

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Is There Life After LIPA?

This week, LILCO and the supporters of the LIPA deal sent out a barrage of mailings predominantly aimed at senior citizens and localized taxpayers. The mailings are intended not to convey honest information but to create fear and panic. They are a desperate effort by desperate people who have a lot to gain financially off the backs of the innocent on Long Island.

One of the nastiest mailings sent out uses a scare tactic suggesting that if the deal does not go through, homeowners in specific communities will face hundreds or thousands of dollars in increased property taxes in order to satisfy the certiorari awards that LILCO has won. This is pure bull, taking dishonesty to the nth degree.

The Suffolk County Legislature has proposed to keep the expiring quarter percent sales tax in place and use these funds to pay down the certiorari judgment. This is a viable alternative to the proposed LIPA plan. The certiorari award represents money ratepayers have paid in taxes. It's theirs, not LILCO's. These overpayments belong to the ratepayers.

The Public Service Commission should require LILCO to return this money to the people it belongs to. LILCO is only the middleman. The company assessed the taxes to the ratepayers and have an equal responsibility to return these funds to the ratepayers.

With the certiorari award out of the way, the deal has little appeal. The liabilities far outweigh the advantages. Without

the deal, LILCO/BUG will be forced to compete. Electrical rates will be forced down!

Public Service Commissions in California and Massachusetts have ordered the utilities within their states to freeze electrical rates now, to competitively recover what they can of their stranded investments, like Shoreham, and what they have not been able to recover by December 31, 2001, the stockholders will be forced to absorb.

As of January 1, 2002, all customers will be free to buy their energy from the lowest cost producer. Utilities can only charge for the production of power and the transmission costs. They no longer will be able to saddle ratepayers with paying for outdated and noncompetitive power plants. The California and Massachusetts models are in the process of being adopted nationwide.

The New York State Public Service Commission has ordered every other utility except LILCO to prepare for competition. Instead of preparing to compete, LILCO is preparing to lock the ratepayers into a 40-year mortgage. Why not include LILCO? What is the PSC afraid of?

LIPA is a public authority. As an authority, it has no responsibility to people, only to Wall Street and its financial interest. Its board members are appointed, not elected, as originally designed in state legislation.

As an authority, LIPA is above and beyond the law. This entity, without direct

input from either ratepayers or voters will be controlling our destiny into the future. Is this what you want? Is this deal best for us or is it best for Wall Street?

Governor Cuomo entered into a deal with LILCO in 1987 that guaranteed LILCO's rates for three years. The legality of this deal is being seriously questioned. Some legal scholars say the deal was illegal because it was not approved by the legislature. They suggest that Cuomo exceeded the powers of his office. If this proves to be true, LILCO has no contract to recover its stranded investment in Shoreham.

Would a suit to determine the legality of the Cuomo/Catocinos deal be expensive? Sure, it will run into millions of dollars. But, when you consider there are a thousand million dollars in a billion dollars and the LIPA deal, as proposed, will cost the ratepayers \$23 billion, a couple of million dollars is pocket change by comparison.

We believe one of the reasons Pataki is pushing the LIPA deal is that he fears a lawsuit over his predecessors' actions. His fears are being exacerbated by Wall Street interests who would see their stack of cards come tumbling down if the

ratepayers are not saddled with bailing out the whole scheme.

If there ever was a course or an issue that requires the residents of Long Island to stand up in a united fight, it is the proposed LIPA deal.

Unfortunately, outside of *Suffolk Life*, the media has been silent on the ramifications of this deal. Ratepayers have not had the benefit of knowing the pros and cons and now LILCO and LIPA are attempting to put their own spin on the deal through fear and distortion.

The public should not tolerate this kind of dishonesty. There is too much at stake and the stakes are too high for the average ratepayer.

We urge you to use the coupons at the bottom of this page or write to Assembly Speaker Silver, congratulate him for having the courage not to be steam-rollered. Write to Governor Pataki and encourage him to reevaluate the plan and stop depending upon his "closed circle" of advisors, who may not be giving him the truth.

It's time for all of us to do our part or pay for consequences that will greatly impact the lives of our grandchildren.

And why not?

**Clip And Send Today**



**Governor George E. Pataki**  
**Executive Chamber**  
**The State Capitol**  
**Albany, NY 12224**

Dear Governor Pataki:

As a ratepayer in Suffolk County, I am greatly disturbed that your advisors continue to inform you that the proposed LILCO-LIPA deal will benefit me. It is difficult enough dealing with having the highest electric rates in the country. Strapping me and my grandchildren with the additional cost of a bailout is just not fair.

My Name Is: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assemblyman Sheldon Silver**  
**Speaker of the Assembly**  
**Room 932 LOB**  
**Albany, New York 12248**

Dear Speaker Silver:

I am pleased that you refused to allow the ratepayers of Long Island to be taken advantage of in the proposed LILCO-LIPA deal. I am, however, concerned that the Democratic representatives in the Assembly will buckle under the pressure from Wall Street and many of our political leaders.

My Name Is: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Gaffney Tax Hike

County Executive Robert Gaffney negotiated a contract with Association of Municipal Employees (AME), the largest municipal county employees' union. Gaffney granted over \$35 million in raises.

The legislature rightfully asked Gaffney where he was going to get the money. He and his staff did not come up with the answer. Before approving the contract, the legislature developed a plan for cutting expenditure by \$28 million to fund this contract. It voted those cuts into law, and, predicated upon the acceptance of these cuts, voted to approve the AME increase.

Last week, Gaffney vetoed the spending cut bill that would have funded the majority of this increase.

Fortunately, earlier this week, the legislature had enough gumption to override Gaffney, and voted to implement those budget cuts which put restrictions on spending and hiring.

Gaffney claims the budget cuts are "illusory," but has given no indication of how he intended to fund this projected shortfall. Without the \$28 million budgetary cutback in current spending, there is almost a guarantee that the county's portion of everyone's real estate tax will increase. The last time this happened, Patrick Halpin was county executive and

the uproar led to his defeat.

Unfortunately, Gaffney has turned out to be a weak financial manager. He has been bailed out from past blunders by a recovering economy. Unfortunately, Suffolk County is not enjoying the kind of robust growth that would be necessary to make up any shortfall that Gaffney has created.

The legislature acted responsibly, but the county executive has acted like he is in never-never land. Suffolk County has other serious financial problems that Gaffney is all but ignoring. The taxpayers are almost guaranteed to get clobbered this coming December. Unfortunately, many Suffolk County taxpayers are just holding on by a thread. A large increase in their real estate tax burden may well push them over the edge.

Gaffney's veto of the legislative cuts was irresponsible and imprudent. Gaffney may be thinking that he can bail out before the next election and become a judge, the usual route for "has been" politicians. Even if the hierarchy of the Republican Party would give in to his wish, he still has to face the voters and they would have a right to question what kind of judge he would be if he has made such poor decisions as an elected official.

And why not?



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## LIPA, Worst Case Scenario

The Suffolk County Legislature released a damning and damaging report compiled by two respected utility consulting firms on the LIPA takeover plan.

In a bipartisan action, the Suffolk County Legislature invested \$200,000 to have this report prepared. It invested your tax dollars because the legislature wanted the truth. The two firms that compiled the report are from out of state. They were not given direction. The legislature was willing to let the facts and the truth speak for themselves.

is that the plan is a "worst case scenario" for the ratepayers of Long Island. Actual savings will be less than could be achieved right now if the Public Service Commission's order for a 5% rate reduction had been implemented and the synergies from the BUG/LILCO merger were implemented.

The consultants back up two recently released legal studies that found that LILCO does not necessarily have either the right or the ability to recover their stranded investment on Shoreham. LILCO neither has a contract nor a consti-

tutional right to recover all of this investment. The company gambled when it built the nuclear plant and it should be made to bear the brunt of this bad investment.

Ratepayers do not necessarily have an obligation, by law, to bail a utility out of a bad investment. The Public Service Commission has retained the right to change the perimeters of the infamous Cuomo deal as well as the rates that will be affected by competition and other factors over the 30 years of that Shoreham deal.

If LIPA now buys out LILCO, there will be a binding contract between LIPA and LILCO to repay the entire Shoreham investment.

LIPA is an authority that is not elected and has no responsibility to the people. As an authority, LIPA is beyond the law or control of the ratepayers. The only people LIPA will have an obligation to is the bondholders, and it is legally obligated to recover the cost of the bonds with interest. Regardless of competition or economic realities, LIPA will be required to set rates to protect the bondholders' investment.

The net result from the LIPA deal, according to the report, is that you will pay at least \$50 per month before you buy a nickel's worth of electricity. And you will make this payment each month for the next 40 years.

The deal that LIPA has cooked up with LILCO guarantees that LILCO will continue to operate the company and supply electricity without any of the safeguards that are provided by the Public Service Commission.

When we first started to write about the deal, we did so in an attempt to get answers to the questions and to inform you, our readers, of what the benefits and the liabilities would be under the deal.

As the information has come out, it

has painted a very dark and desperate picture for the people of Long Island. We will be entrapped in a lifelong financial scenario that we will never have a way of getting out from under. Our electrical rates are almost guaranteed to be the highest in the continental United States for the next 40 years.

The deal precludes Long Island from ever seeing the benefits of competition. For 15 years, we would guarantee to pay all the operating costs of LILCO's generating plants, whether we buy its electricity or not. It's like buying a house that you find you dislike. You can't stand living in it, but you can't sell it.

It is unfortunate that Governor Pataki allowed himself to get so badly sucked into this scenario. Up to this point, he has been a decent governor. We are sure that if he was given the right information, the right reports to read, he would back off in his support. He is far too intelligent a man not to see the subterfuge and the unfairness.

Somebody has to get to him, and the only person we know who has an open line is Suffolk County Republican Chairman John Powell. If Powell does not get to Pataki and warn him of the devastation this plan will cause, then Powell will have failed as a leader. As the governor will, Powell will go down in flames in Suffolk County.

This issue is too big and has too lasting an effect to be left in the hands of the politicians. We encourage you to write and speak to your county legislators. Attend the four public hearings they will be holding next month. Do the same with your assembly and senate representatives, and be sure to write to Governor Pataki, again.

And why not?

## Hold Insurance

### Companies Accountable

A bill recently passed the assembly, A598A, and is awaiting action in the senate, S486-A. The bill, if enacted into law, will make insurance companies accountable to policy holders and people who have been injured by policy holders.

The bill requires that insurance companies reimburse injured parties who sue by awarding legal fees and punitive damages when it is found that the insurance companies have not lived up to their obligations.

Under current law, insurance companies have the right to say, "We are not going to pay, even though there is an obligation and responsibility."

In many instances, the amounts sought to be recovered are not substantial enough to pay for the high cost of legal fees. Most people do not have attorneys on retainer and can ill afford to pay the legal fees necessary to recover what is rightfully theirs. When they are successful in winning these cases, there is no automatic mechanism that requires the bel-

ligerent insurance companies to reimburse the litigants for their legal costs.

The assembly has passed a bill requiring insurance companies to settle claims within six months or face the penalties if a litigant sues and is successful.

The senate is holding up action on this bill. Senate Majority Leader Bruno is reported to be beholden to the insurance companies. It is alleged that they are heavy contributors to the Senate Campaign Financing Committee.

If Bruno can't act on behalf of the people of New York State, then he doesn't deserve to be senate majority leader and maybe we shouldn't have a Republican senate.

Bruno has a choice to make. Let the bill out of committee for the people, or keep the bill bottled up for the insurance companies. The choice is his, but you have the final say when senators LaValle, Lack, Trunzo, Johnson and Marcellino run for reelection a year from this November.

And why not?

## Governor's Lost Touch

We were amused earlier this week when we received a press release from the executive chambers in Albany. Governor Pataki sent a one-line message stating, "The people of Long Island know the LILCO-LIPA agreement is a good plan that will cut their electric rates by 17% and protect them from double digit property tax hikes—and politicians should not be allowed to stop it."

Surely he jests!

If it were not for politicians like Pataki and his predecessor, former Governor Cuomo, Long Island would not be in the predicament it is in.

Were it not for the mute Republican-controlled state senate which has refused to "investigate" the proposed deal—keeping quiet because the Republican bosses want this deal—Long Island would not find

itself faced with this financial fiasco.

In case the governor has not been paying attention, the strongest opponent of the proposed deal is a group of Long Island business owners, residents, and, oh yes, some of the legislators elected by the people to represent the public's interest in Suffolk County and state government.

Long Island is considered to be predominantly Republican, but were it not for the Democrat-controlled assembly (with only a few Republican assembly members), state government would never have held any hearings on this issue. How ironic, especially since those hearings produced a report condemning the proposed deal.

Were it not for the predominantly bipartisan action on the part of the Suffolk County Legis-

lature, we would not have obtained an independent report from energy and utility specialists also condemning the proposed deal.

The audacity of the governor to reprimand those politicians who want to completely review this proposed deal before committing the ratepayers to a lifetime of expenses!

Had we blindly listened to the governor, the state's top politician, our children and grandchildren would be committed to paying for a deal that will cost each ratepayer more than \$23,000 over the next 35 years.

Honestly, we are now convinced that Governor Pataki has lost touch with reality and has forgotten that the support he received from Long Island is why he now occupies the executive chambers in Albany.

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Executive Chamber  
The State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

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off its debts. This sole premise will be the determining factor on future rates. Promises do not have to be kept. Projections can be ignored. Because LIPA is an authority, without control or oversight, it can set rates at whatever level it deems prudent to recover its debt. This is the reason the guarantee that Sheldon Silver received for his support is worthless. Silver knew he was buying a bucket of hot air. He sold out the public and, particularly, his Democratic colleagues on Long Island.

## 2. The Cuomo Contract:

The contract that Cuomo signed with LILCO only gave a three-year rate guarantee. After the three-year period, a plan was set forth to allow LILCO to recover its investment over the next 40 years.

The PSC did not and could not give up its prerogative to change this formula.

In fact, the PSC already has changed the terms and conditions. It has the legal authority to cause the abandonment of the Shoreham regulatory asset in part or as a whole.

In conjunction with this issue, three legal opinions have been issued, giving substantial case histories for this precedent. LILCO itself has repeatedly stated in its annual reports and in other financial disclosures that it has no guarantee the company will recover the Shoreham asset. The PSC can order, in part or whole, the abandonment of this stranded asset.

Also, to meet FERC'S (Federal Energy Control Commission) demand for competition, all utilities except LILCO are in the process of developing plans. California and Massachusetts have developed a model that other state utilities are copying.

In essence, the PSCs of these two states have frozen rates at their current level. Whatever financial benefits the utilities can garner from competition between now and December 31, 2002, are to be applied to their stranded investment. Any portion of the stranded investments not recovered by January 1, 2003, will be absorbed by the stockholders.

Electrical customers then will be free to pick whatever power supplier is the most economical. The savings from competition will accrue for the customer. The utility will only be able to charge for the cost of producing power and the T&D costs.

It is projected that this plan will reduce the cost of electricity in a normal utility by 25% to 33 1/3%. These utilities charge customers an average of 7 to 12 cents per kilowatt hour. The national average for electricity is 7 cents per kilowatt hour. LILCO ratepayers currently pay 17 cents per kilowatt hour.

The New York State PSC has ordered every utility in the state, with the exception of LILCO, to develop a plan for competition.

LILCO was exempted because of the LIPA negotiations.

## 3. The Changing Perimeters:

When the deal was first announced,

the cost of the deal was to be \$7.2 billion. The payback time span was over 30 years. It was to reduce energy by 16% to 18%.

Thorough review of the facts indicate that the deal will cost \$9.2 billion. Like Shoreham, an ever-increasing estimate. The deal now carries an expected 40-year payback period, a one-third increase in the number of years over what was originally announced.

Careful analysis of the figures of the State Assembly Committee on Energy indicate that the maximum savings will be 8.9%, not the 17% average that was initially being touted.

## 4. Nine Mile Point 2:

Probably the most senseless, from a ratepayer's standpoint, is LIPA assuming LILCO's obligation for the Nine Mile Point 2 nuclear power plant in Oswego County upstate.

Consider the following: Electricity produced by this plant is the most expensive in the nation. Depending on whose estimate you believe, the cost of electricity ranges from 10.2 cents to 14.3 cents per kilowatt hour, plus wheeling charges.

LIPA, assuming this obligation, will be required to take 18% of this high-cost energy, 180,000 megawatts. LIPA will become responsible for 18% of the costs from maintenance, decommissioning or liability for an accident. The plant has a history of design flaws, as well as maintenance and operational problems. The NRC recently fined the operators for both human and mechanical failures. Decommissioning costs could add another \$5 billion to the cost of the deal and an additional \$10 billion for interest to fund the bonds.

## 5. Trade-Off:

- A regulated LILCO for a non-regulated LILCO.

- Conversion of the Shoreham deal from a plan into a contract that cannot be broken.

- Oversight by the Public Service Commission would be eliminated and control turned over to an appointed board of predominantly amateur politicians known as the LIPA trustees.

- With this deal, Pataki, Silver and Bruno have traded democracy for a dictatorship. The politicians have taken away our vote, our voice and any mechanism to influence LIPA. They don't have to listen—and they won't.

## 6. Competition:

The deal locks out any meaningful competition for 40 years. During the first 7 to 15 years, LILCO remains as operator and sole supplier of power to Long Island.

The Deal also precludes any advantages from changes in technology in a rapidly changing world.

## 7. Certiorari Settlement:

The certiorari settlement issued by Judge Stark is flawed according to many experts. It is definitely an appealable issue that, under a worst case scenario, would lead to at least half of it being aborted.

Catacosinos acknowledged this

threat in the state assembly hearings when he gave his reason for settling the certiorari amount with LIPA at \$625 million.

The Suffolk County Legislature has a plan to increase the sales tax by a quarter percent to fund the settlement. This will keep most of the cost off the backs of real estate and will be far less costly than the LIPA proposal. The driving force behind the LIPA deal were the certiorari ramifications. If they can be handled less expensively, why not go this route?

LILCO owes the ratepayers an average of \$1,200 to \$2,000 each, from various overcharges, fines and certiorari suits. This could be paid back to the ratepayers as a one-shot refund or used, over time, to reduce electrical rates.

## 8. Savings:

The LIPA deal is purported to save 17% initially, but experts have indicated that the proposed deal, over time, will cost more than if LILCO continued operating as it is now.

The New York State Assembly, in its carefully documented report, calculated the maximum savings from the deal will be 8.9% for the first 10 years. After that, LIPA's rates will be substantially higher than LILCO's would have been.

We give more credence to these numbers than the numbers proved by LIPA headed by Richard Kessel.

LILCO faced a rate cut of 5% on September 1, 1996. This cut in rates was recommended by the PSC to force LILCO to bring its operation and maintenance costs into line with its peer utilities. The PSC never acted on the recommendation because of the LILCO-LIPA negotiations.

LILCO currently spends 100% more than similar utilities. LILCO ignored this order by the PSC. If the deal is not done, the PSC could mandate this rate reduction.

The anticipated synergy savings from the proposed LILCO/BUG merger is calculated into the LIPA plan to be between 2% and 3%. Several reports are indicating that because of nationwide competition, the average utility will be forced to reduce rates between 25% and one-third. Considering that LILCO's current rates are 100% higher than the nation's average, it would be realistic and prudent to expect the savings on Long Island to possibly reach 50% to 60%.

To be conservative, we will peg these savings at one-third. The combined savings from reducing operation and maintenance (O&M) costs, synergy, and the effects of competition, could put the ratepayers in a position of obtaining at least a 40% reduction in rates without this deal.

The PSC is empowered and has a responsibility to revisit the Shoreham settlement. It can order part or the entire abandonment of this stranded asset. Particularly, if they were able to conduct an audit, we expect it will indicate that the ratepayers have already funded more than Shoreham's cost through Construction While In Progress (CWIP) payments, financial stability payments and increased rates that were supposed to be dedicated to the Shoreham debt since 1989.

If the Shoreham asset is taken out of the rate scenario, O&M savings forced, synergy and competition allowed, LILCO or an alternative company could market electricity on Long Island at 6 to 7 cents per kilowatt hour and be profitable. Passage of the deal denies Long Islanders these benefits.

## 9. Conclusion:

Over the last several months, *Suffolk Life* has fought a desperate battle for our readers, the residents of Suffolk County. We tried to bring you every bit of information, the pros and the cons, so you could make an educated and intelligent choice.

We hoped that the revelation of the facts would be a wake-up call to our elected state officials. We failed and this let you, the residents of Suffolk County, down.

Instead of being able to look forward to paying the nation's average for electricity, 6 to 7 cents per kilowatt hour, as a ratepayer you will be locked into a contract that will have the effect of placing an additional \$23,000 mortgage on your home. Before you buy a kilowatt of electricity, the average ratepayer will be assessed \$55 per month to pay off this 40-year mortgage.

You will continue to pay LILCO's inflated cost for the operation and maintenance of the transmission and distribution and the power producing plants. This is 100% more than peer utilities are spending.

Instead of having oversight and protection from the government, your utility will be run by a power that is neither answerable to government or to you.

It's been a hard fight. We did it for you, and we will continue doing what we can.

The fight now moves to the IRS, where LILCO is applying for a sweetheart deal that will allow the stockholders to escape paying \$2 billion in taxes on their ill gained profits. If the IRS rules in favor of LILCO, it effectively will be causing every man, woman and child who pays federal income taxes in the United States to each pay \$17.39 more in taxes so that LILCO stockholders, who have made \$7.2 billion, can escape paying anything in taxes.

The plan also needs FERC approval. FERC is a commission set up by the federal government to bring about competition and reduce electrical rates in the United States.

LIPA is going to have to sell the commission on the competitiveness of the LIPA plan. Commission members are not neophytes. They are experts in utility law and regulations and have a mandate to bring down electrical rates throughout the country.

The facts must be presented to the FERC officials, and once this information is digested, we do not see how FERC can give its approval. The LIPA plan is totally anti-competition, contradicting FERC's federal mandate.

We may have lost a serious battle with our state representatives, but we have not lost the war and we are determined to fight on.

And why not?



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## \$17.39 Per Person

Every man, woman and child in the United States who pays taxes will be required to pony up an additional \$17.39 in federal taxes to bail out the LILCO stockholders and allow them to avoid paying capital gains taxes on the profits from the LILCO-LIPA deal.

That's right, it doesn't make any difference if you are a taxpayer in Maine or Alaska, you will have to do your part for the LILCO-LIPA deal to succeed.

RS311 Catacosinos and the LILCO board have threatened to walk away from the LIPA deal unless they are allowed to use a loophole in the law to escape paying \$2 billion in capital gains taxes justly due to Uncle Sam.

The IRS is expected to issue a ruling within the next two months. Will it allow this grand theft or will it say, "Hey LILCO, you are making a \$7.2 billion

profit. Your fair tax bill is \$2 billion. You are no different than any other Joe Blow who is lucky enough to make a profit. You must pay your capital gains taxes on your profits."

We encourage our readers to write to their elected officials and demand that LILCO be forced to pay its fair share of taxes. If you have relatives or friends out of the area, let them know that they will be forced to pay an additional \$17.39 in federal income taxes if LILCO is allowed to escape paying any taxes.

If congressmen and senators from other parts of the country start to hear from their constituents about being ripped off with no benefits, they may put pressure on the IRS to act fairly and honestly.

And why not?

## Test Teachers

We have been a strong supporter of tenure reform or periodic recertification for teachers. We have heard too many stories from both students and teachers about educators who, for various reasons, are not able to do the job.

Recently, the Connetquot School District decided to test the applicants for open positions within that district. About 75% of the licensed applicants failed the 11th grade reading comprehension test. Yet, these applicants had been licensed by the state of New York as certified teachers.

This is a shock. It is disgraceful and gives importance to the recertification of all teachers.

How many of those currently on staff in our schools, charged with educating our children, cannot pass the same tests our children must pass to graduate? What is the sense of having a poor teacher in the system who does not have the ability to read and comprehend? These teachers are given the

mind of every child in our community. They must have the ability to not only instruct, but to challenge. If the teachers are not capable of doing their best, how can we expect them to motivate their charges to accomplish that very same goal?

We congratulate the school board of Connetquot for instituting this test. The practice should be repeated in every district across the state. Not only should teachers be required to pass this test to become employees of the district, but they should be required to be retested before they receive tenure. Teachers should also be retested at periodic intervals after tenure and, if they fail, they should be required to come up to grade or be terminated.

If tests are a way of determining a child's achievements, they should be used as a measure of the teachers' competence.

And why not?

## D'Amato To The Rescue

Senator Al D'Amato has developed a reputation as "Senator Pothole." This description was meant to be unkind, but its essence typifies the little things that make D'Amato a value to the citizens of New York State.

It was announced that the Coast Guard was going to move its rescue helicopter from Long Island to New Jersey. This would put the boaters from Long Island in jeopardy in case of an accident. The helicopter would be as far as two hours away.

Last week, D'Amato announced that he had been successful in having the helicopter based at the Gabreski Airport in Westhampton. Now, boaters

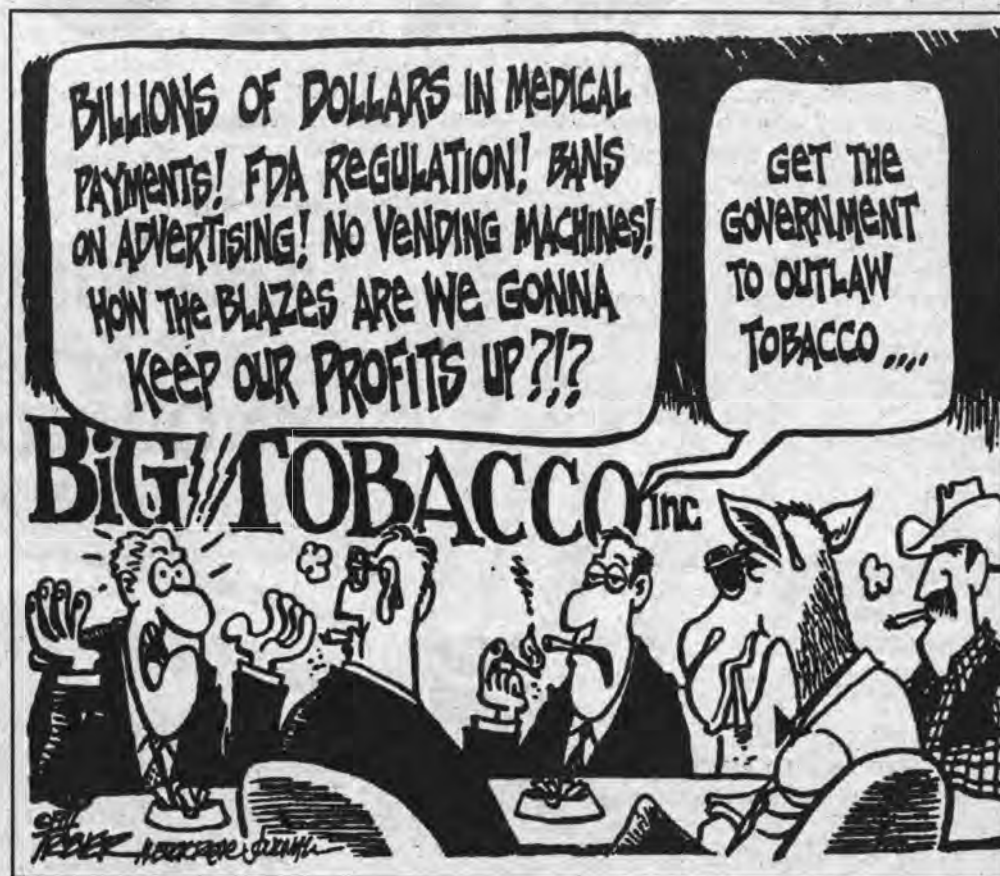
in trouble will get a speedy response and not be dependent on a helicopter coming from either the Massachusetts or New Jersey Coast Guard stations.

This may be no big deal to many people, particularly those who are not into boating, but for those of us who are, it's important.

By contrast, senators, like Moynihan, rarely ever raise their voices or address issues of importance to local people. They live in their ivy towers where everyday life just does not interest them.

It's good to have one senator paying attention to details. Thanks, Al.

And why not?



## Get Your Money Back

If you are one of the 8,000 taxpayers in Suffolk County who paid your taxes late during 1993 and 1996, you are entitled to a refund by Suffolk County. You must make application for your refund. The county is just not going to send you the money on its own.

When *Suffolk Life* first heard that the county had illegally charged residents a penalty for paying their taxes late, we editorialized about the unfairness.

The issue was then taken to court and the court ruled that the county did not have the authority to charge you an additional penalty on top of late fees and interest it had already charged. The court ordered that the late fees be returned, specifically to those taxpayers

who had noted they were paying the additional fee under protest.

We didn't think this was fair and we editorialized that the county took this money illegally and should be required to return it to all the taxpayers who were penalized.

The legislature then agreed that whoever paid this illegal late fee was entitled to get their money back.

To make it easy for you, we have printed an application below. If you are owed the money, fill out this form, send it to the county treasurer, and you will receive a refund.

It's great to be able to help our readers get justice.

And why not?

### Official Notification for Refund Request

Dear County Treasurer Cochrane:

This note is to inform you that I paid the late payment surcharge that the courts have ruled illegal. I am requesting a prompt reimbursement. Enclosed is my proof of payment in the form of a canceled check or other document.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Payment: \_\_\_\_\_