, the subject of President Bill Clinton's health plan came up.

We had always assumed that the English healthcare system of socialized medicine was all inclusive. Our English friends told us that the English system works well for emergencies, life and death situations, but it fails miserably for normal medical care. Waits of six to eight weeks for an appointment for normal illnesses or suspicions about medical problems are the norm. Life-

saving procedures for the chronically ill and the elderly are put off until there is no longer a need. Appointments are a joke, waits of four to six hours in a clinic are common.

All medical care is not equal. Those that can afford it buy supplemental insurance that ensures that they have access to the better doctors and medical procedures.

Doctors are allowed to practice a few hours a day for the national health system and then spend time at their own practices. The cost of maintaining the medical system has skyrocketed

and is absorbing a large portion of the national economy.

Our dinner companions said that socialized medicine did help some people who had no insurance, but it was at the cost of the majority who, prior to national health insurance, had managed relatively well on their own.

They strongly urged that Americans fight socialized medicine, saying England is a 40-year-old experiment that went bad and is getting worse. Sounds like a warning that should not be ignored.

And why not?

# The solution to NIMBYism

A recent report, sponsored by Long Island University and financially aided by a state grant, explored the subject of NIMBYism, the alleged "not in my backyard" syndrome, which those who seek to build and profit claim is stifling economic growth. The conclusions reached are not new, nor surprising.

The study notes that NIMBYism "reflects, in effect, a spreading local anti-establishment mood that reflects a declining public confidence in whether corporate and public officials have their best interest at heart." Absolutely correct. One need look only at the record, at the planning disgraces which have produced mega-problems for those whose neighborhoods have been invaded by poorly planned and in many cases unneeded projects. Long after the developers and the planners, and the workers who cry out for jobs, and the public officials who give their approval have gone on to other things and other profit plans, the residents suffer the consequences. Sometimes it's noise, often tremendous increases in traffic and unsafe conditions. In other instances the business operations have polluted the environment and the water. Many of the planning failures of the past have led to the need for revitalization projects of today.

The study recommends that developers should bring neighborhood groups in early in the planning process to hear their concerns, and then proceed with their plans taking those concerns into consideration. That recommendation has been made many times in the past. Had that been fol-

lowed in the instance of Olympus striving to build a headquarters in Melville, the controversy that erupted may have been prevented. The residents there were simply striving to protect their neighborhood from the influx of problems they feared would result from a project that was being "fast-tracked" by politicians in the name of jobs. The residents insisted there were other sites in the area that were suitable for the Olympus proposal, and they were right. Olympus has now directed their attention to another more suitable location and the jobs, and increased tax base the politicians so eagerly seek to feed their spending habits, will be achieved.

The cry of NIMBYism has been unfairly raised in far too many instances. A resident's desire to protect

the peace, quiet and safety of the neighborhood should not be shunted aside in the quest for jobs, or taxes, or profit. Proper planning, locating projects on suitable sites, not merely one that suits the fancy of a developer or business, is the key to economic growth without controversy in most instances.

Until the developers, the governmental officials and planners get their own acts in order, they should expect the cries of protest from those who are striving to protect what they have. Call it NIMBYism or whatever, we see it as acts of profit-driven and governmental arrogance that must be changed. The application of common sense would go a long way to solve the NIMBY problem.

And why not?

# Live your life now!

We just concluded one of the best, yet one of the saddest, experiences of our life. We fulfilled a dream of visiting Alaska as passengers on the Princess Cruise line, cruising southeast Alaska.

The ship was beautiful. The food was great. Alaska is beyond a quick description. Its beauty is overwhelming. Its massiveness is incredible. Until you have seen it, you have no true feeling for this wonderful wilderness.

The sad part of the trip was people watching. The particular cruise we were on was comprised of probably 50%

widows and widowers. Lovely people to be with, but underlying in most was sadness. Many had lost their spouse within the last year or two, and they were alone on this trip that they had planned on taking someday as one. Unfortunately, the day did not come that they could have enjoyed the holiday together. Instead, they were there single, frantically trying to find the happiness that had eluded them.

We were fortunate ourselves in seeing this dream come true while still young enough to thoroughly enjoy it. But, we could not help but wonder how many other people put off their dreams

until they can't be accomplished. Like everyone else, we can always find an excuse and have done so often in the past. How many dreams never are fulfilled because of procrastination?

The irony of the trip was that the untimely death of a spouse seemed to set free the inner desires of many of these passengers. They were no longer worrying about tomorrow because tomorrow had come. They were living for today, and that's the way it should be.

If you have harbored a dream that you are procrastinating about, go for it now, while you can still enjoy it.

And why not?

# Government bashing government

Governor Mario Cuomo's State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has imposed almost \$1 million in fines against the towns of Riverhead, Southold and East Hampton. These fines were the result of the towns' attempts to find solutions to the garbage crisis created by the state. When the towns failed to come into compliance, the state government set about to penalize and punish the towns. One has to look at the history of the DEC and its relation to the towns to have an understanding of how ludicrous this whole situation is.

The DEC, a regulatory arm of the governor, originally ordered the towns to stop burning garbage, the normal method most municipalities used at the time to rid themselves of their waste. The DEC then ordered the towns to dig huge holes, dump the garbage and bury it. The towns

complied.

The DEC then said the towns were polluting the water table and ordered the towns to put liners in the pits to collect the leachate. The towns complied with this state mandate at a cost of millions of dollars.

The DEC then said, "We made another mistake." The rainwater was collecting at the bottom of the pits. They then ordered the towns to place another liner on top of the garbage dumps to stop the water from seeping into the garbage. Again, the towns were required to invest millions of dollars to follow the DEC regulations.

Then the DEC realized that by encapsulating the garbage, the dumps were becoming methane bombs and ordered the towns, at town expense, to vent the dumps or create methane collection sites.

After following each of the DEC's mandates, which severely drove up the cost of local government, the DEC enforced the closure of all landfills on Long Island based on state legislation. Supposedly, this was to stop water pollution.

The Suffolk County Health Department did an extensive study on water pollution from dumps and found that, in most cases, it was negligible or non-existent. The cost of running public water to businesses and homes, now or in the future, that might be affected was small in comparison to the cost of closing the landfills.

The DEC failed to give guidance or direction to the municipalities on how they were to cope with the closure of the dumps. Instead of coming up with a single plan that the state could help fund on a regional basis,

they left the local governments out on a limb to find answers on their own.

When municipalities offered up plans, the DEC took their sweet time to react to them and often said "no" without any rhyme or reason. Some communities opted to build huge incinerators, urged on by the DEC, that required long-term contracts and guarantees for minimum tonnage. They were built in cooperation with private enterprise. The local governments had to guarantee a certain tonnage of garbage or pay penalties. The incinerators produce a residue of ash that must be disposed of in landfills. The question of toxicity of this ash has come into question, a question the DEC has tried to shy away from and ignore.

The East End towns, which did not burden their residents with long-term bonding obligations, sought to find alternatives to the garbage crisis. They kept their dumps open as long as they could through court challenges. They finally lost and the state has imposed these outlandish fines.

These fines won't be paid by the elected officials. They will be paid by every homeowner. There is rancorous debate currently going on over utilization of the funds. The DEC wants to use the funds to establish an environmental camp for kids. The municipalities want to use the funds to meet environmental projects within the community, including capping the landfills that are now closed by order of the DEC.

We believe it is ludicrous for the state to impose one cent in fines. We, the taxpayers, have done nothing wrong. Yet, we are going to be made to pay these fines.

One must keep in mind that the DEC is an agency under the control of the governor's office. Mario Cuomo is the governor. He can order the DEC to abandon their efforts to impose these fines. A state agency fining a local municipality is ludicrous.

Cuomo probably won't do a thing for us, and we should remember that this November when he asks for our vote. It's payback time.

And why not?

## Salute to our volunteers

# It is now payback time

Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, volunteer firemen stand by, trained and ready to serve. Each member of the department spends hundreds of hours each year learning the newest, best and safest methods of fighting fires. They respond to your calls of need regardless of where they are, what they are doing, the weather or any other conditions.

Outside of the small pension that a few firemen can earn by devoting a lifetime to firematic activities, they are not compensated by the taxpayers. The only thing we pay for are the firehouses and the equipment.

Most fire departments at this time of year reach out to the community and ask for contributions to the Firemen's Fund. These funds are used for social and benevolent purposes. They buy the coffee and the

sandwiches after a call has been completed. They provide the monies for the annual dinners and award recognition. They provide the funds for the safety courses and fire prevention education. They help fund the Little League teams and the other activities sponsored by the fire departments.

A donation to your local fire department is a small price to pay for the incredibly good service and protection you receive from the volunteers. It's the community's way of recognizing the hours of dedication the firemen put in and your way of saying thank you.

Each department has its own particular method of fund-raising. Some use direct mail solicitation, others go door-to-door. Others run barbecues and open houses. Whatever method they use, we encourage every member of the community to support them.

Of course, one of the best ways is simply to write out a check, enclose a note of appreciation and send it to your local fire department.

Many volunteer ambulance companies also hold fund-raisers during this same period. We encourage you to support their efforts as well. Like the firemen, the EMTs (emergency medical technicians) are trained at their own expense. They devote many hours and are ready to respond when they are needed.

Let's make this year's fund-raising efforts the most successful ever by getting everyone involved and contributing all that you can.

We love you volunteers. Thanks for putting your community above yourself.

And why not?

## Election year position

# Governor Cuomo's flip-flop-flip

Governor Mario Cuomo has persistently opposed the death penalty. This November, he will probably face State Senator George Pataki, the Republican designee, in the election for governor. Cuomo is extremely low in the polls, as he should be. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that late last week he had modified his position on the death penalty by encouraging a referendum by the voters.

This change suggested that the governor, if re-elected, would follow

the will of the people. This was a flip-flop. By Monday morning, Cuomo had flipped again and was back to his original position of opposing the death penalty.

Polls indicate that better than three out of four New York State voters favor having a death penalty imposed in New York State. The numbers have increased as violent crimes have become more prevalent. Cuomo has been able to skirt this issue in the past by arguing on principle. While voters accept his rhetoric

on this issue, they are demanding an end to the vicious and wanton slaughter of citizens, which has become an everyday occurrence. Will this issue be the key issue in the race for governor? We do not think so.

What matters to the voters is the huge increase in the cost of New York State government. The taxes and the mandates imposed by the state on the local governments have driven up the cost of local government to a point where people are having trouble affording the homes that they own.

Cuomo is also directly responsible for LILCO's (Long Island Lighting Company's) high rates. He is the guy who made the deal with LILCO that the Wall Street Journal called "the sweetheart deal of the century."

Cuomo has a lot more than his stand on the death penalty to answer for. We believe his flip-flop-flip was just another crude attempt to take the voter's eye off the ball. Hopefully, it will backfire.

And why not?

# The answer to LILCO's strangle hold

Is there life after LILCO (Long Island Lighting Company)? A year ago, we would have said no. LILCO had a complete strangulation hold on Long Island. They were the only game in town and their rates reflected it.

About a year ago, federal regulations were changed. The federal equivalency of the Public Service Commission (PSC) voted to allow the freewheeling of electricity between systems. This was done to create competition and bring electrical rates down.

California and Michigan have started to allow the retail wheeling of electricity within their states. People and municipalities can shop for electricity on the open market. The power purchased from one system is carried over the grid, then distributed to the utility to the end user. Those

that buy their electricity on the open market pay the utility a wheeling charge for the use of their transmission and distribution lines.

According to national trade papers, many utilities are in a state of panic. Utilities such as LILCO who have been gouging the public for years now must face open competition from electrical power generators from the outside. The only thing that is needed to bring competitive factors to Long Island is for the New York State Public Service Commission to give its approval for the wheeling of that power through local transmission systems. Other states are doing it, New York will be forced to and the sooner the better.

LILCO will probably fall back on trying to pass the cost of lost business onto the users who remain with the

system that they currently have. They also will try to set the wheeling charges high enough to give them the same billion-dollar profit they are currently earning. If this scenario plays out, then it is time for the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) to come into play.

LIPA, an authority with the power of eminent domain, can condemn the transmission and distribution facilities of LILCO and wheel the power through its public authority. A condemnation price would be set by the court and, considering LILCO's notorious influence, it might not be the best bet. What might even be better would be for LIPA to develop its own publicly-owned transmission and distribution system with just enough generating facilities to flow the electricity.

It has been estimated that a complete, new generating system could be built for about \$2 billion, servicing all of Long Island. Yes, this is a lot of money. But, when you consider that it could be paid for through tax-free bonds over 20 or 30 years, it may be the most prudent investment, particularly when you consider that LILCO will take over \$1 billion in profits out of Long Island this year. Rates for electricity could be reduced to the nation's norm through competition and public ownership of the distribution and transportation facilities.

Consider the alternatives. We currently endure the highest electricity rates in the nation. Those rates, coupled with high taxes, are a major cause of our area's economic decline. We have a choice. We can wheel power into our area to help reduce our energy costs, or we can continue to wheel our businesses and jobs out of the area seeking lower costs for doing business.

In our mind, the choice is obvious. The PSC must approve the competitive wheeling of power, and Governor Mario Cuomo must do everything within his power to force them to do so. It was, after all, Cuomo who ordered the PSC to become involved in setting up the financial figures in the Shoreham "deal" with LILCO that has caused our rates to soar. That deal was so one-sided in favor of LILCO that the company has been restored to financial health at the expense of the ratepayers, and the virtual destruction of our economy. Now it is time for the governor to correct the mistakes of that deal by directing the PSC to act favorably to permit competitive wheeling so that the high costs their giveaway caused can be reduced. He has the power to do so.

Yes, there is life after LILCO if we have the governmental leadership that has guts and is willing to do what is right for Long Island for a change.

And why not?

## Audit faults county

# AG says SL was right

As so often is the case, Suffolk Life editorially is ahead of its time. For several years now, we have been the lone voice in the Suffolk wilderness advocating that the county put the bus routes out to competitive bidding. County officials have ignored those words. But now the New York State attorney general's (AG) office has echoed our comments.

The county spends over \$13 million per year subsidizing mass bus transportation. This money is spent without competitive bidding by bus companies to provide this service. The situation stinks, and like an old hound dog, once we are onto the scent we rarely give up.

Recently, an audit by the attorney

general's office critiqued Suffolk County government and its financial affairs and, lo and behold, one of the stronger recommendations was that the county has been sloppy at how it spends Suffolk County taxpayers' money on mass transportation because they were not competitive. The AG came to the same conclusion that we came to several years ago.

When we first got onto the issue and started to draw public attention to it, the person in charge of transportation for the county extended, for three years, the contracts two years before they were up, an action designed to prevent any chance of competitive bidding without a legal fight. And not one county official

raised a fuss about that action. This same person somehow has survived from one administration to the next. No county executive has been willing to ask the hard questions or demand accountability. Makes you wonder why?

Now that the attorney general has drawn attention to this situation and has opened up this sacred box, we expect that the politicians will respond. The cat is out of the bag. Suffolk taxpayers can save millions and service can be improved.

Let competition work, the taxpayers will be better served not only from a service standpoint but by reducing county spending. It's time to do the right thing.

And why not?

## Illusion creator

# Suffolk's professional ghost maker

A few years back a movie was popular with the kids that was called Ghostbusters. In Suffolk County we have few ghostbusters, but we do have a professional ghost-maker. He is Richard Amper, who created the illusion that Suffolk's water was in peril unless we developed a pine barrens.

Amper now has his pine barrens. Our water situation, which was never in peril, won't be any better or worse off. We may someday have a brand new South West Sewer District as Amper and crowd have to justify the taking of thousands of acres of land

off the tax rolls by selling and transporting this water to other parts of the Island. What a massive construction scheme this will be. It will make the South West Sewer District look like a kindergarten project.

This past week, Amper, flushed with success, zeroed in on the Suffolk County Airport which is now known as the Francis Gabreski Airport. In a media circus that he so well orchestrates, he charged that there are forces lurking behind the scrub oak trees plotting villainously to develop Gabreski Airport into a major jetport. He was rallying the forces to fight this illusionary proposal.

The timing for this media production is suspicious. It just so happens that many of the big-spending summer people, who have homes in Westhampton and Quogue, are here now. Needless to say, most of these homeowners enjoy the peace and quiet of eastern Long Island and would not be thrilled to have a commercial jetport in the vicinity of their summer homes. There are some who speculate the "jetport rally" was the opening volley in the start of another "cause," a fight against the threat of a jetport. Such fights cost money, and fund-raising efforts are sure to follow.

Our advice to our benevolent summer visitors: have short arms and deep pockets. To our knowledge there are no real active plans being discussed for the development of the Westhampton airport as a general aviation facility. Because the airport is there, the runways are in place, as they are in Calverton, there will always be talk about this development. This idle speculation will give people like Amper a rallying cry, but it should not be used as a fund-raising vehicle. There are too many other battles that are real to be faced.

And why not?