

## They need parental support

When most people bring a child into this world, they accept the responsibility for raising that child until it is old enough to take responsibility for itself.

Few parents realize that children can declare themselves emancipated at 16 years of age, and as early as 14 years in some circumstances. The child can move out of the parents' house, ignore the parents' desires, wishes and authority.

How do they support themselves? They don't. These children are immediately eligible for welfare, and our benevolent government will find them an apartment or a house, feed them, clothe them and pay for their medical care. The welfare department then

goes back to the parents and says, you are responsible for your child. Here are the bills for our aiding your child in getting out from under your control.

Assembly is A-4468, in the Senate S-4886.

You may be saying to yourself, "my kids would never do that." But, we can tell you from experience the alarming number of

sure and refused authority.

Like any of the other tragedies of life, none of us are exempt. Your family could be affected next, and that is why you should join in supporting this movement, today.

Write to your state legislators at the addresses listed below:

**New York State Assembly, Legislative Office Building, Albany, N.Y. 12248.**

Legislators are: Dist. 1-Patricia Acampora; Dist. 2-Fred Thiele; Dist. 3-Debra Masarelli; Dist. 4-Steven Englebright; Dist. 5-Paul Harenberg; Dist. 6-Robert C. Wertz; Dist. 7-Thomas F. Barraga; Dist. 8-Phil Boyle; Dist. 9-John J. Flanagan; Dist. 10-James D. Conte; Dist. 11-Robert K. Sweeney.

**New York State Senate, Senate Chambers, The Capitol, Albany, N.Y. 12247.**

State Senators are: Dist. 1-Kenneth P. LaValle; Dist. 2-James J. Lack; Dist. 3-Caesar Trunzo; Dist. 4-Owen H. Johnson; Dist. 5-Carl Marcellino.

Write that letter today. It's important! And why not?

### Like any of the other tragedies of life, none of us are exempt. Your family could be affected next...

A measure has been introduced to change the age that children can declare themselves emancipated to 18 years of age from 16. We support this change and hope you will too. The legislation number in the

phone calls and letters we receive from readers, from all economic and social levels, who have lived through this nightmare. Parents who have provided love, care and concern, who had kids who succumbed to peer pres-

## Can we afford the increase?

Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney has proposed a 70% increase in the capital budget for Suffolk County. This will cost taxpayers \$48 million. Gaffney carefully spelled out the capital improvement projects he wants to spend money on. He did not indicate where the money was going to come from without a tax increase to fund it.

The legislators who are reviewing these expenditures should be asking some hard questions. What will be the impact on the tax rate? Are the proposed projects a priority? Capital projects are often pure pork. Do any of the proposed projects oink? Are any of the projects designed to serve special interest? Can any of the areas the capital projects are being planned for be privatized?

Elected officials seem to be doing very well financially for themselves. No, they

may not have gotten exorbitant increases in their salaries, but they have done an excellent job of putting family members into high paying, cushy jobs and therefore may not be feeling the economic pain that John Q. Taxpayer is.

Suffolk County and Long Island have not recovered from the recession. We have had very little improvement in the private sector of the economy. Most of our incomes are flat or we have seen a decrease in our earnings over the last five years. We had to tighten our belts to survive. Government hasn't and its massive appetite is strangling us. Most of us would like to fix our homes, put on an addition or put in a pool. These are capital improvements that we can't afford because we don't have the money. How can our government consider capital expenditures when we can't as individuals and tax-

payers?

We hope the legislators act sensibly and justify the expenditure of each and every dollar, just as the taxpayers must do.

And why not?

## Prove they're qualified

New York State Regents will now require all students in New York State to pass Regents exams in English, math, social studies and science to be able to graduate with a high school diploma. It's about time.

Students have been graduating from high school without the ability to read beyond an eighth grade level or do math beyond a seventh grade level. If they are lucky enough to get into a college, they face a year to a year-and-a-half of remedial education in the basics before they are allowed to take college-level courses. If they are less fortunate and go straight to work, they end up in the lowest paying jobs because they can't read simple instruction manuals, do not possess the logic skills to figure out how to do even the simplest tasks.

New York State students as well as their counterparts from around the country have obtained from schools the least amount of

education. They rank 59 out of the 60 industrial nations in the world in scholastic achievement.

We are delighted to see that the New York State Regents are finally addressing this critical problem. Schools are supposed to be educational establishments. It's reasonable for the taxpayers who are supporting these institutions to expect that the kids be given instruction that allows them to master the basic concepts of education.

We have put far too much emphasis on schools being baby sitters and institutions for socialization. We must return to the basics. No one should be allowed to graduate who cannot read, do functional math and have an idea of the world around them and the science of technology.

Maybe, now, there is hope for our kids after all.

And why not?

### For your schools

## Picking the spenders

We often think of school board members as people who are mainly responsible for the education of our children. This is an important part of the job, but masks the real responsibilities of board members.

Board members, by definition, are trustees of multimillion-dollar budgets.

Budgets that far surpass those of our villages, our towns, and our county. We spend a lot of time qualifying candidates for our local, municipal elections. Once elected, we follow them closely. This is not the case with our school board

candidates. Yet, their area of responsibility and the amount of money that they control is far greater than the authority that town and county elected officials have.

Because school trustees have so much say over such a large portion of our taxes (up to 70% of our real estate taxes), we owe it to ourselves to pay more attention to their selection.

School board candidates should be astute business people. They should have

experience in running multi-million dollar enterprises. They should be profit and bottom-line oriented. People who have the intellect and the skills to demand that every dollar that they spend be productive.

We can no longer afford to have the darling of the PTA or the representative of the educational establishment running

**Board members, by definition, are trustees of multimillion-dollar budgets. Budgets that far surpass those of our villages, our towns, and our county.**

multimillion-dollar enterprises from a vested viewpoint. School district budgets are not chicken feed, they are not being paid for with monopoly money. This is your hard-earned tax money they are spending and you better be sure of the qualifications of the candidates before you grant them this kind of awesome power that eats up 70% of your real estate taxes.

Trustees, school board members and approval of budgets will be voted on Tuesday, May 21. Mark your calendar and be sure to vote for those you feel are best suited to be given the authority to spend up to 70% of your tax money.

And why not?

## The point was missed

Do you agree that anyone who uses a gun in the commission of a crime should face a mandatory sentence?

Ninety percent of the people in America agree with this question. They are fed up with crime, period. They are appalled that people are able to walk away from serious crimes in the commission of which they have used a gun. Guns are not toys. Guns kill.

Under the current law, penalties for using a gun in the commission of a crime have been bargained away by the prosecutors. Liberal judges have not imposed sentences that reflect the seriousness of illegally using a gun. Under the provisions of this bill, liberal bleeding heart prosecutors and judges have discretion taken away from them. If a gun was used, the perpetrator will do time, no ifs or buts about it. No amount of whining will change the sentence.

This is what the National Rifle Association has been saying for years. They have advocated that if anyone uses a gun in the commission of a crime they face mandatory

penalties for doing so. This is the main part of a recently passed Congressional Bill HR125.

Unfortunately, although this is probably the most salient feature of the bill, it has come under criticism of the anti-gun lobbyists. The bill contains several different provisions, as federal legislation often does.

The anti-gun lobby zeroed in on the classification of one of the provisions and the definition of what is an assault weapon. In doing so, they totally ignored the critical element of the legislation, which is the bill makes it a federal crime to be in possession of or use a gun in a criminal manner.

If it comes down to a choice of banning alleged assault weapons owned by qualified American citizens and putting teeth in a law to ban the use of a gun in a criminal act, which side would you be on? Would you throw the baby out with the bathwater? Some anti-gun zealots are willing to do this. They should be prevented from doing so.

And why not?

**If a gun was used, the perpetrator will do time, no ifs or buts about it.**

## Stop squeezing the public

At the last legislative meeting, the Suffolk County Police Department's PBA tried an end run to have a measure passed that would have provided funding for additional over-time for the police at the cost of seasonal foot patrols for the communities.

Suffolk County's budget for police for the five West End towns is about \$393 million. Suffolk County's budget allowed for \$5,000,000 worth of overtime. The police have spent nearly two-thirds of this budgeted amount in the first three months of the year.

The budget also allocated \$200,000 for foot patrols that give a police presence on the streets of our communities and in our parks and recreational areas where people tend to gather in the hot weather months.

The public widely supports the physical presence of police on the main streets of our communities. They feel safer when they see a policeman walking a beat rather than a fleeting presence in a moving car.

Last year, the police won a huge increase above inflation in their arbitration case against the county. The ramifications of these higher salaries have had an effect on the amount the county must pay out in overtime.

Last year, the county brought the manpower of the police department up to its current level of 2,740 sworn officers. The elected officials believed what they had been told by the police brass that if they increased the number of officers,

**The public is entitled to have top value for every dollar they have taken from them in taxes.**

overtime would be controlled and reduced.

This has not happened. It's a typical ploy by both elected officials and the unions to threaten a cutback on the most desired and needed service in order to win a negotiated point. It works this way: pick out the items the public wants, threaten to eliminate them and get the public up in arms, demanding those services. When politicians add the extra bucks needed to do so, they claim it is because the public made them do it.

As we editorialized a few weeks ago on this issue, there has got to be room in a \$393 million budget to meet the needs and the desires of the residents and taxpayers and still keep this expenditure on track. The public has long been a supporter of the police. Suffolk County residents have allowed their elected officials to pay the highest wages in the nation for police protection, but even the generous Suffolk County taxpayers have a limit to what they can afford. It's time for the police unions to get real and realize that Suffolk County doesn't have a piggy bank and an unending supply of money to fill it.

It has often been suggested that civilian-type jobs that are being performed by police officers can be converted

to civilian positions. Civil employees make a fraction of what uniformed police superior officers make who are doing everyday, routine, safe jobs but are getting paid as if they were laying their lives on the line.

The PBA's end run was stopped last week by the personal intervention of County Republican Leader John Powell. There are those who criticize his personal involvement in going to the legislature. Powell is coming to realize that as leader of the Republicans, who have a super

majority, the buck stops with him. Powell is firm in his belief that good politics makes good government. If the buck is going to stop with him, he has a responsibility to act on the taxpayers' behalf and assert his influence where and when he can.

Powell comes out of the unions, but as a public official he has come to realize that you sometimes have to have courage, to stand up and say "no" if it is in the public's best interest.

The public is entitled to have top value for every dollar they have taken from them in taxes. The police have a right to just compensation. Always wanting more and squeezing the public is wrong. The public knows it and they should, too.

And why not?

## Mother knows best

This Sunday is Mother's Day. We wish all women who have brought children into this world, have nurtured them, cared for them and loved them a happy Mother's Day.

You are our heroes. You have been there when we have needed you and been there when we thought we didn't. Your guidance, your wisdom gives us a strong foundation to grow upon. Seldom do we say thank you. Rarely do we give you the respect that you deserve.

Let each of us in our own way make up this Mother's Day for the 364 days we neglect to treat you like a queen. Ironically, with Mother's Day just upon us, the New York State Legislature has finally given new Moms a gift. Although babies have been routinely tested at birth for AIDS, mothers were denied the results of that test.

Hospitals and medical personnel are now required to inform the mothers of newborn infants the results of such tests. Some women and their spouses are HIV positive and are not aware of it.

**You are our heroes.  
You have been there  
when we have needed  
you and been there  
when we thought we  
didn't.**

The illness is transferred to the child and unless the mother is aware of it, the child cannot be treated.

We can only imagine the ramifications of such a situation. A mother coping with an ill child not having any idea of the cause. Medical personnel treating a variety of symptoms without the knowledge of what might be the cause.

We are glad the legislature has passed this measure. It's the best gift that they can give to someone.

And why not?

## Subverting democracy

It's ironic that we trust our schools to establish in our students the principles of democracy, the privileges and the freedoms granted to us by our government. Unfortunately, some school officials do not believe in what they teach.

Having been involved with school boards and school board elections for almost 40 years, we have seen some of the stunts that superintendents and school boards have resorted to, to keep their fiefdoms out of the public light.

This year on May 21 all school districts across Long Island will vote on school board members and their school budgets. Suffolk Life is endeavoring to bring to all voters the names of the candidates, their backgrounds and their

superintendents are allowed to control access to the candidates, how is the public going to know who is the best candidate? How do we know what their positions on the issues are? Why should we trust superintendents to be honest and forward our requests for information? Remember the case of BOCES Superintendent Edward Murphy and his golden parachute, the million dollar ripoff of uninformed taxpayers?

Unfortunately, there are still superintendents who feel that the voters are a bunch of yokels who obediently should fall in line, pay their taxes and keep their mouths shut.

Every board of education should establish a policy that the addresses and

## You're paying for it

State Senator Norman Levy announced recently that the New York State Senate has approved legislation which has proposed slashing school taxes for disabled veterans in New York State. If a veteran has a V.A. approved disability of 40% or more, under the recently passed bill, which now awaits action in the assembly, they will receive up to a 50% reduction in their school real estate taxes.

Hey, what a great idea. What a great way for our New York State Senators to say thank you to our vets. Unfortunately, the senate's generosity begs the question on who and how his generosity will be funded.

Typical of the Albany politician, they create scenarios that grant tax relief to special segments. They do not provide the funding for this relief. They leave the local folks, the towns and the school districts holding the bag. These are the very same state officials who have already done their best to help destroy the educational system with cuts in state aid, and a lack of legislative action to bring relief to the overburdened taxpayers.

According to Levy, the measure "will allow localities the option and opportunity to assist those brave men and women who were severely injured while serving

our country." How nice it would have been if these senators had put their money where their concerns are and provided the disabled veterans with an exemption from the state income tax. Instead, they say to the local municipalities, you foot the bill. And the local officials will come under intense pressure if they dare say no, while the state senators will brag to the veterans: "Look at what we have done for you." In reality, they have done nothing.

When the exemptions are granted, and the tax base shrinks, school taxes will have to be raised for those that are left to pay. The senators will then fall back in mock horror and say, "Who, me? I'm a State Legislator. I have nothing to do with the increases brought about by your local town or school board." That's bull. We know it, and they know it. They just hope you're not smart enough to realize it.

We will be happy to applaud efforts to reward our disabled vets when and if the state comes up with the funding. If they can't, they are nothing but con artists and we have had enough of those in government. Let's remember in November.

And why not?

**Come on, give us a break! When a person seeks a school board seat, he or she becomes a public person.**

positions on the issues.

In a number of districts, superintendents have attempted to block our reporters from their assigned jobs. They have refused to give anything more than the names of the candidates. They claim that the addresses and the telephone numbers of the individuals are confidential information and is, therefore, privileged.

Come on, give us a break! When a person seeks a school board seat, he or she becomes a public person. The press has a right to be able to contact these individuals. We should not have to rely upon the superintendent forwarding our requests. Nobody died and made them God. What a convenient way for the superintendent to stack their board. The

telephone numbers of all candidates must be made public prior to the school board vote. The bureaucracy must be broken. It can be, if the citizens of the district demand that their schools and the administration be opened up to public scrutiny.

We hope every voter on Long Island remembers to turn out on Tuesday, May 21. The cost of educating our students and feeding the bureaucracy that has been built eats up 70% of the real estate taxes we pay.

The opportunity to participate in school board elections and budget votes represents grassroots government. We must take part in it or continue to suffer the consequences.

And why not?

## Vote, or don't complain

This coming Tuesday, May 21, school districts from one end of Long Island to the other will hold budget votes and elect school trustees.

School taxes are up to 70% of your real estate tax bill. Anyone over 18 years of age who is registered to vote in the general election is eligible to cast a ballot.

Traditionally, school votes have been ignored by most residents. This is tragic and has led to the huge increases in real estate taxes that we all suffer under. In no other area of our government do we have the ability to cast a direct ballot on spending issues.

School boards prepare budgets each year. Part of the budgets contain mandated items that the district is required to give by the State Board of Regents and Department of Education. These mandates cover about half of the average proposed budget. The balance of the budget is curriculum and electives that have been proposed by the members of the board of education, usually based on pressure from a group of community residents.

Some of the curriculum may involve a full day of kindergarten. Other curriculum may include enhancements to the language, math and English curriculum. Some enhancements border on the extreme, covering hobbies and cultural enrichments.

Traditionally, those who have a vested interest in the financial rewards of education have turned out and voted. Taxpayers have for too long ignored school elections. Those with a vested interest have been able to pass budgets at will, no matter how expensive they are to the taxpayers. They have stacked the boards with candidates representing the educational establishment and with parents who have a vested interest and want specialized programs for their individual children.

School costs are totally out of context when compared to the rest of the taxing entities. As an example, in the Town of Islip, the combined budgets of only seven of the town's school districts totals \$579,201,125. The budget for one of those seven districts (Sachem) is \$156,664,351. This is for the education of students basically from kindergarten through 12th grade. The town budget requires \$145,935,657 of your tax dollars and funds town government code enforcement, parks and recreation, cultural and senior citizen activities. They are responsible for the roads and garbage and a whole host of other town governmental expenses.

The county spends approximately the same proportion as the town. They provide police, courts, county parks, jails, health and welfare and other county functions. The county and town not only fund the expenses of the citizens between birth and 18 years of age but all the governmental

## Hidden cost retirement

A number of municipalities have proposed early retirement plans as a partial solution to today's hemorrhaging tax dilemmas. Depending upon the municipality, the early retirement schemes allow government workers as young as 50 years of age to prematurely retire. The argument in favor of the plans says that those are the highest paid workers and if we excess them, we don't have to replace them. In cases where they are replaced, we can bring the people in at entry level salaries.

expenses from cradle to grave for the rest of the population.

Over the last decade, the citizens and taxpayers of Suffolk County have increased the amount that they spend on education, enormously. Unfortunately, the students have not received the education we are paying for. Most students who graduate from high school have an impaired ability to read. They can barely do seventh grade math. Too many of our high school graduates have difficulty reading applications for jobs.

The majority of students who are accepted into college must take remedial courses before they can take college courses.

Our neglect in not voting in school board elections has created bloated bureaucracy and a wage scale for those involved in education that is two to three times as high as the average salary that is paid on Long Island.

School boards have never had to fear a large turnout at school board elections. This year, with all school board elections

**This year, with all school board elections being held on the same day and if the public participates in large numbers, the message will be clear.**

being held on the same day and if the public participates in large numbers, the message will be clear.

The public is involved, and they are going to be demanding accountability from the trustees

that they select.

Which candidates should you select? This is a hard question to answer. Candidates do not have political labels. It is difficult for voters to ascertain the true philosophy of the candidates. A few things you should look for and watch out for: school board members are trustees of multimillion-dollar budgets. They will decide what should be appropriate and for what. Do they have any business training? Can they understand financial data sheets and analyze financial statements? Do they understand the ramifications of actions that they may take today, or tomorrow? A key question is who is backing the candidates? Is their support coming from the educational unions? What is their agenda? Who do they profess to represent? Are they or any member of their family employed in education? Will they benefit from any contract they will vote on?

One thing every voter must understand, changing the system is not easy, it is a time-consuming process that may take years. Contracts may be in place that new boards will have to live with. To change the majority on the board it sometimes takes two to three years of trustee elections. Unless we start today, we are never going to get to tomorrow. If you give a damn where 70% of your tax money goes, vote. Don't pass up this opportunity.

And why not?

The fallacy of this argument is government rarely shrinks, it expands. A position vacated may remain open for a short period, but, unless permanently eliminated, it will be filled later, quietly.

Older workers often are the best workers. Older workers are known to have a work ethic that younger workers often lack. They have accumulated knowledge and experience that the younger workers often do not have. Of equal importance is that once these government workers are retired, they are not

gone. Many government plans continue health, and sometimes other benefits, until the employee dies. They are unfunded, long-term liabilities.

One comptroller from a small East End town has estimated that the cost of the current long-term unfunded liability for that town can easily be calculated at \$50 million to \$80 million. This obligation of the taxpayers does not show up under current accounting standards on the balance sheet. The unfunded liabilities are a time bomb about to explode.

The more people we push into early

retirement, the higher the liability is for the taxpayers of that municipality. All we are doing today is pushing off a financial obligation until tomorrow. When the total cost of these unfunded liabilities is finally revealed, many municipalities will face huge tax increases or the possibility of municipal bankruptcy.

Early retirement schemes are often shell games. One of these days someone in power is going to pick up the wrong shell and the shock will reverberate throughout the United States.

And why not?

## How late will budget be?

How late will the budget be?

Governor George Pataki presented the New York State Legislature with an outline of his budget three weeks earlier than it was due. The budget is now six weeks late. It is business as usual in New York State. Pure, raw politics that doesn't do the residents of New York State one damn bit of good.

There are three parts to the state government, the Executive Branch, the Senate and the Assembly. There are three leaders, Governor Pataki, Senator Joseph Bruno and Assembly Majority Leader Sheldon Silver. A budget can't be passed until the three agree.

As the school districts go out for voter approval next Tuesday, the boards can only guess as to what state aid they can expect to receive from the State. Voters

will be in the dark when asked to approve or reject budgets, without full knowledge about what tax impact they will face.

The Legislature stops the clock at midnight on May 31, a technical maneuver that allows them to keep arguing and fighting after the deadline for passage of the budget.

We have suggested in the past the clock should stop as well on the payments of all salaries of the Governor and the Legislature. When they feel the discomfort of losing their salaries for their ineptness, it might provide the impetus to do the job on time.

Stop the clock, stop the salaries and late budgets will be on time.

And why not?

## No need to be open

Last December, P.C. Richard raised a valid question: "Why should retail stores be open on Christmas Day?"

The idea is being discussed by the Legislature which is considering the enactment of a law requiring all retail stores to close on December 25.

We don't like the Legislature sticking its nose in business, but, at the same time, we agree with P.C. Richard that the stores should close on Christmas Day.

Anybody who has been involved in the Christmas selling season, whether a shopper or a seller, knows that this is a grueling period. Christmas Day is the main holiday during the year when families try to get together. The people who are required to work on Christmas Day are on the bottom of the seniority list and the least able to defend themselves.

What can you sell on Christmas Day that you did not sell the day before or won't sell on December 26? Sure, some people are given cash for Christmas

instead of a gift, but will it kill them to have to wait another 24 hours to spend it?

If only one store was open they probably would have a business bonanza. But, if the rest of the retail community opens up for fear of losing business, the market will be spread so thin that opening on this day will become a cost instead of a profit.

Of more importance is to remember the meaning of Christmas Day. It is one of the most important Christian holidays of the year. It not only has tremendous religious significance, but gives all of us an opportunity to be with our friends and our families.

If common sense and a sense of fair play can't voluntarily be achieved by the retailers, then we join in supporting P.C. Richard in the mandatory closing of retail stores on December 25.

And why not?

## One dirty joke

About a year ago, we heard about the scheme allowing businesses to do their part in keeping Long Island clean by adopting a mile of the Long Island Expressway. When we originally heard of the proposal, we were led to believe that the participants would be allowed to erect a small green and white sign, identifying their participation as is done in other areas.

We were dismayed to see billboards going up that are more advertising signs than designations.

Last week, as we traveled the Long Island Expressway, we were even more disappointed at the condition of the Long Island Expressway. In the past, the LIE was never noted as the cleanest highway in the nation, but it appears to us that

conditions have deteriorated.

We support the concept of private enterprise saving taxpayers' money, but this program does not seem to be working. It's a dirty joke. Wasn't there any oversight on the size of the signs or the colors that were used? What are the criteria for keeping the roads clean? How often are they cleaned and is anyone checking to find out if the schedule is being adhered to?

It seems to us that the firms paying for the signs should be screaming bloody murder. They are paying good money for the program and from the way we see it, they are being shortchanged. What a dirty joke!

And why not?

## A bargain in college education

Many parents and students are going deeply into hock to pay for a college education.

In private schools, tuition today can range from \$6,000 to \$15,000 higher in some of the top ivy league schools. In contrast, students can go to a community college, such as Suffolk Community College, for two years and secure an associate's degree for less than \$4,500.

Suffolk Community College was recently in the headlines as they are faced with the dilemma of either increasing tuition by \$80 per year or having the county increase its funding for the colleges by 15 to 20%.

For the county to fund this contribution it would have to pierce the tax caps that the legislature imposed to bring tax stabilization to Suffolk County. This would open up a whole can of new worms, as every department in the county would then use this as justification to exceed their budgets.

The college must increase funds to pay for the increase in salaries that the legislature authorized during the last contract negotiations. The legislature knew that this would be the ultimate outcome and accepted the responsibility when they caved in to the demands of the unions.

Currently, tuition at Suffolk Community College is \$1,050 per semester, or \$2,100 per year. An \$80 increase in tuition payments should not be the end of the world for any student. It should not preclude anyone from taking advantage of this great educational bargain.

Suffolk Community College has earned a good reputation as being a

down-home, grassroots college. As with most community colleges, they provide the students with courses and degrees that prepare them for the outside world and making a living. They are short on liberal arts and long on the meat and potatoes that students need for their chosen careers.

Students that do well at Suffolk Community College have little difficulty continuing their education at four-year schools. Most New York State schools give full credit for courses taken at Suffolk Community.

At a four-year state school, a student can generally get by for \$6,000 to \$7,000 in educational costs per year, as compared to private schools that can range

from \$10,000 to \$20,000 when room and board are included. The state college system is the last break that middle income residents have. They are one of the few ways we can afford to educate our children.

My own children all went to state schools. It was the only way that I could afford to provide the advanced education that they wanted and I wanted for them. When we first explored state schools we were amazed to learn how highly-rated some of them were.

My first son chose Albany and during our investigation we found that it ranked in the top 10 state schools in the nation, and was more highly rated than the majority of private colleges. Some 99%

of the students who chose to go on to law school from Albany were accepted, 66% who wanted to become doctors were accepted in medical schools. The tuition then was \$1,150 per semester.

A student who does not want to face huge debt after graduation, or whose parents cannot afford a heavy contribution, will find a community college a wonderful alternative. Tuition is reasonable and within reach. Students can continue to live at home, eliminating the need for outside room and board, and can work locally to help pay for college costs.

Last week in Suffolk Life we published Suffolk Community College's curriculum for the summer session. The three campuses are offering a huge array of courses in both general studies and career-specific offerings. Community colleges even have facilities so students can enroll for courses that can be taken from home during their free time through television and videos. Students can combine work and college. At the end of two years, a student can earn an associate's degree and be ready for the work force or go on to achieve a full four-year degree at a fraction of the cost of attending a four-year school away from home.

This is an alternative more people are taking advantage of instead of creating family and student debt that, in some cases, will take up to 10 to 20 years to dig out of.

An \$80 increase in tuition is reasonable. The school should not be afraid to make this move if it will ensure the quality of education that Suffolk Community College has become noted for.

And why not?

## Those little buggers

Tanger II, the second phase of the Riverhead outlet center, is being held up by the discovery of salamanders on the property.

Those little buggers, the darlings of the environmentalists because their presence can be used to stop any construction dead in its tracks.

Salamanders are no big deal. Eastern Long Island is the northernmost extreme for the survival of these creatures. They basically are warm weather reptiles. They are only endangered in this area because they don't have wings to fly south and they freeze to death.

In the southern states, they are so common that they are sold as bait. The salamanders, as far as we know, other than playing a minute role in the ecosystem, do not provide food, do not contribute to shelter, they are not pretty to look at even if you can find one because they have a tendency to hide.

They are valuable to those who want to stop all construction on Long Island. Steve Tanger's project is being held up as are many other major construction projects. Tanger should outfox the environmentalist by buying a million of these little buggers and turning them loose. We can see the environmentalists now, screaming, "You did not have a permit. You are upsetting the ecosystem. You have caused an overpopulation of salamanders that is going to make nature unbalanced."

Isn't there any common sense left in this world?

And why not?



## Honoring our veterans

The 125,000 graves at Calverton National Cemetery will be the focus of attention this Saturday as scouting groups and area organizations volunteer their efforts to place flags on the graves, honoring veterans in recognition of Memorial Day. Cub Scout Danny Ansbach and Brownie Amanda Riley place flags as representatives of groups who participate and representatives of the Armed Forces look on. They include, middle row, left to right: Pat Qualls (NYNEX Pioneers), Kathleen MacMenamin (Civil Air Patrol), Jessica Lynne Sullivan (International Order of the Rainbow for Girls), Sandra Sacks (Sayville Pilot Club). Back row: Tracy Lynch (Army Reserve), Damian McAleavey (Marine Corps), William Litchfield (Navy), Ken Dolan (Coast Guard), Richard Otterstedt (Air National Guard).

## A dredge upon our towns

The Suffolk County Supervisor's Association voted unanimously last week to oppose a bill approved by the Suffolk County Legislature requiring the towns to pay 10% of the county's dredging cost for projects within the town's borders.

The county, as part of the Public Works Department, operates a dredge that is used to clear waterways that have become silted over and filled in. This is a county operation. The towns have no say as to where the dredge will be operated, what project will be worked on, what the manning, the expenditures or what the budget is for the operation.

The county is pressed for money. In legislation proposed by Legislator Angie Carpenter, the legislature passed a scheme mandating that the towns be required to fund 10% of the dredging operation.

We believe the legislature is ill-advised on this ill-conceived scheme. We fail to see how they can unilaterally

transfer the funding of this operation from the county to the town. If they get away with this, what will they try next? Charging the towns for the county operation of the jail, the health department or any one of their other operations? They all serve the residents of the county, legislators might suggest, so why shouldn't the towns pay for these services?

Town taxes are raised for town purposes. County taxes are raised for the endeavors that the county is involved in. We have had enough of downward mandates, a higher form of government imposing their will on the local governments.

We are glad to see the 10 town supervisors unanimously opposing this crude attempt by the county to shift their burden to the towns. Hopefully, County Executive Gaffney will veto this measure. It's the right thing to do. He should know it as you now do.

And why not?

## On minimum wage

## No taxes

In this election year, the debate ranges on increasing the minimum wage by about 25%. One side argues that no one should be asked to work for a minimum wage that is below the poverty standards. The other side argues that only 5% of the nation's jobs are at the minimum wage level and most of these jobs are entry level jobs taken by youths or people looking to supplement their income. Increasing the minimum wage will eliminate many of these entry level jobs, precluding people from ever finding work.

Minimum wages, as all wages, are taxed by the government. There is Social Security tax, state and federal withholding taxes. Why not make minimum wage jobs tax free? This would give those seeking to enter the work force an immediate raise in their take home pay and an incentive to go to work. There would be no penalty for working, as there is right now. Why not reduce the amount taxed on the first few dollars that minimum wage earners earn?

A mandated increase in the minimum wage is a penalty on small businesses. A 25% increase in these wages will lead to either businesses not being able to survive or inflationary pricing. Instead of putting the full burden on businesses, why not let government become a partner in making opportunities available for the unskilled and bringing them into the system so that they can learn how to work and how to earn more and become productive taxpaying citizens as their wages increase?

And why not?

apts.  
reat.

## It's our money

A heated debate has developed between the environmentalist and the County government over how our tax money is spent.

In 1987, Acting County Executive Michael LoGrande proposed a catch-all tax scheme that was sold as an environmental protection program. It increased the sales tax by one-half of 1% through year 2000. Part of the funds were planned for acquisition of open space. Part of the funds were promised to the towns to be used for capping landfills. Additional funds were earmarked for the body, control and interpretation of the land acquired under the program.

The whole program was a deception that was cloaked as a means to protect our freshwater supply. LoGrande saw it as a taxpayer supported fund to take care of some of the environmental needs while, at the same time, taking pressure off the county government by eliminating the need to fund these items out of the current tax base.

Voters were sold a bill of goods that if they did not vote for this increased taxation, their water would be in jeopardy. Proponents used this as their centerpiece, arguing that we were protecting the freshwater for our children and their children. Although this was the main theme, it was far from the whole truth.

The program was a pay as you go proposition. As money was raised through sales taxes, the towns would share in the wealth. They would be able to take care of their local needs out of sales tax revenues, which towns do not normally receive. The sales tax dollars go to the county and the state.

In 1987, Suffolk County and the nation was in the heyday of a booming economy. Most everybody was making more money than they thought possible. Good jobs were plentiful. Wages were increasing. Overtime could be had for the asking. Businesses were earning record profits. Downsizing wasn't even a concept. The sales tax increase passed, but LoGrande lost his bid to be elected county executive.

The following year, former County Executive Patrick Halpin placed on the ballot a similar proposition. The biggest change was that the funding was changed from a pay as you go to bonding. Because bonding required interest, the usable funds were cut in half. Land prices were at an all time high. With the recession, real estate prices have dropped dramatically. Because of Halpin's change, we bought land at the height of prices and must pay interest from the one-half percent sales tax.

The fund has accumulated some balance. Last year, the county executive and the Suffolk County Legislature used part of these surpluses to stabilize taxes. The transfer of these funds allowed the county to reduce sales taxes by one-quarter of a percent and still pay its bills. The incomes of residents have been drastically reduced. The taxpayers are crying out for relief. Their priorities have

changed.

Richard Amper, executive director of the Pine Barrens Society, screamed foul. He wanted these surpluses and all future revenues to be used solely for acquisition of land. If Amper gets his way, taxes will have to be increased or services cut. Amper would prefer to have our tax dollars spent for acquisition of additional lands rather than to provide necessary services or give residents tax relief.

Amper's organization has proposed a ballot question to be included in November's election, directing that all monies acquired under the one-half percent sales tax be used for land acquisition.

We support ballot initiatives, but they should be done honestly and forthrightly. The question should be asked: "Should the county continue to tax residents a one-half percent sales tax for the acquisition of open space?" Let's not hide the issue behind pure water. Water has very little to do with this expenditure. The issue has to do with preserving open space. Let's determine and disclose the reason why.

Water that lies under the pine barrens cannot be pumped out and transported without a huge public works project that would make the South West Sewer District look like a drop in the bucket. Mains and pumping stations would have to be developed running from eastern Brookhaven and Southampton towns the length of Suffolk County. The project would require huge indebtedness that would have to be paid back through increased taxes.

We do not think that Suffolk County residents can afford this scheme. They don't have the resources or the ability to meet current tax burdens. If the water is not to be transported to the west, what value is a huge, untapped aquifer to the people? Does the West End need additional water supplies? What is the inventory of water reserves? How long will they last? Are there untapped, more economical sources closer to the need? If water is not the issue for the preservation of open space, is it worth the investment? Let's give our residents honest answers.

What value are scrub oaks and scrub pines to the public? Why preserve the worst soil on Long Island when we are allowing our rich farmlands to be developed? How much acreage do the people on Long Island want to own and maintain? What lands have already been purchased at what cost? Who owned the lands at the time of purchase? What ecological value did these lands have? Let's find out where the money already spent has gone. And why.

What can additional land purchases be used for? How many residents who are being asked to pay the bill will ever avail themselves of the limited uses that are now being proposed?

Let the debate rage. Let all the questions be answered honestly for a change.

lands for over 200 years. They have been subjected to poverty, but have survived. Some of these lands, such as the Shinnecock Reservation, were not considered of value because they were low lying and contained swamp and bogs. Today, they are considered prime waterfront properties. They are under Indian control and for the most part, remain pristine. These lands are sparsely populated because the native Indian and their descendants, by tribal law, cannot own specific pieces of property. With tribal permission they can build a dwelling and inhabit it, but they can never own the land on which it stands. They cannot get mortgages, thus, in most cases, can only put up small, inexpensive structures.

Indians, with tribal permission, can establish commercial enterprises. The more entrepreneurial have established smoke shops, souvenir shops and in upstate areas, gas stations and gambling facilities. They own the business, but the tribe owns the land.

The smoke shops sell cigarettes at \$5 to \$6 per carton under the price that retail stores charge off the reservations. The Indians do not charge sales tax, as taxes cannot be collected on the reservation. The reservations are sovereign nations that are not required to pay taxes to the state government.

Retailers surrounding the reserva-

tions have complained that this is unfair competition. In response, the state has ordered the wholesalers and distributors to collect the sales taxes and pass them along to the Indians who would have to pass them onto the customers. Without the price incentives, their businesses will fail.

The Indians statewide are vowing to fight back. The state has given them until July 1 to come into compliance. The Indians are in no mood to compromise and, as a result, negotiations are not moving forward.

We are curious to know why the state is devoting so much energy to closing down the Indians where there are so few reservations in the State of New York? We all know, and particularly our law enforcement agency is aware that the mob imports millions of dollars of non-taxed cigarettes into the state every year. They are sold at tobacco shops, gas stations, delis and bodegas. These black market cigarettes illegally avoid all state taxes, yet, rarely do you ever hear of enforcement. We have such problems because the state has placed high taxes on cigarettes. Our taxes are the highest in the nation and invite illegal actions.

If the state is serious about recouping taxes, let them go after the mob and leave the Indians alone.

And why not?

## What a difference a judge makes

Victor Yannacone, Jr. was elected Justice of the Peace in Patchogue Village. Patchogue, like most downtown areas, was succumbing to deterioration and rot. Once respectable homes were turned into apartments and rooming houses. Patchogue started to wither around the seams.

The village passed an ordinance requiring all rental homes to meet their minimum requirements or the landlords could face up to \$1,000 in fines for violations.

The passage of the law does not ensure compliance. Yannacone, as judge, has put teeth into the ordinance by enforcing the maximum penalties. Some landlords are facing fines up to \$30,000. He has gotten the landlords' attention and Patchogue is being cleaned up.

We have witnessed too many communities going down the drain because the laws were not vigorously enforced. Beautiful downtown areas were scarred and permanently ruined because the municipalities and the judges would not enforce the laws that were on the books.

Yannacone is making the difference and we congratulate him for having the guts to do the job that he was elected for. The landlords all scream foul, for they have become used to getting their way by beating the system. The system para-

lyzes itself when judges won't use the tools that they have before them to achieve the intent of the law. Slaps on the wrist don't work, heavy fines and persistent justice do.

Too often, landlords have been able to milk the system through postponements, delays and, when finally their case reaches the docket, they walk away with a plea bargain. In Yannacone's court, violators are swiftly brought to justice. They've met a judge who can't be buffaloed and doesn't have a bleeding heart.

Patchogue is revitalizing itself and the other towns and villages in Suffolk should take a chapter out of this village's book and use the laws that are on their own books to clean up their rot and ruin. If Yannacone can do it, so can every other JP who is sworn to uphold the law without favor or favoritism.

These are civil matters. Who knows, maybe even some of the judges who are trying criminal matters might get the idea that it is okay to be a hanging judge in this county. Imagine what the criminal element would think if they knew that in this County of Suffolk, crime does not pay. If you break the law, you pay the highest penalty for your crimes. Wouldn't it be nice to be safe again?

And why not?

## Heartbreaking

There are few sights quite as beautiful as a freshly tilled farm field. To us, it always has reminded us of the renewal of spring.

Likewise, nothing is quite as heartbreaking as seeing houses sprouting up over several feet of rich, food producing topsoil.

My old friend Doc Goode used to lament this scenario. Doc was close to nature. He respected man's needs and criticized man's wanton abuse of the natural resources that they were given. He

would point out that the good Lord had put plenty of sand and rich topsoil on Long Island. He used to say: "Build to your heart's content on the poor soil. Save the richer soil for growing and you will never be without a home or food in your belly."

In our land preservation scheme, the topsoil is what we should be saving, not just the pine forests that have trouble surviving on the poor sand. Both areas are part of our aquifer, one just has more value than the other.

And why not?

## Keep them on the reservation

Dotted throughout New York State are legitimate Indian reservations. They are the remnants of what once were the dominant Indian tribes that populated New York before the white man came.

Through barter, trade, theft and white man's rule, the Indians were regulated to what was considered some of the least productive land.

The tribes have remained on these