

L. I. Power Authority survives

Despite earlier rumors that Governor George Pataki was contemplating the death of the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA), wisely, Governor Pataki did not totally kill LIPA. That agency was formed for a very simple and pure purpose—an independent authority to be there, to act if utility rates accelerated beyond the point it is prudent to fund out of ratepayers' income.

The authority was to be a bully pulpit and have the ability to either take over or compete against LILCO, if necessary. LIPA was formed out of a grassroots movement that was born right here in the community room of Suffolk Life Newspapers. The original proponents worked diligently to establish a structure that would have kept politics out of this authority. As pure, meaningful and right

as it was in its initial purpose, it became bastardized by the politicians.

Governor Mario Cuomo took control of the authority. He stalled elections of members of LIPA's Board of Directors from the public-at-large. He used the authority as his toy. He handpicked the chairman, who was then obviously beholden to him. Over the last several years, he had Richard Kessell at the helm. Kessell had a reputation of being a political gadfly and saw himself as one day being the governor of the State of New York, or at least the county executive of Nassau, a position he unsuccessfully sought. Kessell used the chairmanship to further the goals of Cuomo and his own political ambitions rather than using the authority for its original mission.

Pataki originally announced that he planned to fold LIPA into the New York State Power Authority. NYPA has never fairly treated Long Island. Over the years, they have denied us low-cost power, favoring upstate New York and even states surrounding New York.

Suffolk Life raised a voice in protest. Pataki reconsidered and now, as a compromise, is recreating the board of LIPA. The majority, if not all, the board members will be from Long Island.

Suffolk County Republican Leader John Powell is expected to be influential in the selection of the chairman. He already has voiced support for former deputy county executive and Off Track Betting President Frank Jones, who was very involved over the years in the LILCO issue, including Shoreham. Jones is fiesty, does not easily give ground and would be a worthy opponent of LILCO and an advocate of the Long Island ratepayer.

Powell should also consider Babylon attorney Irving Like as a board member. Like currently is a member of the LIPA board. His involvement with LILCO and the atomic energy issue goes back to the late '60s when he asked the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), during the pre-licensing hearings, to consider evacuation. He explained to the hearing officers that Long Island was long and narrow, and only had three exits. The AEC commissioners responded by saying that they wouldn't study the evacuation issue until after the plant had been built. This decision led to a waste of \$15 billion and has been the catalyst for killing Long Island's once vibrant economy.

LIPA would be effective even with an appointed board, with the right people. The mechanism should be kept in place allowing for a competitive utility or the takeover of LILCO. Creating a new LIPA board is not the whole answer, however. Pataki must address the lack of consumer representation that is currently coming out of the New York State Public Service Commission. Competition for utilities is not only on the horizon, it is here now. The only thing stopping competition is the Public Service Commission and the establishment of fair and equitable wheeling rates that do not include the cost of utilities' power producing facilities.

Pataki should consider alternatives which might include a NYPA takeover of the generating facilities throughout the state, the sharing of costs and benefits on an equal basis from Niagara to Montauk and the elimination of taxes on the generation of electricity, to name just a few.

Long Island has been a big generator of taxes for the state government. We can be again in the future, if we are allowed to become more competitive by having competitive power. Without competitive power, businesses which would benefit from relocating here shy away, and the engines of business—small business—are not created.

It's up to Pataki. How he handles our high cost energy problem probably will determine his worth and effectiveness as a governor.

And why not?

It's a done deal

The Pine Barrens Comprehensive Plan has been passed by the town boards of three towns, Brookhaven, Southampton and Riverhead, and amidst a staged political victory gathering which included Governor George Pataki, has been signed into official status.

The political portion of this long, often controversial crusade is now over. The nitty-gritty of the implementation process, which will come head to head with the many questions that were left unanswered by political pressure to pass the legislation, will now be the focus of attention.

The arguments made to pressure town officials to approve the Pine Barrens Comprehensive Plan, despite the many questions that still remain unanswered about issues which could have a dramatic impact upon the future, have covered a lot of ground. Verbal promises, which offer no guarantees since they were not contained in the plan, must now be kept or broken.

Throughout the last hectic weeks of the approval process, proponents pointed the potential finger of blame at anyone who might dare to vote against the plan. The claim was that a "no" vote would be responsible for killing the pine barrens bill, and the wrath of the hard core environmentalists would surely follow. Efforts to have minimal changes in the law were refused, even though those changes sometimes involved only one word. We can't change the law, would be

the response, the law will be killed if we do. You must pass the law as it is currently written or you will be responsible for its death. "Trust us," was the cry.

The plan has now been passed. But despite the hoopla and declarations of victory on the part of the staunch proponents, the future success of the plan could be in much doubt unless unanswered questions are now answered, a sense of fairness is applied to those landowners who will be impacted, and there exists a willingness to change the law, if need be, to eliminate problems that will undoubtedly surface. The alternative is litigation. Unfortunately, we envision many lawsuits in the future, legal action which could well stall, or perhaps even kill, the dreams upon which the pine barrens proposal was built.

It would be a serious mistake for the members of the Pine Barrens Commission to get carried away with their power, and for the proponents to become drunk with their success. The plan has successfully gone through the "birth" process, but it has a long way to go before it matures to the point where its future survival is ensured. It is our hope that a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to accept the need for revision when necessary will prevail. Without it, last's week's plan passage celebration may be the only bright note in the pine barrens' future.

And why not?

Time to give

During July and August, our volunteer fire departments and ambulance organizations hold fund-raising drives. These drives or fund-raisers take the form of direct mail solicitations, door-to-door canvassing, open houses, barbecues and carnivals.

The volunteers ask the communities for donations to fund the social, fraternal and community endeavors that they are involved in. These volunteers give hundreds of hours of their time each year without direct compensation. They spend hours in training, retraining, practice and being prepared for the real thing. Hours that they may prefer to spend with their families or to pursue their leisure activities or advance their careers.

Why do they do it? They care about

you and me. They are the community. They put their efforts where their concern is. They willingly go into burning houses, inhale noxious smoke, jump from warm beds on cold nights to answer your call for help.

It may seem exciting to be racing down a street to a fire, but it isn't that glamorous when you read about the number of firemen injured in crashes or in the act of putting their life on the line for someone else.

Just last Father's Day, as we were finishing up our meal at our son's house, there was a tremendous crash outside. Within minutes, close to 100 fire and ambulance personnel had arrived. A young lady was pinned inside a car with no easy way to get her out. Using modern day tools and drawing on experiences learned from training and past accidents, the volunteers were able to dissect the car and safely extract her to the waiting volunteer ambulance core.

We could not help but wonder how many Father's Day dinners were disrupted. How proud their kids must feel to know that their Mom and Dad were willing to disrupt their party so that they could help save someone's life.

When the volunteer fire department or ambulance corps solicits you for a donation, please don't hesitate. Dig deep. Every dollar helps to show we care about our volunteers, we love them.

Thanks, gals and guys. We are a lot safer and better off because you are the community and willingly volunteer to serve.

And why not?

Sometimes we win one

For several years, Suffolk Life has taken the lead, editorialized and promoted a single day vote on school budgets and election of trustees.

The New York State Assembly and Senate, in the closing hours of the 1995 session, approved this measure. Governor Pataki is expected to sign it into law.

Senator Kenneth LaValle has sponsored this legislation for several years, and earns applause for his determination to get it passed.

Under the current system, each district had the latitude of establishing its own voting date. This created confusion and resulted in poor voter turnout. Having all school districts on Long Island vote on the same day will draw widespread attention to this important vote and, hopefully, a larger turnout of voters at the polls.

Sixty to seventy percent of Long Islanders' real estate tax bills are comprised of budgeted expenses by the local school boards. Yet, in some dis-

tricts, as little as 100 people show up at the polls. With all districts having to make their presentations on the same day, it will be a lot easier for the press to zero in on the importance of these elections and encourage widespread voter turnout.

This has been a several year campaign by this publication. It's nice to win one once in a while.

And why not?

Why no Assembly sponsor?

Two weeks ago, we again proposed the state take over mandatory education for our students. A state takeover of the basic core curriculum that leads to a Regents diploma would wipe out up to 60% of our real estate tax burden.

The state would provide the facilities, the teachers and the administration. Throughout the state, local school boards would remain in control of local districts, but they only would offer extra curricula or enhanced curriculum that was approved by the voters in the districts.

Currently, state aid ranges between 39% and 42% of the average Long Island budget. State mandates requiring a quality, basic education cost the district between 44% and 48%. The balance of the budget is made up of electives chosen by the local school board, over which voters

have no input. Once placed in the budget by the board, those costs become part of the budget and must be offered whether the budget passes or fails. If there were a state takeover, administrations could be consolidated, educators hired by the state rather than by the local districts. The cost of meeting this quality education would be close to what is spent by the state on education right now. If there were a difference it could be made up on a state-wide, broad-based tax. This proposal makes sense and cries out to be addressed.

As we mentioned in our earlier editorial, Senator Kenneth LaValle had proposed legislation in the past which would accomplish this proposal. Earlier in the year, we inquired about it and were told that it had not been submitted. When the

editorial appeared, Senator LaValle cried foul. He claimed he had resubmitted the legislation.

We received a copy of the legislation last week and, indeed, he had submitted it for consideration. No, not in January, when serious legislation is normally submitted. It was not submitted until May. It didn't even have a companion Assembly bill. A representative from his office claimed it was very hard to get any support for this measure. We find this a bit incredulous.

The one issue every Long Islander outside of the educational establishment has been talking about, pleading for, is relief from school taxes. At every legislative hearing or open forum we have attended, this demand by residents is brought up. A disproportionate number

of letters to Suffolk Life bring up the high cost of real estate taxes and, specifically, the 60% to 70% of their taxes going to meet educational costs. The entire educational system, specifically its quality and financing, cries out for attention and reform.

LaValle's bill is a good starting point. It needs some refinement, but what it needs more than anything else is support from the public. It is a common concept that the Democratic Party in the State of New York is owned lock, stock and barrel by the educational establishment. The educational establishment's unions are the most powerful in the state. They are highly organized, very vocal, have a large contingent of lobbyists and, at a moment's notice, can call the educational troops into war whenever their fiefdom is being threatened by citizen involvement or even common sense.

New York State residents, not only Long Islanders, are finding it increasingly difficult to be able to afford to continue to live here. The pain and the ills of living on Long Island have spread upstate. The teachers' unions up there have used the rallying cry of parity to increase the wage scales and lower the work load.

Just like here on Long Island, good, middle income families and those on fixed incomes have given up their discretionary buying power to increased school taxes, and are being forced to move in order to survive.

People across the state are asking why are we paying the equivalent of college tuitions to educate grade-school children. In fact, it is not only tuition, but in many colleges you could throw in room and board and the cost would be less than what we spend on a five-year-old kindergarten student.

The way the laws are currently set up, the educational unions have all the cards stacked in their favor. School boards are supposed to represent not only the children but the taxpayers.

The Long Island Business News, in a five-part series on education, reported that 75% of the school board members here on Long Island have either direct or indirect ties to the educational establishment. These included teachers and administrators, husbands and wives of those involved in setting policy and wage scales that directly affect their own incomes.

We have often heard that the culprit is mandates. Yes, they do play a part. At this juncture, we say the percentage of state aid is close enough to the percentage of state mandates for the state to take over the educational establishment. Constitutionally, it is the state's responsibility to provide education. It is not up to the counties, the towns or their subdivisions, the school districts.

LaValle's bill addresses the subject foursquare. Which Democratic Assembly person wants to break rank with the Democratic leadership and the educational unions to offer the Assembly support for this bill? Why not all Democratic Assembly people from Long Island, joining forces? Why not have all of Long Island's Republican senators stand up and be counted? We are sure once upstate, Assembly people and senators present the ramifications of this measure to their residents and taxpayers, they would be encouraged to jump aboard the bill too.

LaValle's bill is Senate 5178. If you are fed up with having 60% to 70% of your real estate tax bill going for education, if you want it reduced by this amount, phone, write, fax or E-Mail your own senators and Assembly people today. Include Governor George Pataki on your list. He needs to hear from you too.

And why not?

Sharing natural resources

Ask any Long Islander what is our best natural resource. They will tell you, "our beaches."

Ask any Floridian what is the best natural resource they have and they will enthusiastically tell you, "our beaches." How can two states whose residents answer the same question the same way be so far apart? It's a mind-set, that's all.

In Florida, most beaches are open to all residents. There is no permit system. There aren't any "No Trespassing" signs. Cars are free to pull up wherever there is water. Residents and visitors alike are welcome guests.

Florida business people know that open access to the beaches brings tourists and draws residents from inland to these natural wonders. This means good business and good government. Everybody has the opportunity to enjoy the natural resources and, in doing so, they do business in the area, creating jobs and opportunities.

Here on Long Island, visitors are greeted with "No Parking" and "No Trespassing" signs. What few public beaches there are, are controlled by the towns and villages. The state has beaches at Jones, Robert Moses and Montauk. The county has a few beaches, but most are controlled by the local municipalities. Residents, for a reasonable fee, are able to obtain a seasonal parking permit. On some town beaches, non-residents are able to gain access by paying an exorbitant fee that is often beyond the disposable income of families and senior citizens. Kids are denied the pleasure of roaming the beaches and swimming.

Residents in towns such as Huntington, Smithtown, Riverhead and Southold are denied the use of ocean beaches. Likewise, residents of East Hampton, Southampton, Islip and Babylon cannot avail themselves of the very different and unique waters of the Long Island Sound. Residents of Shelter Island are just plain out of luck and only have bay beaches to enjoy.

Isn't this stupid? Why are we denying our neighbors from our adjoining towns the use of our natural resources? Why are we denying our residents the ability to use these different and unique resources?

For over 25 years, Suffolk Life has editorialized about this foolhardiness. We have heard from many residents on

both sides of the Island who are in support of a sharing concept. It would not take any huge amount of work to set up a reciprocal agreement. It is a no-brainer.

The town boards would only have to pass a simple resolution allowing reciprocal rights for an adjoining town. It still could be done for this season. It could be tried as an experiment. We doubt that it would cause any overcrowding, and it

would heighten the ability of all residents to use Long Island as a shared natural resource.

Why not Babylon, Huntington and Smithtown and Islip and the five East End towns? Join in three reciprocal agreements. Try it—you may like it, and it won't cost anybody any more taxes. Let's share our natural resources for the good of all residents.

And why not?

Lawyers win again

As residents of Suffolk County and ratepayers of LILCO, we have already been stung with paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to attorneys involved in tax assessment suits by the utility against the governments.

Now, we are investing more tax money in legal fees over the Suffolk car leasing fiasco and the finger pointing by the Suffolk County Legislature and the District Attorney's Office.

The investigation ordered by the Suffolk County Legislature, conducted by attorney Laura Brevetti, cost county taxpayers, at last count, about \$426,000. The three-volume Brevetti report, measuring about 5.5 inches high, looked at the car leasing deal, conducted numerous interviews, and found a number of questionable happenings, but no indictable illegalities.

The District Attorney's Office sought another investigation, this one probing the actions of Suffolk County legislators in opposing the car lease agreement. District Attorney James Catterson, whose son is deputy county attorney and a key figure in developing the leasing agreement, appealed to Acting State Supreme Court Justice Michael Mullen to name a special prosecutor to handle the probe. Initially, Mullen named Nassau District Attorney Dennis Dillon, who later stepped down. Then he appointed attorney Joseph Ryan as special prosecutor.

County legislators voted to have the \$250,000 preliminary cost of Ryan's investigation taken from the District Attorney's budget, further inflaming relations between Catterson and legislators. Then

Ryan sent a bill for an additional \$90,000, which legislators refused to pay. They wanted documentation for the additional cost, and Ryan refused to give it, insisting the information is "confidential" because it would reveal whom his investigation has been interviewing. Ryan went to Judge Mullen, who last week ordered the county to pay the \$90,000. That brings the unfinished Ryan probe cost up to \$44,000, with undoubtedly more to come.

On top of this, Governor George Pataki has given the go-ahead for a state investigation into charges made by legislators and other county officials that the district attorney has used pressure and unethical tactics, including threats of investigations. The cost of this investigation is not yet known.

These are our tax dollars that are being squandered. We doubt that the outcome of either investigation will be worth the paper it is written on and definitely not the almost million dollars it cost.

Why do we allow ourselves to squander money so foolishly? Isn't there a better way to investigate and determine any official wrongdoing before we get involved with the attorneys and their billable hours? How much good could have been done with the million dollars these attorneys will reap for themselves?

Why should it always be the public that has to pick up the bill for both sides of every argument? Isn't this incompetent government? Shouldn't those who squander our money so easily be removed from office?

And why not?

Bad partnerships don't

Good partnerships seldom work

In a last ditch effort to shore up his crumbling empire, hold-over Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) Chairman Richard Kessel is attempting to draw Suffolk and Nassau County governments into a partnership with LIPA for the take-over of LILCO.

Kessel was Governor Mario Cuomo's Consumer Affairs commissioner. He was Cuomo's hand-picked tool as director of LIPA. Cuomo used LIPA as a political toy. LIPA, which once had the potential of controlling LILCO or taking it over, became marred with the Kessel image. Kessel was best known as a gadfly, a lot of huff and puff, but not much energy. The concept of LIPA was bastardized by Cuomo.

The creators of LIPA had envisioned a politically-free entity. LIPA was created to have a board of directors that would be elected by the ratepayers, and whose election would be held after the political parties had exhausted their manpower and their finances on the general election.

Cuomo would not allow the directors to be elected. He reserved that power for himself and then manipulated the authority for his own political agenda.

When George Pataki became governor, Kessel lost his job as Consumer Affairs commissioner. Although encouraged to resign as LIPA chairman, he did not have the good grace to do so.

Pataki, in frustration, resorted to eliminating LIPA's budget. Now Kessel, through LIPA, in a last gasp attempt to stay alive, initiated a LILCO take-over. The board of directors of LILCO said, 'No thank you, we do not care to discuss your plan.' Pataki responded by saying that he is putting together a state-wide energy plan and that he intends to restructure LIPA and its board. Kessel will be out by September 1.

Having run into a brick wall with

LILCO, not being able to count on the state for support, Kessel now is desperately trying to drag both counties into a financial commitment that would be the biggest financial undertaking ever proposed for either county.

Even here, honesty and forthrightness is not forthcoming. Kessel wants both counties to sign onto the concept without revealing who is the "secret partner" LIPA claims they have to operate the utility. Kessel claims security laws preclude the announcement of this secret partner.

What if this partner turns out to be the mob? What if it turns out to be the Tokyo Utility Company looking for a utility in the United States that it can milk? Ludicrous? Yes, but look at the history of Long Island's energy crisis. Remember Bokum Ridge and mob infiltration in the Shoreham fiasco? Remember LILCO estimating Shoreham's cost at \$250 million and then spending \$5.5 billion? Remember "energy too cheap to meter" and when the plug was pulled on Shoreham it was estimated oil would have to be \$55 a barrel for energy pro-

duced at Shoreham to be competitive? Oil today, by the way, is still under \$20 a barrel. This kind of deal that will commit every Long Islander's future cannot be done in secrecy.

Richie has honed his skills as an orator. He could probably even consider a career as a lobbyist, but we don't see Richie's future very promising as the head of the Long Island Power Authority.

Give it up, Richie. Enjoy what is left of the summer.

And why not?

An old idea might work

Several times during the '70s and '80s, during our involvement with the Shoreham issue, we proposed that it become the state's responsibility to generate electricity. The state, in fact, is in the energy generating business right now.

The New York Power Authority (NYPA) has electrical generating facilities throughout the state. Most of the power generated by the state is sold upstate to utilities. Some is provided in the form of low cost power to municipalities and school districts in upstate areas. Some is even sold out of state to utilities that border on New York State.

Long Island traditionally has been denied this less expensive power. We only receive a small portion, a disproportionate share in comparison to what the upstate region receives.

During the hearings held by the Shoreham Commission, of which I was a commissioner, I listened to extensive testimony on the entire energy picture for the state. It became very clear that for a single utility such as LILCO, to undertake mammoth generating plants that were proposed at

that time, would require a cost that would be prohibitive and anti-competitive.

Would it not make more sense for the state to assume full responsibility for either generating or importing less expensive power, and distributing it at a flat rate throughout the state to the local utilities? Local utilities, then freed of the huge cost of creating generating facilities, can transport, distribute and market the electricity to the customer. The blended costs of producing the electricity could be equally shared between upstate and downstate.

Rates for wheeling, distribution and transportation would be set by the Public Service Commission. They would be uniform throughout the state, and utilities would be forced to live within their statewide restraints. They would not be guaranteed a rate of return, they would have to earn it.

If we cannot produce electricity competitively here in New York State, NYPA could import electricity from more competitive regions. This would put NYPA's workforce in competition with other utilities. This competition would force a

streamlining of the operations and force them to be productive or be underemployed.

If the cost of generating electricity was equally pro-rated, Long Island immediately would see a reduction in the cost of electricity. This proposal should be seriously considered, particularly while there is still active talk about the possible takeover of LILCO.

Governor George Pataki is in the process of formulating an energy plan not only for Long Island, but the state, and it would be wise for his energy gurus to look at this old idea. It had merit then; it has merit today.

Wall Street initially opposed the idea because they saw utilities and the responsibilities for generating power as cash cows. With the advent of competition, the changes in federal rulings and the Public Service Commission being forced to look at competition, utilities are no longer a guaranteed safe bet for investors.

The opportunity is now. The time is now. Let's explore these possibilities that can bring relief to Long Island ratepayers.

And why not?

Finally, one for the good guys

Many neighborhoods are plagued by private waste disposal, composting or transfer station operations that violate local zoning regulations but are able to operate because of ludicrous actions by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

What usually occurs is a private facility will spring up, most often in violation of zoning requirements, and disposal operations begin. The firm submits an application to the DEC for a permit to operate. As long as that permit is making its way through the long delayed permitting process, the firm has the green light to operate. In many instances, efforts by towns to close down such operations, which usually create many problems within the neighborhoods where they are located, are stalled because the state process has precedence. If in the DEC permit process the first step was adherence to local zoning requirements, and a town sign-off on the project was required, the problems would end almost immediately.

State legislation recently approved in the New York State Assembly, sponsored by Assemblyman Fred Thiele (R-Bridgehampton), would go a long way toward resolving this problem.

The legislation adopted by the Assembly would subject private solid waste facility permits to the same stringent

conditions as municipal applications. Specifically, no permit for a private facility could be considered complete or granted unless it was consistent with the local solid waste management plan, according to Thiele. "The effect of this legislation would be to take the final decision for the approval of solid waste management facilities away from the state DEC and return authority to the towns where it belongs," Thiele said. To which we add, Right On!

The legislation, Thiele notes, would have a number of beneficial effects on solid waste planning. "First, it obviously will prevent the siting of solid waste facilities in the middle of residential communities like East Moriches, where they do not belong. However, the bill does much more than that. It protects local government's home rule control over land use decisions. It also allows towns to say 'no' to the importation of garbage from outside their community."

Thiele's mention of East Moriches targets an ongoing controversy over the odor-ridden Long Island Compost Facility. LI Compost, Inc., has been operating its facility without a permit and pursuant to a consent order in recent months. The facility is currently subject to an ongoing permit application. The East Moriches community strongly protested the permit application and has been joined by Thiele,

who submitted testimony calling for an Environmental Impact Statement, enforcement of the existing consent order, and eventual closure of the facility.

Opposition by residents is based on foul and noxious odors from the facility and its close proximity to a residential neighborhood, school, church and nursing home. The permit process has been adjourned until November, which means residents will be forced to suffer through the hot summer. The lack of action by the DEC to resolve this problem has so angered Congressman Mike Forbes that he has called for the ouster of DEC Regional Director Ray Cowan.

While Thiele's legislation passed in the Assembly, he reports it is pending in the New York State Senate, where we certainly hope it will also gain approval.

The DEC is not the only place where common sense seems to be missing when dealing with illegal operations. The court system is a close second, in fact sometimes far out in front. Violations for multiple unit housing violations are usually stalled in the courts, and when action is finally taken it amounts to a slap on the wrist fine which does nothing but become added to the cost of doing business, illegal or not.

A recent mind boggling instance of a court action which gives credence to an il-

legal transfer station operation deals with a tract of land in the Medford area. The land, owned by a Florida resident, is leased by local residents who began clearing the trees and brush from the property. The site then became the dumping ground for huge piles of brush, trees, stumps, construction and demolition material, bags of leaves, chunks of concrete, and, according to town officials, garbage.

Acting upon complaints from angered residents of the area, the town went to court to secure a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) to stop the dumping. A second Supreme Court judge revised the TRO which allows, until sometime in August, the continued dumping of this material on a site for which no permits or proper town approval has been given. What we have in this instance is a court giving approval for the continuance of an illegal operation. Aren't courts suppose to be upholding the laws, rather than assisting the lawbreakers?

The good guys don't always win in matters of this kind. Thiele's legislation, and perhaps an inclusion that would prevent courts from coddling the breakers of the laws, would at least level the playing field. It's time the good guys--the innocent public that suffers the consequences while those who break the laws profit--get fair and honest treatment.

And why not?

Good government is convenient

Few of us disagree with the concept of cars being regularly checked for safety and emission controls. Currently, local car repair shops and automotive dealers, licensed by the state, check cars using very expensive emission control devices. The system works. Undoubtedly, there are a few shops that bend the rules, but they are few and far between.

Small business people, entrepreneurs, have invested tens of thousands of dollars in this equipment to inspect the cars. If they fail the inspection, they tell the motorist what must be done to bring the car up to standard. They offer their services. The customers are free to go elsewhere for other estimates. It's a buyer's market.

Last week, hearings were held in Suffolk County on a leftover Cuomo proposal to create 10 to 12 super inspection sites for all of Long Island. They would be run by big business.

They would be licensed by the state. These super centers, by everyone's estimation, would become a gridlock, a nightmare, causing long waits and a waste of energy.

Consumers, law abiding residents of the state trying to comply with the regulations, would not be able to have their cars repaired at these testing sites. If they failed the inspection, they would have to take the car to some other shop, have the repairs done, return to the state system, wait in line again and have their car re-inspected. The cost right now for an inspection is \$19. The state gets \$4 of this as a fee or a tax. The small business owner receives \$15 for the labor and the cost of equipment, overhead and profit. It is estimated that the cost of an inspection at a super station site could cost up to \$50.

The state would only inspect once every two years. Currently, inspections are required on an annual basis. The

two-year span between inspections means that cars that become defective with potential safety and emission problems would be on the road 12 months longer than under the current system.

Just about everybody--motorists, small business people and even savvy politicians--are opposed to this plan. Why fix the current system if it ain't broke? Who would be the beneficiary of these super sites? How would the contracts be awarded? What jobs will they create versus what jobs will they displace? Will the owners be New York

State taxpayers or an out-of-state corporation, milking our precious resources? Will the air be any cleaner with two-year inspections versus one-year inspections? Will more lives be lost because equipment important to safety was not detected as defective for 12 months longer than the current system allows?

This is a bad idea, a bad proposal. Governor George Pataki should scrap it. It wasn't good for Cuomo, and it is not good for Pataki or the residents of New York State.

And why not?

Juice for layoffs

During Governor Mario Cuomo's terms of office, a slogan was developed that proclaimed, "Juice for Jobs." Big businesses were awarded cheap electrical rates based on the premise that these businesses would keep and create jobs. One of Long Island's major beneficiaries was Newsday. Newsday received two separate grants giving them thousands of kilowatts of low cost, subsidized electricity, juice, for about four cents per kilowatt hour.

Within a short span of time, after the second allocation, Newsday announced a downsizing, they were cutting their staff by 600. We didn't expect a whimper out of the governor's office as Newsday was Governor Cuomo's cheerleader on Long Island. And there was no whimper.

Last Saturday, Newsday closed down New York Newsday. Mark Willes, the chief executive officer of the LA Times, the parent company, said this was just business, folks. The bottom line dictated that he close the paper down and terminate the 800 people employed there.

The new CEO of the Times Mirror, Willes, is a number cruncher. He is all

business; the bottom line is the only thing that counts. As a publisher, we dread the closing of any newspaper. Newspapers are more than a business, but for survival, there must be business first. Willes is tightening the belt in all Times Mirror operations.

Rumors coming out of Newsday are that they will cut another 600 positions at Long Island Newsday. This brings us to the point: how can Newsday justify accepting the subsidy of cheap electricity while downsizing and laying off people? How can the Pataki administration allow this fraud to continue?

The bottom line is Newsday is not creating jobs, they are eliminating them. They do not deserve and should not continue to be given preferential treatment, cheap electricity subsidized by all other ratepayers.

Willes should understand this, it's the bottom line that counts. If you can't produce profits and jobs, you are not entitled to the subsidy. That's just good business.

And why not?

Dealing with pigs

"It would be nice to see Long Island's beauty without all its trash. I've traveled by car in many places and outside some areas of the big cities, Long Island has the trashiest roads I have seen."

So said a Suffolk Life reader in a recent letter, urging Suffolk Life to call attention to the growing litter problem. While our reader is right about some areas of the county, the same cannot be said about other sectors where conscientious citizens volunteer their time to keep various roadways litter-free. Were it not for those volunteers, and their dedication, the litter problem would be much worse.

The fact remains, however, that many of our roadways have become the dumping grounds for an assortment of debris, discarded household items, branches and construction garbage. It is an unfortunate fact of life that there exist among us those who have so little concern for others that they willfully dump their garbage along the roads. Unfortunately, too few are caught in the act.

It is absolutely amazing that with all the expressed concerns about open space and pristine environmental values, we as a citizenry, do not declare war on those who would destroy the scenic quality of the areas in which we live. Much of the open land acreage that we insist upon winds up the home of huge piles of garbage.

Our letter writer suggested we encourage our readers to send us pictures of places made especially ugly by litter and dumped garbage. The idea has merit. The writer suggested several locations that qualify for such a designation, including the exit and entry ramps at Exit 71 on the Long Island Expressway, long sections of the Sunrise Highway, North Ocean Avenue and Old Nicholls Road. There are many, many other locations that also qualify. So, we invite our readers to send us photographs of the ugliest litter and debris dumped locations they happen upon. We will publish as many of

these photos as we can, space permitting.

It is our hope that the towns and the county will share in this effort to restore scenic beauty to our lives by creating cleanup crews, through the county's workfare program or the once-heralded but not often seen today Sheriff's Department program which utilized prisoners for road cleanup efforts. The photos sent by our readers should help in this cleanup effort by calling attention to the ugly spots.

Cleaning up the impact of dumpers is only part of the overall solution, however. Getting tough on those who wantonly discard garbage and debris is a must. Tougher laws, including forcing those convicted of such actions to clean up such areas, are necessary. Violators should be forced to wear bright pink attire so they are readily identified as the pigs they are.

And why not?

'Give us a break'

Identifying drunk drivers

It's sad to say, but the vast majority of drivers at one time or another have had too much to drink to drive. Most are lucky. They avoid an accident or being pulled over by the police.

Unfortunately, too many people who drive repeat the same mistake. Under the current law, when they are apprehended they face a large fine, legal costs and mandatory schooling. All told, the costs can be as high as \$15,000 for a first offense. Insurance premiums double, not only for the car but for the boat, homeowner's coverage and, in some cases, business insurance. Those arrested suffer humiliation. This is generally enough to make people believers, and if they are going to drink outside of their homes, to have designated drivers or to take a taxi home.

There is a small part of the population who are not affected by costs or disgrace. They go through second, third and more offenses. Although technically, after the third DWI they are considered felons and subject to hard jail time, rarely are they sent away unless they are involved in a fatality.

A Nassau County judge recently sentenced a convicted, repeat offender to install a sign on the rear of his car stating that he was a convicted drunk driver. A higher court threw out the sentence, deeming it too harsh. The humiliation of being self-identified was considered cruel and unusual punishment.

Give us a break! This driver was knowingly and deliberately thwarting the law. They pose a danger to them-

selves and anyone else on the roads. They are convicted of being a repeated drunk driver, a danger and a menace to society. How does their humiliation stack up against the loss and pain of a child or a surviving spouse or parent of the death of a loved one by a drunk driver? Think how a good, law abiding citizen must feel being condemned to a life in a wheelchair because he or she were the victim of a drunk driver? How would that judge feel about lying in bed a vegetable for the rest of his life because someone said 'The hell with the law, the hell with the courts and the hell with the safety of my fellowman.'

Every convicted, repeat drunk driver should be clearly identified, tattooed and labeled for life.

And why not?