

# It's the ratepayers' turn now!

Future LILCO rates were recently severely impacted by the actions of a Manhattan attorney who agreed to settle a class action suit against the utility for \$390 million, plus an additional \$10 million in attorney fees and expenses for all the attorneys involved in the action. The ratepayers had no say in the matter. The attorney, Judith Vladeck, was named to represent the ratepayers by Federal Judge Jack Weinstein, the judge who dismissed the county's RICO case against LILCO after a federal jury had found the utility and a former LILCO president, guilty of lying to the Public Service Commission in rate increase applications.

While the ratepayers had no say in the decision reached by an attorney they never selected and who had never been involved in the Shoreham controversy, such an opportunity will come at 10 a.m., March 3, in the United States District Courthouse on Rabro Drive in Hauppauge.

Judge Weinstein will hold a "fairness hearing" at that time to determine if the settlement should be approved by the court as "fair, reasonable and adequate." In our view, it fails in all three categories.

Vladeck was the attorney of record representing the five original ratepayers who had become part of the county's RICO action against LILCO. Judge Weinstein certified three additional ratepayers to that group, and then named Vladeck to represent all LILCO ratepayers. Seven of the eight ratepayers certified by the judge opposed Vladeck's decision to settle for \$400 million. The potential liability against LILCO, if Weinstein's dismissal is reversed in an appeal, could be as high as \$4 billion.

Judge Weinstein, and his personally selected mediator, worried that a \$4 billion penalty against the utility would have resulted in its bankruptcy, and labored to have all parties come to an agreement on the issue. When that failed, the mediator came up with several proposals, including the agreement Vladeck accepted. That action removed a heavy cloud over LILCO's head, and resulted in a number of banks extending additional credit to ease the utility's financial woes.

According to Vladeck, she made the recommendation to settle "based on my understanding that Shoreham will shortly be closed and thereafter dismantled. I make it also with the hope that this will begin a new era of cooperation and good relation between LILCO and the consumers."

Vladeck's comments were contained in a statement dated February 14. Three days later, on February 17, LILCO attorney Donald P. Irwin wrote a letter to all the Nuclear Regulatory Commissioners urging "that this commission proceed as expeditiously as possible to a final adjudication of its application for 25 percent power and full power operating license." That request certainly contra-

dicts Vladeck's "understanding that Shoreham will shortly be closed and thereafter dismantled."

In his letter to the NRC, Irwin also noted: "Over LILCO's objection, and by a recorded 4-3 vote, the PSC imposed a condition that LILCO 'not operate the Shoreham nuclear power plant during the pendency of these temporary rates.' LILCO has instructed its attorneys to take appropriate steps to seek removal of this condition." The condition was part of the recent approval the PSC gave LILCO to raise rates by \$97.7 million.

What this proves is that LILCO is continuing with its arrogant ways. If Vladeck is correct, and there was an

understanding that Shoreham would be closed, who lied to whom? Was Vladeck misled just to get her to agree to the proposed settlement? And if LILCO had no intent to agree to the PSC condition, why didn't they simply reject the rate increase under those terms? Do they intend to take the money and run? Laughing all the way?

One thing is clear. The controversy over Shoreham must end. But it will never die as long as the same cast of characters remains in control of LILCO. And it will never end under conditions the ratepayers will accept, as long as people in high places, regulatory agencies, federal courts, or

court-appointed lawyers, continue to go out of their way to bolster the utility's existence at the expense of the ratepayers.

Have you had enough? The time is 10 a.m. The place is the United States District Courthouse in Hauppauge. That's when the ratepayers can have their say, and tell Judge Weinstein and attorney Vladeck that the agreement is neither fair, nor reasonable and adequate, and should be rejected. The settlement permits LILCO to continue pushing Shoreham down the throats of the people. The only fair, reasonable and adequate solution is to close Shoreham, with affordable future rates, or close LILCO.

And why not?

## Tonight's the night!

The growing mood of anger on the part of Suffolk County taxpayers continues to increase. A staggering county property tax increase, coupled with increases in most town taxes and in school districts as well, has given birth to a taxpayers' revolt of enormous proportions.

The public's anger has, thus far, been expressed in angry letters to publications and in calls to legislative offices. The mood has been fraught with both outrage and frustration. Anger over the size of the rate increase, and frustration over an inability to do anything about it. But now, with the creation of an organized taxpayers group to strike back, there is hope. And tonight's the night this retaliation begins.

As we have previously noted, Suffolk Life will host a meeting in its community room to begin the organization that will give the rank and file taxpayer a loud voice in future budgeting matters in governments, school districts and any other taxing entity that imposes a tax burden on the people. Scheduled to attend this

meeting are volunteers who have expressed an interest in providing the leadership to create town chapters of the taxpayers' group. Town chapters, working under a countywide umbrella, would give the public a unified voice in fighting the spending habits of public officials which add to the tax burden upon the people.

The plan is to set up committees within each town group to oversee the spending practices of county and town governments, school and library districts, and other tax entities which are financed through taxes. These watchdog committees would then report back to the town group, where evaluation of the data and a plan of action can be prepared.

Until now, the only lobbies our public officials have heard from are those who seek funds for special interest programs and projects. These lobbies have been successful in the past in coercing the officials into adding more dollars to the taxpayer's burden. With the creation of the unified taxpayers' organization, the rank and file taxpayer will now have a voice.

That voice, in the form of anger already expressed, has had an impact. An outpouring of opposition caused congress to turn tail and vote down tremendous salary increases which had been proposed. And here in Suffolk, the anger generated by a whopping rate increase in county taxes has brought forth a number of cost saving proposals aired by politicians who see the handwriting on the wall. They know that the public is fed up, and hope that the various proposals they announced at various press conferences will douse the anger before the November elections, when their futures are at stake.

One could ask, of course, where all these cost cutting plans were before the public outrage began. Why the cuts in spending now proposed were not put in place before the budgets soared as they did. The answer is simple: the public officials bow to the pressure aimed their way. The silent majority, the public, was forgotten in the rush to placate the loud voices of the special interest groups. Until now!

After tonight's meeting, the volunteer leaders will begin the process of scheduling meetings in each town. We will let you know when the meeting for your town is scheduled. We urge you to attend, to participate. Don't give up now because politicians are coming up with belated attention to soaring taxes. These plans are too little and too late.

We must continue to keep the pressure on those who spend our tax dollars, who keep asking for more so they can spend more. The message is clear: we will no longer tolerate wasteful spending, the use of our tax dollars for patronage to keep a political welfare system alive. We will not be satisfied with tax caps, or token cuts. We want an end to grandiose spending plans. We want cuts in spending, meaningful cuts, and lower tax rates.

And we will remove from office any public official that doesn't heed our message. Now!

And why not?

## A word to the wise

School districts throughout the county are now involved in the preparation of next year's budgets. Interestingly, these budgets will be the first opportunity an angered public will have to strike back against the growing tax burden. Hopefully school officials have sensed the public's angry mood and will take the necessary steps to put forth budgets which reflect sincere attempts to pare needless spending. If not, there's trouble ahead.

Many school officials are now pointing to the state and blaming growing financial burdens on an outdated state aid formula. "It's all the states fault," they declare, "because the state aid has not kept pace with the escalating cost of providing education." Undoubtedly there is some justification in these charges, but we think school officials had better start looking in

mirrors to see the real culprits.

The major problem is spending. Getting more dollars from the state will result in higher taxes on the state level. It transfers the problem, it doesn't solve it.

School districts had better start looking within themselves to find ways to economize. Efforts to get more state dollars will not bring the immediate relief that is needed to satisfy the public's demand for tax relief. School officials have an opportunity to show the public they have heard the cries of anger and have responded, or face a record number of budget defeats.

A word to the wise, to school officials: look hard and cut deep.

And why not?

## It's now or never

Taxpayers in Suffolk County are in an angry mood as the result of a tremendous increase in the county tax rate this year. A full scale tax revolt is in the making, with people from all walks of life vowing to fight back. The first battle in this war against wasteful spending will take place on March 14 in the legislative meeting room of the county legislature building in Hauppauge. The public's turnout at this meeting will determine the success of any effort to bring taxes under control. It's a now or never situation.

On tap at the March 14 meeting are public hearings on two tax cap proposals, another which would terminate the western court complex plan for which costs are continually escalating, another which calls for a freeze on salaries for county employees and officials, and still another that calls for a freeze of the discretionary portion of the county's operating budget. These proposals could cut millions of dollars from future budgets.

This meeting will be crowded by people who are opposed to these measures. Members of the construction unions will be on hand to fight the proposed cancellation of what promises to be a bigger boondoggle than the Southwest Sewer District, the court complex. Western Suffolk attorneys who want a plush workplace nearer their homes will oppose. County employees will be on hand to battle against any salary freeze. All will be present to pressure the legislators to kill the proposals. The voices of these pressure groups have been heard before and have been, for the most part, responsible for many of the budget increases which have caused the escalation in county tax rates.

The one missing voice in the past has been that of the taxpayer. Public apathy has been a major reason the pressure groups have successfully swayed the actions of legislators. And it will happen again if the public

does not appear at the March 14 meeting to back the actions of legislators who have put forth tax cutting measures.

The outpouring of public anger at the whopping tax rate increase has gained the attention of public officials. While the tax caps now being proposed are not the answer--taxpayers want a tax cut, not a cap which would allow increases of four percent--they are a start. They would be on the ballot in November and the taxpayer will have a say in the future of these proposals, plus others that are sure to make the ballot as well. But all of these measures will be for naught if the public does not turn out at the March 14 meeting.

It's now or never. If you have had enough of skyrocketing taxes, make plans to be at the March 14 meeting. The meeting is scheduled at 5 p.m., with the early hours devoted to matters adjourned from the previous meeting. Discussions of the tax cut will no doubt last long into the evening. The legislative complex is off Veteran's Highway, north of the expressway. It has been recommended this meeting be held at the Hauppauge High School, where sufficient room is available to handle the large crowd expected. Thus far Presiding Officer Gregory Blass has not seen fit to make this change. He should, and should make every effort to inform the public if he belatedly does.

It's now in your hands. You can bring about a reversal of the spending habits of the past if you invest just one evening to deliver a firm message to public officials: "We're serious about putting an end to tax increases. We won't allow you to tax us out of our homes. We're fighting mad and we are not going to take it anymore." Don't depend upon others to fight your fight. If you are concerned about taxes, be there!

And why not?

## Did it again

Governor Cuomo announced recently he had signed a new deal with LILCO for the closing of the Shoreham nuclear power plant. We applaud him for his efforts to close this plant once and for all. We condemn him, again, for the deal that he has made.

The governor, for some strange reason, has a fixation with keeping LILCO in business with its management intact. The management of this company squandered its ratepayers' money in their attempt to build a nuclear power plant where it never should have been built in the first place. It took what was a good, solid, well run company and brought it to the verge of bankruptcy. In doing so,

it lied and cheated, causing the people who must buy the product to pay more than they should, with rates slated to be the highest in the nation.

The governor's deal bails out the company and rewards its incompetence. The governor's deal, if the Public Service Commission approves, will result in rates that will bankrupt thousands of small businesses and homeowners who just won't be able to financially meet the cost of electricity.

Why the governor, a Democrat, a man who calls himself compassionate, is willing to trade off the financial health of the small, defenseless citizens for that of a

greedy, mismanaged corporation is known only to himself. Although at this writing we have not seen the full details of the deal, we only have a release of the governor's announcement, his new agreement with LILCO smells just like the last one with the one exception, there is no guarantee, nor is there a cap, on the rates. What the rates will be in the future will be determined by the Public Service Commission.

As we are all too painfully aware, the staff and administrative judges of the Public Service Commission have been in the pocket of the utilities for years. Frank Robinson, the administrative judge on many of the Shoreham hearings, confided during a recess in one hearing that his primary concern was the financial health of the utility. Impact on the ratepayers was of secondary importance, he said.

Ralph Marino, last fall in an interview here at Suffolk Life, pledged to this newspaper that he favored a total shake-up of the Public Service Commission, including the election of Public Service Commissioners. Marino is not only a senator from Long Island, he is the senate majority leader, the second most powerful person in the state. His support for a major revision in the Public Service Commission is vital for the financial future of Long Island.

The governor's deal makes it imperative that Public Service Commissioners be elected by the people they are setting rates for. Public Service Commissioners presently are appointed by the governor, and

## Taxpayers unite

We are off and running. At an organizational meeting held at our offices here at Suffolk Life last Wednesday night, a group of citizens from all walks of life from all over Suffolk County gathered with one common goal, cut taxes.

Temporary chairpersons from each town were selected by the representatives from those towns. Temporary chairpersons will meet this week to adopt a structure for the organization, a name and a preamble which will outline the specific goals of the countywide taxpayers organization.

Briefly these goals are: One, to roll back taxes to levels not higher than those when the legislature first passed a cap on taxes. Two, to have a law passed that prevents politicians on the county, town and school board levels from introducing budgets that will raise taxes above the rate of inflation, or the rate of increases in assessed valuation.

The taxpayers organization is looking to strip government down to a size that can be afforded. This means the complete elimination of duplication, patronage and special

are approved by the senate. They have a history of being totally responsive to the utilities and ignoring the realities of the impact of rates on the ratepayers. They have allowed themselves to be lied to, to be given false information on which they were supposed to make intelligent decisions. They have collected salaries from the citizens of the State of New York, while not doing their job. Incompetent, insensitive, corrupt--who knows?

The facts are, the Public Service Commission and its members and staff are as much responsible for the financial implications of the Shoreham fiasco as the board of directors of LILCO, the NRC, and the governor. They could have stopped the fiasco at any point in time by refusing to give LILCO the money to continue the construction of the plant. But the PSC, and Governor Cuomo, did nothing to protect the people.

We, the people, must have the right and the power to select members of the Public Service Commission who are free of utility control and are responsive to our needs, as well as to those of the utility. The commission must have a staff that is honest, and whose word can be taken as gospel.

It's time for Marino to show what he is made of and to live up to the pledge he made here at Suffolk Life. It's time to fight for a new Public Service Commission, elected by the people of the State of New York, and a new regulatory staff to go with it. It's time the people are protected.

And why not?

interest contracts and programs.

The organization, once the structure is in place, will hold local meetings in every community. The taxpayers organization will seek the involvement of every citizen who pays taxes directly or indirectly. The group intends to be the unified voice of the taxpayer, investigating, probing and demanding that we get the maximum bang for each buck we spend.

Putting together the organization will be a time consuming effort. To be more than a flash in the pan and to have substance and sustaining power, great care must be taken to build a proper organization with the proper people at the helm, people who have the taxpayers' concerns uppermost and will not use this organization as a political stepping stone.

We believe the time is right for a unified taxpayer lobby to bring reckless spending under control, and tax rates back to reality. We give this organization's efforts our 100 percent backing, and urge all residents to get involved.

And why not?

## Message to the spenders

# Hell no, we won't go!

The headline of this editorial is a message to those who spend our tax dollars. You are not going to drive us out of our homes or off Long Island. You are going to reduce our tax burden. You are going to eliminate those expenditures which you have added so gleefully over the last several years which have driven up the cost of our taxes. You have brought us to the point where we have to say "no."

Over the last several months you have heard our voice. Come this spring, when we vote on school budgets, you will feel our force. Those school boards and administrators in districts that have had declining enrollments and increased budgets will have to explain why, in terms that we can understand, or these budgets are going down to defeat. No more hiding funds, no more roll overs, no more reduced class sizes, no more luxurious options.

Strip the programs back to give our children a quality education, one that enables them to receive a Regents diploma and qualify for college or be prepared to go into the work world with a thorough knowledge of reading, writing, spelling and math.

County officials approved a number of spending and tax caps going back to 1983. Some of these measures were in the form of referendums which we, the voters, overwhelmingly passed. We now expect county officials to roll taxes back to where they were when these laws were first passed. You have found ways to circumvent our vote and our will. You have proved you were creative and you know how to juggle numbers. Now you had better figure out how you are going to cut the cost of county government to bring it into line with the laws you passed and the laws we voted upon.

Don't have the audacity to try and give us anymore phony promises that you have no intention of keeping. Prove by your vote, not your rhetoric, that you will cut back on the cost of county government. We are ready to do without a whole host of programs you told us we wanted.

Read us loud and clear; what we want is to be able to afford to live on Long Island. This means a substantial cut in our real estate taxes. This means no increase in sales tax. This means we want you to tell us of the plans that you have to reduce spending low enough so that we can not only roll back property taxes, but sales taxes as well.

The same message pertains to our towns. We want town government cut back. We want programs and services eliminated so that we have barebones

government on every level. The first and most important objective we have as citizens of Suffolk County is to be able to continue to afford to live in our homes. Thousands have already given up. They have abandoned Long Island even though their families, their friends and their roots are here. Those of us who have decided to stay are going to fight you tooth and nail.

You are either going to do the job you were elected to do, or we are going to throw you out of office. This is no flash in the pan that will subside. Taxpayers throughout Suffolk County are organizing.

One would not have to have a crystal ball to predict that a meeting held last evening, after this editorial was written, was the scene of mass bedlam caused by too many people trying to occupy too small a space. It was not by accident or by chance that this condition occurred. It was by design. And it spotlights the arrogance that lives at the county level.

The purpose of last evening's gathering was the holding of public hearings on a number of tax cutting proposals. One was the cancellation of a western court complex, a building scheme that is destined to cost the taxpayers untold millions of dollars, but one that is strongly supported by lawyers, judges, and construction unions who see big paydays ahead as a result of the project. It didn't take a lot of common sense to know that a large crowd would be on hand for this hearing.

A couple of tax cap proposals were also scheduled for last night's meeting. Although strongly supported by the public, such proposals are the enemy of special interest groups who see their favorite programs being scuttled as a result. It didn't take much common sense to know that these special interest groups would be well represented at the hearing.

A proposed salary freeze for county employees was also to be the subject of a public hearing. It didn't take any common sense at all to know that hearing would draw a tremendous number of county employees to register their opposition.

In addition, the members of the tax revolt army who are fed up with the spending habits of county officials, and the huge tax increases they bring, could be expected to be on hand. It didn't take common sense to know

This past week, a political action committee, Tax PAC, officially came into being. It is being carefully structured to have longevity. It will be represented in a democratic way by taxpayers from every walk of life throughout Suffolk. The organizational structure of Tax PAC is that of a political party. Every election district throughout Suffolk will have a representative, a town chairperson and a co-chairperson. Tax PAC will monitor every spending and tax entity within the county. It will identify fiscal waste and incompetency. It will bring substantial recognition and publicity to

those who do not adequately represent the taxpayer. Those elected officials, whether they be school board members or county legislators, who show real fiscal conservatism will be supported.

The day of the political free lunch in Suffolk County is over. We are not going to run. We are not going to hide. We have joined hands as an army. We will be a force that you will reckon with today, and in the future. We will fight to keep elected officials from taxing us out of our homes and this area we choose to live in. And we will win.

And why not?

## Display of arrogance

that all of those looking to support their own causes, and the outpouring of the public fed up with tax increases, would produce too large a crowd to be accommodated in the legislative meeting room where the meeting was scheduled.

There was an alternative. The nearby Hauppauge High School contains a large auditorium where the crowd would have had sufficient room. Numerous calls were made to the office of Presiding Officer Gregory Blass asking that the hearings be transferred to that facility. Blass refused. That refusal was not based on common sense. It was based on arrogance. The legislative meeting room could hold only a small number of people, thus the legislators would not have to face the entire crowd at one time. The overflow would be out in the hall. A Blass spokesman said they would make sure the speakers in the hall were working properly. That's nice. That really shows concern for the people. If Blass played his cards right, those who were opposed to caps and freezes and the like would be inside, and the others, the public, would be outside in the hall. Out of sight, out of

mind. Just like it has been all the while the spending frenzy has been going on.

Blass is not the only one to blame. The rest of the legislators did nothing to force the issue. One told Suffolk Life he had recommended the meeting be switched to the high school. He recommended. Why didn't he demand? Are all of our legislators so weak they can't take a stand and demand what's right for the public? Are they Blass puppets or representatives of the people?

This is the way things stood as of Monday morning. It may well have changed before the meeting was held last night. Hopefully some common sense prevailed. If not, we would suggest the public pick up the phone, dial their own legislator, and read him or her the riot act. Let them know this is the way things were done in the past, but the times have changed. That meetings of this type should be held in several locations in large enough facilities. And that those who do not want to serve the public in such a fashion will be targeted for defeat in the November elections.

And why not?

IF FOR ANY REASON,

**SUFFOLK LIFE**

NEWSPAPERS

IS NOT DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME OR P.O. BOX  
ON WEDNESDAY BY THE MAILMAN,

PLEASE CALL

**516-369-0800**



## Easter 1989

Easter is the most joyous holy day of the Christian world for it is the celebration of the opening of the gates of heaven for those who believe.

During the next four days, Christian churches throughout Suffolk will celebrate, in different ways, the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, and his glorious resurrection. During these special holy days, we all have an opportunity to reflect upon the sacrifices God made for all men. We should examine our lives to see whether we personally are in sync with his love for us.

Each of our houses of worship is special in one way or other. There is one very special place and we strongly encourage you to visit it, the

Shrine of Our Lady of the Island. This sanctuary is located just off Sunrise Highway in Manorville.

We have visited this living church on a number of occasions and have never come away without inner peace. The facility has a life-size Stations of the Cross. The walk of the stations is through the woods. Not only do the stations reflect their symbolic message, but their co-existence and serenity with nature add a special dimension that has affected both Christians and non-Christians alike. We're sure you will enjoy a visit to the shrine.

The staff here at Suffolk Life wishes all our readers a very special Easter.

And why not?

## We need your request

For close to 30 years, Suffolk Life has been sent to its readers free of charge or on a voluntary paid basis. We want to continue sending you Suffolk Life free of charge, and you can help us make this possible. To obtain our goal of gaining second-class requester status, and to continue sending Suffolk Life free of charge, the Post Office requires that those who receive the paper have submitted a request to receive the publication. The Post Office requires those who wish to continue receiving Suffolk Life to print their name and address on the form which appears on the front page of this edition, and to sign the form.

We request that you either print the computer number found on the address label on the front page of your paper, or tear off this label and place it in an envelope with your requester form and send them back to us.

There are some distinct benefits to you and to us for doing this. If we are able to obtain sufficient responses, we will be able to increase the number of pages, which will enable us to include additional features such as sports and other articles of interest. We will also be able to better serve, and thus increase, our advertisers who bring you the best values the business community has to offer.

For almost 30 years, we have been your watchdog, your partner here on

Long Island. We have led many a fight on your behalf over the years. We have always tried to be the advocate of the average citizen, so much so that we have gained the reputation for being the "people's paper," a publication that cares about the readers it serves.

We have fought big business over Shoreham/LILCO. We have fought the county government over taxes. We have demanded productivity and accountability from school boards and from town boards. Photographically we have covered as many of your function as time and space would allow, giving particular attention to the accomplishments of our youth and the dedication of our volunteers who serve the community. We have given you a voice of your own through the "Letter to the Editor" section, and have expressed your viewpoints editorially. Your response to this request will enable us to do an even better job in serving you.

It's very important that you join with us in this effort to make Suffolk Life a better product. Please do your part. Please send in your signed requester form today. Mail it to Suffolk Life, Circulation Department, P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, NY, 11901.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this request.

And why not?

## Number One Target

When you received your tax bill with its enormous jump in taxes, your anger was directed at the county executive and the legislature. Rightly so, as the county portion of the bill you received from your town had jumped 50 to 200 percent, depending upon the town you live in. A further look at your bill should indicate that on an average, 60 percent of the amount you are being taxed goes to fund education.

We all must pay taxes for education whether we have children or not. How much we pay is up to us. We elect the school boards that make the budgets. We then have the opportunity to also approve or reject the budgets. At annual budget hearings, the administration and superintendent present to the voters a lot of gobbledygook. Some of it true, some hidden facts, some outright misstatements of truth.

The most common misstatement made is that 85 to 90 percent of the budget is mandated by the state. That's only half true. The state lays down a basic curriculum for all schools to follow. Adherence to this curriculum allows students from kindergarten to 12 to receive sufficient education to achieve a Regents diploma. The cost of bringing these mandated items to the students averages between 42 to 49 percent of the budget.

The second portion of the budget is made up of specific electives that the school board has added to the curriculum. These items may include additional gym periods, additional art and music, additional math, science or languages above those required by the Board of Regents. These and many other electives that the school board has chosen to include in local budgets makes up another 40 to 45 percent of the budget. Once the school board has chosen to voluntarily give these items, how they are given and their cost are mandated primarily by the state. If they are not given there are no mandates. They are just choices that the school board has made. They can be eliminated from the budget and school budgets can be reduced by these costs.

The last portion of the budget includes the goodies that the superintendent and the school boards use to blackmail parents into getting out and working for the passage of the budget. These include extracurricular sports, and busing shorter distances to the school than is re-

quired by the state mandates. One district we heard of goes so far as to bus every student, even the kids that live just one block away. Other items range from cafeteria services to special educational trips. These are the most people sensitive programs.

During the next few weeks, nominations will be taken for school board candidates. If you care about your taxes, you should consider running for school board. Teachers and those connected with the schools will field slates of candidates for these positions. To us, this has always smacked of allowing the fox into the hen house.

Isn't it time for the people who pay the bills to become involved? If you have expertise in business management, accounting, law, and you feel you could be a productive member of the board, why not consider running?

Also, during the next few weeks many of the school districts will be in the final stages of preparing their budgets. We encourage you to get copies of the forthcoming budgets and copies of last year's as well, go to the budget hearings, ask questions, and settle for nothing less than clear, honest answers.

Look at the ratio of the number of students being educated in your district today compared to that of ten years ago. If your district enrollment has gone down and the budget has gone up, demand honest answers as to why. Find out what the cost of educating a student was in the past and what it is today. If the cost of educating a student has increased more than inflation, find out what they have spent your tax dollars on. Was it essential?

Of equal importance, demand to know how our students are fairing against those across the nation, in comparison to how much we are being taxed for.

Let's stop looking at schools as the sacred cow that we continue to throw money at and ask nothing for in return.

A few weeks ago, I picked up the Virginia Patriot. An editorial asked why American children were ranked 58 and 60 on a list of 60 countries in reading and math. How can two-thirds of the American students polled, who had placed 60 on a list of 60, say that they felt they were doing well or better than well in math?

It's up to us, all of us, to cure the educational sickness in America, its cost and lack of productivity.

And why not?

IF FOR ANY REASON,

**SUFFOLK LIFE**

NEWSPAPERS

IS NOT DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME OR P.O. BOX  
ON WEDNESDAY BY THE MAILMAN,  
PLEASE CALL

516-369-0800

## We want what we voted for

In 1983, Suffolk taxpayers had had it. Legislator Joe Rizzo responded to their demands, introducing and getting passed a law that capped Suffolk County spending by allowing for a four percent annual increase in discretionary expenditures. The only way the cap could be pierced was by a three-fourths majority of the legislature, and this was only supposed to be done in an emergency. The law was overwhelmingly approved by the voters as an amendment to the county charter.

The intent of the law was clear; county government had been growing too fast, taxing too much. The taxpayers wanted limits put on the reckless spending of the politicians. The law was to be implemented commencing with the 1986 budget.

Based on information obtained from the county, the adopted general fund tax rate in 1986 was \$2 per thousand dollars of full value. The full value of property subject to tax levy was about \$29.3 billion.

Between 1986 and 1989, the full value of property subject to tax levy increased to about \$47.7 billion. Based on the 1983 law capping discretionary spending, the general fund tax rate should have dropped to \$1.12, before adjustment for any surplus from 1988. Instead, the tax rate we

pay today is \$3.63, an increase of 38 percent over the rate adopted for 1988.

Last week on Tuesday night, the Suffolk County Legislature heard the anger and frustration of the taxpayers. The message was loud and clear. Roll back taxes. We have had it with conniving politicians. If you do not accomplish what we voted for, get out or we will throw you out.

In plain and simple terms, the voters want the tax rate rolled back to the \$1.12 it should have been this year under the 1983 law. You are the people we elected. We put our trust and faith in you. How you get back to the \$1.12 rate is your job.

Develop a budget for 1990 that reflects the \$1.12 rate or, if the full value of property increases again, reflects a further decrease, and you may be re-elected. Fail to do it, and you have an army of opponents who will settle for nothing less than your being run out of this county on a rail.

You have put us in a position of being taxed out of our homes. As President Bush said, "Read my lips." We are not going; you will go unless you do the job we elected you to do. Roll back taxes to reflect the intent of the law, nothing less.

And why not?

## Bureaucratic idiocy

A feature story by Suffolk Life reporter Julia C. Mead last week focused on the courageous battle by Mrs. Lillian Juliano of Rocky Point to overcome the impact of a terrible accident and to restore her life to as useful a level as possible. To achieve that goal, however, she had to battle bureaucratic idiocy which became a major obstacle in her path.

Mrs. Juliano's life was shattered as the result of a 1977 accident which left her a quadriplegic. For ten years she was confined to her home. Unable to do anything without assistance, she relied upon county health aides to come to her home twice a week, and visits by a county health nurse twice a month, with Medicare covering the costs.

But Mrs. Juliano was not content to just sit home. With the help of a state grant, she enrolled in a class at St. Joseph's College, achieved straight A's and began an internship in gerontology, a course of study she hoped would lead her someday to a job counseling the elderly.

Everything was going fine until she attended an internship session at a Shoreham day care center for senior citizens, offering an opportunity to learn first hand some of the problems of the aged. A county nurse was also present, and reported

Mrs. Juliano's presence at the home to county health officials. Shortly thereafter she received a letter signed by a county health employee which stated that her Medicare benefits had been revoked.

Why? Because, county officials declared Mrs. Juliano had violated "homebound status," which ruled she could leave her home only to visit a doctor, and for no other reason. Because her Medicare coverage was revoked, Mrs. Juliano faced more than \$400 in costs to continue receiving home visits for the assistance she needs.

Mrs. Juliano acquired the services of New Hyde Park attorney Charles Roberts, a legal specialist in Medicare cases. They went to court and won. She was granted reinstatement of Medicare eligibility, retroactive to the time they were revoked.

While that's good news for Mrs. Juliano, it doesn't help anyone else in a similar situation because our bureaucratic idiocy doesn't work that way. "Even though you win one case, the government never changes the standard because it knows these aged and disabled people cannot get attorneys and the government thinks it's saving money," attorney Roberts states. "The ridiculousness of this shortsighted policy is that people

who don't have the strength and family support system that Lillian Juliano has wind up in nursing homes at a far greater cost not only to society and to taxpayers, but also to the individual."

The stupidity of this system is not only the fault of federal officials, but those of the local level as well. According to David Bekofsky, the county director of Health Education and Public Information, "The county does not make the rules, we just went along with the regulations set up by the (federal) Department of Health and Human Services." In other words, they took the easy way out. They enforced a regulation that is as wrong as any we have ever heard, a view apparently reinforced by the court decision.

Mrs. Juliano's attorney notes this policy winds up costing the government, and ultimately the taxpayer, more because it drives people into nursing homes. Or keeps them lock-

ed in their homes through fear. If for no other reason, and there are more important considerations, county and federal officials should kill this regulation for the economies such action would bring. But more importantly, the regulation should die because it hurts people who have already known too much hurt in their lives. It stifles their initiative to regain a useful status in life. It serves no purpose other than penalizing people who should receive encouragement and assistance, not bureaucratic stupidity.

We call upon the county's congressional representatives and county health officials to target this idiotic regulation for extinction. There should be no need for anyone else to have to hire an attorney and battle for benefits they should rightfully receive. It's time to get rid of the ridiculous regulations that cause such hurt, and the bureaucrats who create them.

And why not?

## Listen now or pay later

At the recent legislative public hearings in Hauppauge when the public was, in large numbers, left out in the cold because of the large turnout, legislators tried to give the impression that they tried, but could not get, larger facilities to handle the crowd. In checking who did what and when, Suffolk Life learned that officials' inquiries into other facilities were not made until the morning of the hearings, hardly a dedicated effort to adequately serve the public.

The legislators could have made amends by holding a continuation of that hearing—the mayhem at Hauppauge was recessed until yesterday—during evening hours at a suitable facility, such as the eastern campus of the Suffolk County Community College in Riverhead. They didn't. The hearings were scheduled to be held at 9:30 a.m. in the county center.

There were charges—in our view rightfully so—that the scheduling of the hearing in the legislative facilities in Hauppauge was little more than an exercise in crowd control. With a limited number of seats within the hearing room itself, the legislators did not have to face the entire crowd at one time. With limited space in the lobby, the remainder of the gathering was barred from entrance, cutting down on the face to face confrontation between irate taxpayers and their legislators.

The same holds true for the Riverhead facility. The occupancy of

the meeting room is limited. Although the lobby is larger, and thus can accommodate a larger overflow crowd, the face to face factor is controlled. And the fact the meeting is being held during the daytime hours will limit the crowd tremendously. With tax rates soaring as they are, the taxpayers can't afford to miss a day's work to do battle with the spenders.

Two legislators, James Gaughran of Huntington, supported by Legislator Richard Schaffer of Babylon, initiated a call for an evening meeting in a facility large enough to accommodate all those who wish to attend. In late word as this was being written, we learned several other legislators have recommended similar action. And there has been a report that Presiding Officer Gregory Blass has prepared a list of dates and possible meeting places for additional public hearings on tax capping proposals. For the sake of the public which deserves an opportunity to be heard, we certainly hope these reports are correct.

The legislators should accept one simple fact. They can avoid the angry cries of the public, but they can't escape the wrath of the voters. They may be able to control the crowd at legislative hearings, but they can't control the turnout of voters at the polling booth. They can listen now, and make the changes being demanded, or pay later.

And why not?



If you could hold a square mile of sunlight in your hand, it would weigh three pounds.