

# Fix LIPA, don't replace it!

When Governor George Pataki was campaigning for office, he offered hope that he would be the vehicle for change to help us resolve specific problems we have long faced. We have been disappointed in his efforts in that regard.

Our first hope was that he would bring about meaningful change in the state's Public Service Commission (PSC), a regulatory agency that has lost sight of its true mission. Instead of protecting the consumers, the PSC has become an ally with the utilities. Rather than provide strong oversight over the operating practices of the utilities, most especially the Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO), the PSC has ignored the plight of the ratepayers here on Long Island and has, in fact, been a major part of the problem that has driven our electric rates to the highest in the nation.

It was the PSC that kept LILCO in the nuclear plant construction mode by supplying, time and time again, construction work in progress (CWIP)

funding which enabled LILCO to continue building the plant. Without those funds, LILCO would have been forced to end that nightmare long before it did.

When former Governor Mario Cuomo and his economic chief, Vincent Tese, devised a deal to close the Shoreham plant, it was the PSC that did the financial manipulations which brought LILCO back to financial health at the expense of the ratepayers. Wall Street experts called that agreement the "sweetheart deal of the century," and, as history has now proven, it certainly was. When economic conditions changed, oil prices dropped and interest rates fell, the PSC did nothing to soften the drastic impact of the Shoreham deal. LILCO reaped a huge windfall as a result.

When Pataki swept Cuomo out of office, he offered some rhetoric about making meaningful changes at the PSC to make it an agency that would serve its mission of protecting the public. He

then put Harold Jerry, a longtime PSC commissioner who had been part and parcel of all the ills of the past, in the chairman's seat, an action that perpetuates business as usual rather than needed change.

And now Pataki is moving towards making another mistake. He wants to do away with the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA), combining it with the New York Power Authority (NYPA), a state agency which has, itself, been the target of mismanagement claims.

LIPA was a product of the Shoreham fiasco. It was created as a vehicle to take over LILCO. The legislation which created LIPA called for the election of LIPA trustees, which would give ratepayers a local voice in dealing with our energy future. Those elections, which have been postponed by Albany legislators for questionable reasons, would put local elected individuals in decision making positions rather than political appointees who owe their allegiance to the politicians.

LIPA has never lived up to its true potential because it was manipulated by Cuomo. He named the chairman and selected a number of the trustees. While it was used by Cuomo as a weapon to force LILCO to the table to

discuss the Cuomo deal to close Shoreham, and was active in the decommissioning process, it never became the people's agency it could have been.

Pataki wants the current LIPA chairman, Richard Kessel, to resign. We don't have a problem with that. Kessel was put there by Cuomo, and served as the former governor's point man on a number of issues. If killing LIPA is designed to hasten Kessel's departure, the price is too high. Kessel should resign rather than have that happen.

NYPA, on the other hand, has shown little concern for the plight of downstate ratepayers. Of the approximate 8,000 megawatts of low cost power it handles annually, Long Island received about 10%, if that, to ease our energy needs and costs. With NYPA and the PSC in control of our energy needs and problems, the problems of our past will continue into our future.

The LIPA board of trustees must be elected by the people. There must be new leadership for LIPA. We cannot rely on the state to resolve our high rates. We cannot depend upon a state agency that is under the control of state politicians. We must fix LIPA, not discard it.

And why not?

## In or out?

Most Americans cannot identify where Bosnia is, even though it has been in the headlines for well over three years.

We are news junkies, yet we have even had trouble figuring out which side is which in this Yugoslavian war. For most of us who are not directly involved, this is an internal revolution that crosses boundaries between regions, religions and races.

The only thing that is evident is that towns are being laid to ruin. Innocent civilians are being tortured, raped and slaughtered. From news reports, all the factions seem to be equally guilty, with none willing to listen to reason or compromise.

The United Nations is involved. NATO is involved, and because of our involvement with both organizations, we are involved. Our involvement has been limited, and we would hope it would remain so.

In recent days, there have been persistent reports that the President may order the deployment of not only United States air support, but also ground troops into this fight.

We well remember the Vietnam War, a war that the American people failed to comprehend why were we fighting. And why were we fighting with one arm tied behind our backs? Why were we sending American men and women to certain death without a desire or reason to win?

Will Bosnia become the '90s Vietnam? Who is our enemy and why are we taking sides? What kind of commitment are the American people willing to make? Can we be a policeman all over the world? Are there some conflicts too deep-seated for settlement without bloodshed? Would our intervention make a difference? What will be the cost of American lives and natural resources? Are we wanted? Will our presence make a positive difference?

President Clinton has a lot of questions to answer. He must give the American public these answers before he commits our sons and daughters to a new war.

And why not?

## Two good ladies

Shock and sadness came to Suffolk County in recent days with the loss of two women who served in governmental roles for many years. Both were unique in their dedication to their constituents and the causes they cherished. Both will be sorely missed.

Legislator Rose Caracappa passed away unexpectedly over Memorial Day weekend.

Rose was one of those woman who you loved to hate and hated to love. She was unique, unusual. She had a compassion for the underdog and was a man's man. She would appreciate this comment because she enjoyed being politically incorrect.

Rose's word was her bond. She never left you with a doubt on where she stood or why. She probably was the first elected Conservative registered woman in the State of New York. She was a fierce proponent and defender of the municipal unions, the police and the uniformed agencies, senior citizens, and

her constituents in her legislative district.

Rose was an advocate of working women and often threw aside her Conservative philosophy when it came to helping those she had a passion for. Yes, at times to the detriment of the taxpayers.

Politically, we often disagreed with Rose and she with us. Yet, there was a mutual respect. She had her job to do, and we had ours. In many respects, Suffolk County is a better place because Rose was involved. She will be hard to replace.

One week after Rose's unexpected passing, we lost Henrietta Acampora, former Brookhaven Town clerk and supervisor, a true champion of the people.

Henny also left no doubt about the strength of her feelings. She said what she meant, no beating around the bush. Her sometimes salty language gave the impression she was a hard-nosed individual, and indeed she could be. But within her heart she had more compassion and sensitivity than most.

She loved her town, the people she served. She served for many, many years as town clerk, and, we think, enjoyed that role the most because she was closer to the people she was dedicated to serve. She especially was devoted to the town's senior citizens. But her knowledge, talents and experience took her to the top town position, supervisor, and she brought the same devotion to that position as well.

To know Henny was to love her, even if you were on opposite sides of a position. She was straight-forward, direct, and there are a host of "Henny" memories that will forever bring a smile when they are recalled. She was a special lady.

We hope Rose and Henny are receiving their just rewards for the lives they had in their hearts.

And why not?

## Some things never change

Eight years ago, John LaMura ran for Brookhaven Town supervisor. Eight years ago, his father-in-law, Tom Nepell, was the prime insurance broker for Brookhaven Town. Eight years ago, the Nepell Agency obtained this business without competitive bidding.

Eight years ago, John LaMura pledged he was going to put insurance out to bid. Six years ago, he pledged he would. Four years ago, he pledged he would. Two years ago, he waffled on the issue.

Now, in 1995, John LaMura comes before the voters asking to be re-elected. He says, "Trust me, look at what I have done for Brookhaven."

Year after year, John, we have pointed out that the town could save a couple of million dollars a year if they went out to bid on their insurance. We have pushed. We have prodded you, John. You gave us lip service and yet Brookhaven's insurance is still awarded to your father-in-law without competitive bidding. Brookhaven Town residents have paid millions of dollars in unneeded taxes that could have been reduced through competitive bidding on insurance.

You are a nice guy, John, but you haven't been a very good supervisor. John, your father-in-law is a nice guy, too, and very knowledgeable and experi-

enced in his field. If insurance is put out to bid, he would stand a good chance of winning the bid even though it probably would be at lower rates, lower commissions, and lower taxes for Brookhaven residents.

John, you have between now and November to put the insurance out to bid, decline the nomination, or lose the election. We don't think the good folks of Brookhaven are going to put up with paying higher taxes because Tom Nepell is your father-in-law.

The choice is yours, John. It's too late for excuses. And by the way, John, you could take the whole board down with you.

And why not?



# Too many unanswered questions

The town boards of Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton must approve the pine barrens proposal by a June 30 deadline. This huge program will affect the zoning, the taxes and the quality of life within these towns forever more.

The pine barrens bill establishes another level of government that supercedes the town's ability to plan and zone its own communities. The core area of the pine barrens covers over 50,000 acres. The compatible growth area covered by the bill surrounding the core area encompasses an additional 48,000 acres.

## Not the truth!

The concept of the pine barrens has been sold to the public almost solely on the need for pure water. This played well with the fears and the paranoia of most people, but it was not the truth.

According to the Suffolk County Water Authority commissioner, Michael LoGrande, rain naturally recharges our aquifer at a rate of four times what is taken out.

There is a dome of fresh water lying under the Great South Bay extending out into the ocean, a water supply that has the capacity to meet our pure water needs through the year 3000.

There is no practical or inexpensive way to take the water that is under the pine barrens and transport it to the rest of Long Island. To accomplish this task would require a public works program that would dwarf the South West Sewer District by many fold.

## Open space motive

The creation of the pine barrens is more an open-space preservation program than it is a water program. According to LoGrande, there are only some 2,670 potential home sites within the core area of the pine barrens. About 1,650 are in Brookhaven Town, 770 in Southampton, and 250 in Riverhead. Most are only paper lots that have not been surveyed. Most are not connected to roads and, technically, cannot be developed.

This raises a very serious question: why should we, the people, be concerned about the maximum potential of 2,670 home sites on a 50,000-acre parcel? According to LoGrande, some of the potential sites are zoned five-acre, not what would be considered the source of dense development or environmentally destructive.

The private owners of the land within the pine barrens are due just compensation for the land. The Supreme Court of the United States, in recent rulings, has stated that the government cannot take private lands for environmental purposes without just compensation to the owners.

## Serious questions

Serious questions exist concerning compensation for landowners. The pine barrens bill, according to one point of view, takes away private owners rights and offers as compensation script in the form of transfer of development rights, which would allow the transfer of the core property's potential development yield to another site. A taking without real compensation opens up a huge window for lawsuits and potential liability in the hundreds of millions of dollars for the people, the taxpayers.

Proponents of the pine barrens proposal claim cash compensation for affected lands is available. The purchase price would be based on appraisals and a fair market value, this viewpoint claims. Another condition, of course, would be the availability of government-

tal funds to purchase the impacted land.

Owners on non-residential properties in the core area "are provided no direct assurances that their economic interests are incorporated in the land use plan," according to the latest revision of the Economic Impact Analysis of the Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan dated May 23. What legal ramifications await this lack of assurances?

## Still pay taxes

The owners of the affected land are expected to continue to pay taxes on this land for legitimate purposes and, because of the moratorium, not even sell it for its real value.

This is plain not fair. It is taxation without representation, but without utilization. This does not seem to bother the proponents, but it should strike a nerve with every American, for it is a prime example of our government acting capriciously and with arrogance.

Taking these lands off the tax rolls through Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) is estimated to have a substantial negative impact upon a number of school districts, by varying percentages up to 10%. The whole TDR proposal raises a multitude of questions that have not been answered, including the impact on the receiving school district, which could have high density development without the taxes to fund the new students and the new schools that would result.

## Wheeling and dealing

There has been incredible wheeling and dealing going on since the beginning of this process. Although Wilbur Breslin's proposed "mini-city" is right in the middle of the core area, it has been cut

## It's payback time

# Promises kept or broken

The law of gravity applies to just about everything but taxes and government spending. In those areas, taxes and spending go up, hardly ever down, and if it does descend, it's still higher than where it started from.

That thought comes to mind with the recent controversy over the proposal by Republican county legislators to reduce the county sales tax by one-quarter percent. A media alert was distributed about the scheduling of a press conference for the announcement of the "historic, first ever in the county" quarter-percent reduction. This good news was to be delivered by a bi-partisan gathering of legislators, the media alert informed.

Well, it didn't happen that way. The Democratic legislators said the quarter-percent reduction was nice, but not enough. One whole penny of the county's 8.5% sales tax is scheduled, by law, to sunset at the end of this year. Thus, if the county does nothing, taxpayers save one whole percent in sales taxes, not just one-quarter-percent. They're calling the one-quarter percent reduction proposal, heralded by County Executive Robert Gaffney as a first-time ever event, a "tax increase," not a reduction.

Semantics aside, the full 1% reduc-

tion and exempted. Brookhaven National Lab is also in the middle of the core area. Brookhaven National Lab has been a major polluter over the years and has been designated a federal Superfund site. No one knows when the pollution will be cleaned up, as the federal government is short of money just like the county and the state. So much for the purity of water.

The Pine Barrens Commission Report is over 680 pages long. The revised financial report was only released last week. The first financial report, released last November, would lead the reader to the conclusion that economically, the whole concept is not doable. The new report has not been thoroughly analyzed and not read by most people. And there have been reports that still another revised economic impact report may be forthcoming.

We doubt many of the town board members, and especially those in the three affected towns, have had time to read and analyze the 680-page report, and the November and June financial impact reports.

## Devil in the details

The devil is always in the details. Because of constant revisions, there hasn't been time to sufficiently flush them out all the facts and potential pitfalls. The town boards are under pressure to approve the pine barrens by June 30. In good conscience, how can these men and women make an intelligent decision without reading, studying and debating the issues? They are being asked to accept a plan that takes away their sovereignty, their independence and develops an additional tax burden on their own residents without full knowledge and questions answered. They are being given assurances by

members of the pine barrens, but those assurances are worth little. A majority of those who were first named to this commission are no longer there. Those who still sit often send representatives to commission meetings rather than attend themselves.

The people who are demanding this approval are the same ones that developed the hysteria over the creation of the pine barrens by developing images of polluted water threatening our safety and health. If the original premise is based on an exaggerated need, how many other details in this proposal are exaggerated to push it through?

## Answers needed

There are those who say that anyone who does not support the approval of the draft plan by the June 30 deadline is in great risk of being responsible for the death of the proposal. We disagree. We believe all the questions that still exist deserve answers. A good pine barrens plan that will protect our land and environment would be worth having. A bad plan with hidden, unanswered problems could be a disaster.

What's the rush? The deadline, originally set for March of this year, was extended to June 30. While the staunch proponents of the plan insist there is no chance of another extended deadline, we see that as an argument designed to achieved their own special goal. But the victory they would win by passing a plan as flawed as has been proposed would be a costly defeat for the public. Too much is at stake to risk committing our towns' futures. All the questions must be answered before our town officials rush into something they could well regret when the answers belatedly come.

And why not?

ment, the financial implications could be severe. The county officials should have been living up to their promises of the past and preparing for the elimination of the extra sales tax revenues. They haven't.

If county officials continue to push for just the quarter-percent reduction, breaking their promises on the remaining three-quarters, they can hardly brag about an "accomplishment." Their quarter-percent cut plan is an admission of failure. The people of Suffolk County should insist the politicians keep their word. If not in the form of an outright elimination of the entire 1% added through their tax hikes, at the very least with a detailed plan of spending cuts and a schedule of exactly when future reductions will take place.

The political world is full of broken promises, and the electorate is becoming more and more fed up. The broken promises of Suffolk County officials in failing to end the added sales tax when they promised it would sunset should be an important factor in the county elections in November.

It's payback time, one way or another. Promises kept deserve votes. Promises broken don't!

And why not?



## My silent, greedy partner

Last week I was a delegate to the White House Conference on Small Business. Some 1,800 delegates from around the country discussed, debated, lobbied and voted on 600 issues that were raised by small business. The issues had been put forth by state delegations, then merged into common grounds through regional meetings.

There were six regional delegations. Each delegation submitted 100 items for consideration. At the end of four grueling days, the conference had reduced the number of issues to 60. It was democracy in action.

Through intense lobbying and negotiations, New York State's delegation was successful in getting 93% of their agenda into the top 60 issues that will go to the President and Congress for action. Many of New York's items made it into the top 15, on which action is expected.

Although there were state and regional delegations, they were composed of delegates who had special vested interests and coalesced into subdivisions. Although chaotic at times, this system worked. Congress now knows what is important to small business, and the ball is in their court.

On the way home from the conference, I got thinking about my own experiences in business. In 1958, 37 years ago, I started in business by selling ads on the sides of trash cans that were located on the main streets of many of the East End towns.

I was young, naive and filled with energy. At the end of the year, I had pulled off a miracle. I had grossed \$39,000 and I had what appeared to be a net income of \$6,000.

What I didn't realize was that I had a silent partner. I didn't know anything

about the trash or garbage business. My partner said to me, I want 20% of your profit. I don't care if I didn't put up any capital, give you any help or take any risk. You made money and I want 20% of it. My partner warned me that he controlled all the soldiers and the courts, and if I protested or tried to avoid paying him what he considered his fair share, he would get me.

After a couple of years, I decided I didn't like putting ads on the sides of garbage cans. I went into the newspaper business. As my business grew, and I made more money, my partner followed me and upped his ante. He wasn't satisfied with 20%. He wanted 30%. Dutifully, I paid my partner each year even though he was becoming more obtrusive. I had no choice. As my business grew, so did his demands. He upped his demands again to where I got to a point that for every dollar that I made in profit, he

wanted half. He didn't care whether I had the cash at the end of the year, he wanted his in cash. If I couldn't pay him his tribute, he would add interest and threaten to take away all of my assets, even though they were not liquid.

As the years went by, he was not satisfied with being just a silent partner. He started telling me how I had to run my business. He interfered with my people and the way I ran my facility. Over the past 37 years of running this business, I have taken my share and reinvested it in the business. My partner wanted his in all cash, never reinvesting a dime in growing this business or personally sacrificing to make the business work.

Now the time has come for me to think about the future. I have looked into the possibility of having my kids, who I have brought up in the business, take over the business. I guess that is every father's dream. My partner doesn't like this idea and he told me that for me to get out of the business and to have a new life, he wants my kids to pay him everything that I want to give them, plus a 10% penalty on top of it. Yes, you heard right. My partner wants to take 100% of my business and my other assets and then assess my kids, my heirs, an additional 10% because they are the children of the father.

This is one of the reasons I was at the White House Conference on Small Business. The issue that was most dear and near to my heart was not organized crime, but organized government. I recently had started to do some serious estate planning, and the experts pointed out that if I do not use any of the loopholes, my estate would not only be wiped out by the government but my heirs would face an additional 10% penalty imposed by the government because of the way the laws are structured. That is a crime that no mobster would dare to commit.

This was only one of 60 issues that congress will be working on. Each is as important as the next. Small business is the largest generator of jobs in America. Over 60% of the jobs are in small business. The government is our silent partner who makes the rules and takes the profits that are so desperately needed for reinvestment to create more jobs.

The horror stories of regulations imposed by the government were the talk of the town. We came together with a purpose, we left with a resolve. Now it is up to the President and the congress to act out of fairness. To get out of our way and allow us to grow America.

And why not?

## Pure political stupidity

The New York State Assembly Health Committee recently killed legislation sponsored by Assemblyman Robert C. Wertz (R-Smithtown) which would have established a new and more efficient tumor registry in the state. The current registry is now four years behind with this vital data, a lag that would be cut to 40 days under Wertz's bill.

According to Wertz, the health committee caved in to special interest groups "that are uninformed on the issue and unwilling to recognize the necessity of having an updated tumor registry within the state Department of Health."

"The bottom line is that the state's present registry is obsolete and unable to provide the medical and scientific research communities with information that could offer a breakthrough as to why New York's cancer rate is higher than the rest of the nation's," Wertz said. "It is unconscionable for groups who represent themselves as medical organizations to oppose legislation that capitalizes on emergent technologies in the fight against cancer."

The special interest opposition, according to Wertz, came from the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS) and the American Cancer Society. The cancer society opposed the bill, Wertz said, because they believe

it is "necessary for the cancer registry data to be cross-referenced with death certificates." But Wertz counters that waiting for death certificates extends the lag time between when data is recorded and when it is made available to cancer research professionals.

Wertz is incensed by the failure of the Assembly Health Committee to pass his legislation on for a vote on the floor of the assembly, and we share his view. The current four-year lag in the registry is just now making available the data on the number of cancer cases in 1991. That's absurd! In this day and age of computer technology, there is no valid excuse to lag four years behind in coming up with the statistical information as to the extent of the cancer problem in specific areas.

A large number of local, dedicated women, many who are themselves victims of breast cancer, have worked very hard with community surveys and mapping projects to determine the extent of the breast cancer problem in their areas. Their efforts could be made so much easier, and far more accurate, if the state assisted by supplying accurate numbers of cases in each community. While that information may not bring about immediate solutions, it could well shed additional light on the conditions that cause

the disease. And maybe, just maybe, it could bring a solution much closer to reality.

How dare the Assembly Health Committee majority kill the Wertz bill? How dare they succumb to the pressures of special interests which are looking out more for their own interests than they are for the victims of cancer. Are they afraid more up-to-date numbers will cut into their businesses somehow? To diminish their profit margins?

We would hope that the assembly people, from both sides of the aisle, demand the bill be resubmitted to the Health Committee and cleared for a vote by the full assembly. And we would hope that the bill would pass overwhelmingly, for it is long overdue. The shame of their action rests heavily on the shoulders of the health committee member who helped kill this bill. That shame will also come to light on the heads of other assembly people who sit back and do nothing to correct this tragedy.

Those involved in the battle against cancer have enough suffering to handle. They shouldn't have to suffer from political bureaucratic stupidity as well. If you feel, as we do, that the Health Committee's action is a disgrace, let your Assembly representative know. In no uncertain terms!

And why not?

## She read it, now she's against it

Suffolk Life congratulates Councilwoman Pat Strebel of Brookhaven Town for reading the 680-page Pine Barrens Plan. She did what few other public officials have done, learn about a matter before voting upon it.

Last week, at a special Brookhaven Town Board meeting, Strebel peppered Richard Amber with questions. She became so frustrated with his refusal to answer, his stonewalling and his arrogance that, at one point, she walked out of the meeting in anger.

Strebel is probably the only council person or town supervisor who will make the decision on the Pine Barrens Plan who has fully studied the issue. The 680-page report and the subsequent financial analysis reports require an exten-

sive amount of time to digest, time elected officials are not willing to invest, and yet, their actions will affect the tax base, the economy and the ecology for the rest of the government, forever.

Town board members are being unmercifully pressured into voting without knowledge. An artificial deadline has been set of June 30 for passage. There is no logical reason why it can't be extended so that all questions can be honestly answered. These are not trivial questions, they are serious in nature, and the answers are not apparent.

It will be a travesty of government to allow this bill to be passed without these questions being answered. It is our lives, it is our future, it is our environment that is at stake. Every elected official

that must pass on this bill must, before voting, read, understand, question and comprehend all the nuances that are hidden in the verbiage.

Thus far, there have been three economic impact reports, the original issue and two revisions, the latest just last week. Even the latest report leaves questions to be answered. There's a lot of speculation about impact if this happens or that takes place. School districts may or may not lose a good chunk of their tax base, which means the rest of the folks will have to pick up the loss. How much? The plan doesn't know. It depends on a number of factors. One school district, Riverhead, has asked its town board to hold off action until an economic study can be made of the po-

tential impact on their district. That makes good sense, something other districts should insist on.

Don't count on changes to resolve these problems once the plan has been approved. Adjustments will be forbidden or dependent upon an ever changing commission membership. Interpretation will be up to the courts. The vote on the Pine Barrens Plan is the most important any legislator will cast. It is too important an issue to be cast at the orders of a political leader or because of the pressure of special interest.

Let's not be fools—let us take our time, understand what we are voting on, the people of Suffolk County, today and the future.

And why not?



# We can cut school taxes

School taxes make up between 60% and 70% of your real estate tax bill. They do not have to. In fact, if the state can take over the educational system and provide the facilities and the personnel to teach the courses that they mandate, school taxes could be eliminated.

The state prescribes a specific curriculum and course sequence that will give every student a quality education and enable them to receive a Regents diploma. These are the true mandates. Consequently with these state mandates, school taxes between 44% and 48% of the average school budget. To compensate our local school boards for meeting these mandates, the state provides between 39% and 42% of the school budget through state aid. These funds are raised through state sources of taxation which include sales taxes, income taxes, business taxes and inheritance taxes, to name just a few. The balance of the budget is used to pay for electives which have been put in place by our local school boards. This curriculum covers enrichments, and a lot of courses that have few students participating but are expensive to offer.

Each school system operates as an entity unto itself. It has its own buildings, administration and overhead costs. Administrative costs, in most local school districts, have grown 10 times in the last 10 years. This has taken place while enrollments were falling by 40% to 50%. There is no logic, no reason and no service to the students from this bloated, enlarged bureaucracy. Much of it can be condensed, streamlined and eliminated if we had one central school district covering the entire state. This consolidation

would more than make up the difference between state aid and the cost of providing a good, basic education for every student from Montauk to Niagara.

Senator Kenneth LaValle had, at one time, a bill in the New York State Senate calling basically for this type of school system, but, mystically, similar legislation was not resubmitted this year. In the past, with the Republicans controlling only the Senate, with the Democrats controlling the Assembly and the governor's office, Republicans had the luxury of filing legislation containing all kinds of ideas. They knew the legislation would be killed in either the Assembly or by the governor. The senators could play to the folks back home by saying, "I sponsored that bill, but the Democrats killed it."

Now with the Senate and the State House in Republican hands, they have got to be careful of what they wish for. The consolidation of education by the state would bring the relief Long Island and the rest of New York State is crying out for.

The state would fund the basic, quality education through broad-based taxes. Teachers would be hired on a state-wide basis and, just like the State Police, assigned to where they are needed. More importantly, every New York State student would have an opportunity for an equal education. Homeowners would be able to continue to afford to be able to live in their homes. Here on Long Island, real estate tax bills now averaging \$4,000 to \$5,000 would be reduced to \$1,000 or \$1,500 per year.

There still would be local school boards which would be empowered to

enhance or enlarge upon the core education given by the state. These enhancements would be presented annually on a menu basis to the taxpayers and residents to accept or reject, as part of the budget. The entire state would vote on the same day, there would be no re-voting until the following year. Items would have to pass or fail on their own merits and the needs, wants and ability to pay by the community.

This plan is doable. It will bring the relief that we need. We encourage you to

write to your assemblyman, senators and the governor. Encourage them to explore this alternative to the present school financial system which is killing communities. If enough assemblymen and senators know that you know there is an alternative, they will be forced to act. If you have friends or relatives in New York City, Nassau County or upstate, write to them and ask them to contact their representatives.

It is up to us.  
And why not?

## Paying fair share

When you hear the term "illegal apartments," several different images come to mind.

The one most of us choose to believe is the older couple with grown children who are faced with the possibility of having to leave their home because of high taxes. In desperation, they convert part of their home to an apartment. This is rented by a young couple with no children who are just starting out in life. Although an illegal apartment, it is a win-win situation. The old folks are able to meet their tax bills and keep the roof over their heads. The young couple have an affordable place to live.

It is estimated that between 20% and 30% of the single-family homes in western Suffolk County are illegal

conversions. In Brentwood alone, the school district has developed a list of 5,200 possible violations. The great preponderance of illegal apartments exist in homes that are not owner-occupied. They are owned by both small and large speculators who are flouting the law and reaping large profits.

We have heard of some units having as many as 14 different families living in a single-family home. A while back, a reader from Huntington wrote to us about such a condition in her neighborhood. Not only had the house been broken into several housing units, including the basement and the garage, but even the storage shed was housing two people. Their source of electricity was a dangerous extension cord running from the main building.

These illegal apartments cost the legitimate taxpayers a huge penalty. The children that come out of these homes must be educated at an average cost of almost \$12,000 per student. The garbage generated is picked up by the municipality and the landlord only pays as if it was an independent house. These illegal occupants strain the roads, the recreational facilities and the health service facilities without paying their fair share.

We applaud the Brentwood school system for sharing their suspicions with the officials of Islip Town. The schools have an ideal opportunity to determine the possibility of illegal apartments. When children are registered in the school, they must give their address. When the names are matched up against the addresses, a job easily accomplished by computer, the information would give an indication of multiple families sharing the same address.

Islip Supervisor Peter McGowan says this all looks good on paper, but the realities are such that once the proceedings enter the courts, they are dragged out and the landlords are able to avoid prosecution. McGowan has pleaded for a more expeditious system. He wants the courts to know the havoc that their inactivity creates within the community.

McGowan angrily asks why legitimate residents should be paying real estate tax penalties to support those that are not paying their share. Why are we, who pay our fair share, tolerating this abuse of the system?

Illegal apartments have been around for years. Aren't you tired of the elected officials and the judicial system winking at these injustices? Let's do something about it.

And why not?

## Is our delegation asleep?

Two news items recently came out of Albany that should make all Long Islanders stand up and take notice. It appears that, at long last, New York State is going to allow casino gambling. No, not here on Long Island, the forgotten part of the state, just upstate.

Casino gambling is a huge tourist attraction; whole industries have been built around it. Long Islanders, in droves, go to Foxwood in Connecticut. Undoubtedly, they would stay home and spend their money if we had the availability of casino gambling. Under the bill that is being proposed, we won't.

Were our New York State-Long Island legislators asleep? We know of no widespread opposition to gambling here on Long Island. In fact,

from time to time a number of expressions of interest have been heard.

The second item of note is that certain areas of the state will now have a 65-mile-per-hour speed limit. Don't our New York State assemblymen and senators drive on the Long Island Expressway?

One afternoon last week, I was returning to my Riverhead office from Smithtown. The cars in the slow lane were doing 60 to 65 mph, in the middle lane, 65 to 70 mph, and in the speed lane, 70 mph plus. This is common and normal; in fact, if anyone breaks this pattern, traffic jams up and virtual gridlock occurs.

This traffic moves past cops at will. The cops can't stop everybody. The drivers know it, and the cops know it, and our speed laws become one of those laws that everyone vio-

lates. It isn't until you get past William Floyd that the cars are ticketed for doing 65 mph. Ironically, this is where there is the least amount of traffic and the safest place to drive at these speeds.

Aren't you tired of Long Island being treated as a different state or a different country? Where are both our Democratic and Republican representatives? Collectively, they make a meaningful block, a block that if, voting together, would make a big difference to Long Island.

Maybe they are too old. Maybe they have been in office too long. Maybe they forgot that they represent Long Island first and the political parties second.

Maybe it is time for the voters to change.

And why not?

## Forbes converts pork

How do you convert compost into buses for the handicapped and the elderly? The answer is quite simple: have a congressman who is alert and who cares.

In examining the appropriations that affect Long Island, newly-elected Congressman Michael Forbes found, tucked away, an appropriations measure, a grant for studying and implementing a program of placing compost on the Long Island Expressway.

The study, which the federal gov-

ernment had paid \$90,000 for, could not be found. The balance of the money, \$410,000, had already been appropriated and had to be spent.

Forbes knew there were human needs that needed to be met. He decided the \$410,000 could be better spent to benefit his constituents. He contacted the towns within his congressional district and inquired whether any of the communities needed transportation monies. It turns

out that in most of the towns, the senior citizen vans and equipment used to aid the handicapped were many years old. Some vehicles had over 200,000 miles on them.

This summer, new equipment will be arriving instead of compost and manure being dumped on the Long Island Expressway.

It's a new day in Washington and, at last, a breath of fresh air. Thanks, Mike.

And why not?