

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## "There, But For The Grace of God, Go I"

The elections are over with and now our attention turns to "The Group."

"The Group" is an unofficial gathering of people, who for the last 18 years have come together to help those who normally are capable of providing Christmas for their kids, but cannot do so this year.

The recipients of "The Group" normally are average working families who have experienced a once in a lifetime catastrophic financial reverse. They have suffered from illness, accidents or deaths, or other financial calamities.

These are cases where mom or dad (or both) have to tell the kids, "Santa won't be coming this year." As hard as they try to explain, the kids don't want to believe them. All around them they see the decorations. They hear their friends making up their wish lists.

Some of the families we help need to be clothed from underwear to outerwear. Of course, these kids also want the toys, the games, the books and the other gifts that bring such joy.

"The Group" raises the funds needed for this endeavor from the residents of Suffolk County. The families are qualified by a very close-knit group that verifies the legitimate needs. Lists are made up for each individual child and shoppers go forth on bargain hunting expeditions, making every dollar buy \$3 worth of merchandise. The shoppers never know anything more than the child's first name, their age, their sizes, their needs and their wants.

The week before Christmas is "Bedlamsville." Last year, over 3,500 gifts were boxed and wrapped, catalogued, inventoried, bagged and delivered throughout Suffolk County.

**The recipients of "The Group" normally are average working families who have experienced a once in a lifetime catastrophic financial reverse.**

Everything is done anonymously. The families do not know who helped them except by the name of "The Group." Their names are kept confidential, so there is no embarrassment and no publicity.

Most of us involved with "The Group" operate under a very simple premise. This year, we have been fortunate. We are ahead of the game and we want to share with others because we do believe, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." None of us knows when we are going to be toppled from our comfortable position, the security of our job, the paycheck at the end of the week. While we can, we want to reach out and help someone else less fortunate.

No one receives any recognition for either work or contributions. This is just pure goodness; A real charity. "The Group" has no administrative costs. We do not spend one cent on fundraising or bureaucracy. Everything is donated. Every penny raised goes to the kids. No one receives a salary. No receipts are given out for contributions. There is no board of directors, there are no administrators, just people working together hand-in-hand.

Somehow, without a formal structure, everything gets done, and most important, the kids wake up on Christmas morning with a wonderful Christmas and a belief in miracles.

If you would like to be part of "The Group," we welcome your participation or your donation. Please direct your correspondence to "The Group," P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

And why not?

## A long, cold, hard, look

County Executive Robert Gaffney released his preliminary budget for 1997. It calls for a tax hike in eight out of 10 towns.

Southampton's share of county taxes will increase 20%. Other towns do not fare as badly.

One of the county's biggest costs is welfare. Since 1993, the caseload is down 30%. Sales taxes for 1996 are coming in at \$16 million above what had been predicted. Taking these two items into consideration, one would expect taxes to come down. Instead, Gaffney plans on increasing our tax burden while spending those revenues created from the sales tax increase and the reduction in welfare.

We think this is bad government. Suffolk County residents have endured a long history of tax increases. Those increases have contributed toward forcing longtime residents to abandon Long Island for more cost-effective areas. Most hard-working residents have little discretionary money left over, and they badly need a tax break—not a tax increase.

The legislature has an opportunity to

examine Gaffney's budget thoroughly and carefully. The BRO (Budget Review Office) should go over his budget line by line. It is incumbent upon the legislature to look at this budget with a critical eye. Anything that is not a priority should be cut.

The economy on Long Island still stinks. We have not recovered from the recession. No one has replaced Grumman and there is no one on the horizon. Although Long Island has a great work force and many wonderful attributes that would normally attract businesses, new businesses aren't coming because they cannot afford to support the taxes demanded by government.

Until Suffolk County and all of its governmental entities can learn to be mean and lean, we will continue to be unappealing to businesses and we will continue to drive away our senior citizens when it comes time for them to retire.

Wake up, face the facts. We can't afford even a small increase in taxes.

And why not?



## It's the Follow-Through That Counts

In a coordinated effort between New York State Police, Riverhead Town Police and Southampton Town Police, approximately 67 street level drug dealers were rounded up and arrested. Warrants were put out for an additional 40.

Those of us who witnessed this extraordinary effort to eradicate drugs in our communities cheered. The police used the New York State Armory as a processing center.

Many of us were dismayed by the behavior of the family and friends of the alleged drug dealers who showed up at the armory and cheered the dealers as they were bused off to jail. It was like these alleged perpetrators were going off to war to serve their country and not to jail.

This incident is indicative of how this element of our society views drugs and drug dealers. In their minds, the dealer is a hero, someone who has earned the respect of their community by breaking the law and then mocking it.

These arrests were the culmination of a painstaking six-month dedication of our combined police departments. Each dealer is alleged to have sold drugs at least twice to an undercover agent.

Our streets will be safe again, right?

That evening, an acquaintance of ours was bike riding in the Riverside area of Southampton and passed one of the street corners that was notorious for drug dealing. She observed the dealers at work that very night of the arrests. They hadn't been stopped. They hadn't been thwarted. She asked, "Were they the same people who had been arrested that morning? Were they back on the streets already?"

Police officers bitterly complain that oftentimes, before they even finish the paperwork, perpetrators are back on the streets doing business as usual. We hope this was not the case and are looking into it.

We would hope that the judges involved set bails appropriately for these drug dealers. These dealers are the ones who are selling to our kids, poisoning their bodies.

But one of the police officers involved in the bust mentioned to one of our reporters that everyone of those who were picked up had a previous felony conviction. If this turns out to be true, it

adds credence to the phrase "turnstile justice."

The judges must be made to realize that if they let drug dealers go with low bail or light sentences they are as much of a problem as the drug dealers are themselves. It has been common practice to set low bail to avoid overcrowding at the jail. Low bail for those with prior arrests does not make any sense at all. It only invites the perpetrators to continue doing business as usual.

Likewise, accepting a plea bargain for such a serious crime, particularly one conducted by a perpetrator with a felony conviction on their record, sends a message that even if you get caught repeatedly, you are out in no time flat. The profits from illegal drug sales are worth the inconvenience.

Another acquaintance of ours, who once dealt street level drugs, told us he used to make \$500 to \$1,000 per day. When he was selling, he had no fear of the law, for the law had no teeth. It was common street knowledge that the courts didn't get serious about you until you had been convicted a half dozen times. He said, "What's the big deal about getting caught, a few nights in jail, a few days in the slammer?"

Our police have made the effort. We hope they are working on the second big bust, but if the courts don't do their job, the District Attorney accepts plea bargains, and the judges fail to hand out meaningful sentences, we might just as well give up.

If the District Attorney can't get meaningful convictions on the full charges, he should turn in his license to practice law and resign as the county's top prosecutor.

Judges should show no leniency to those convicted of drug dealing charges. This extraordinary effort gives the entire legal community an opportunity to work in lock step to show professionalism and coordination. The police have done their job. The District Attorney must prosecute to the fullest extent of the law and the judges must throw the book at the perpetrators. Only if all three branches of the justice system are in sync will the message get out.

And why not?



## On With The Work

The elections are over; now it is time to turn rhetoric into action.

The most serious problem facing the New York State Legislature is how to deal with the welfare reforms and the changes in the federal programs.

The New York State Legislature must figure out what programs, previously provided by New York, will have to be curtailed or eliminated to stay within the federal funding. If they don't stay within that federal funding, New York State's taxes will have to be increased and we will become a magnet for welfare recipients from around the nation.

Our Long Island delegation has a couple of items that impact the folks from back home. The Long Island Expressway is a state road. It is the obligation of New York State to police it. The delegation must make sure that there is money in the budget to either hire the troopers to do the job or to reimburse Nassau and Suffolk counties for doing that job. This should be the number one priority in every Senator's and Assembly member's work order.

The second item that the legislature will address this year is whether or not to give our communities the option of voting on casino gambling on Long Island. Last year the legislature voted on a similar bill, but it left New York City and Long Island out of the mix. We should be allowed to vote on this issue.

When the bill comes up again this year, every Assembly member and Senator from Long Island should make sure that

we are given the right to exercise our vote. We are not second class citizens, we are part of New York State. This is a statewide question and we should be allowed to participate in our government.

If you are a legislator and you are opposed to gambling, that's okay. Vote to give your constituents a choice and go out and campaign like mad urging a "no" vote.

The biggest issue facing the federal government is reining in and controlling our Medicaid/Medicare system. It is fraught with waste, fraud, and the cost of the program is growing faster than can be supported by the United States economy.

Clinton used this issue to scare the senior citizens. It obviously worked, but now is the time for honesty. The President and Congress must agree to appoint a non-partisan board to study, explore and make recommendations on how to save the system. Our senior citizens need this insurance, few can do without it.

How do we slow down the costs to bring them into line with what we can afford? There are a lot of great minds in America; let's find the best of them to come up with a nonpartisan solution.

We would like to thank all those who turned out last Tuesday to vote. You selected the people whom you want to represent you. You have done your part. Now, stay vigilant and make sure your elected officials deliver on what they have promised.

And why not?

## The Ability to Pay

When a New York State Arbitrator announced his ruling on the increases for the Suffolk County Police, most of us were shocked. Very few anticipated that he would grant a 5% increase for 1996-1997 retroactive to February and a 4% increase per year for the next three years.

Inflation has been running around 2.5% per year. Long Island is still in a deep recession and there is nothing on the horizon that will pull us out of it in a hurry.

Currently, Suffolk County police officers receive just under \$60,000 per year for a regular tour of duty. Suffolk County police officers are paid more than most town police, just a few dollars short of what a Nassau County officer makes, about \$15,000 more than a New York City police officer and about \$20,000 more than a New York State police officer.

Arbitrators generally play the salaries of one force off against the next. The Suffolk County police are among the highest paid in the nation. The base salary does not take into consideration overtime, benefits or the hours worked.

Most expected the police to get either a freeze for the first year and then only an increase comparable with inflation. This settlement is double the rate of inflation and it is going to have severe ramifications on the county budget; it will set a tone for the rest of the police and the municipal negotiations.

Arbitrators do not have to take into consideration the ability of the community to fund or afford these increases. This is the biggest weakness in the arbitration law. Arbitrators have a tendency to just write a blank check without giving consideration to the effect on the communities paying the bill. We need a change in the state legislation mandating that the communities' ability to pay be taken into con-

sideration.

Suffolk County is left with few options. They can raise taxes on their already overburdened taxpayers, driving more of them out of the county. They can cancel the cadet classes and allow the force to shrink back down to a 2,000-member minimum. They must look at privatizing all non-safety related jobs within the police department that are currently held by police officers. They now must give serious consideration to giving up the patrolling of the Long Island Expressway and Sunrise Highway. These are state roads that we don't belong on and because of the increases in pay, can't afford.

Suffolk County taxpayers are reeling from a poor economy. Granted, our unemployment is relatively low, but many Suffolk County residents who have been fired or laid off have only been able to find low-paying jobs in the service industry. Most residents are struggling to make ends meet. They have little or no discretionary income and will find it difficult to come up with these big bucks to fund the mandated police increases.

Our New York State legislators from both sides of the aisle must summon up the courage to introduce and enact legislation that makes inflation and the communities' ability to pay part of the binding arbitration process.

Sure, the unions will be mad as hell, but so are the taxpayers who are being shown no mercy. Raises that are twice the rate of inflation are not justifiable or sustainable.

From a taxpayer's standpoint, the binding arbitration process has been broken for years. It cries out for attention, legislation. It must be fixed or it will break the taxpayers forever.

And why not?



## Fighting Over The Pork

New York's voters overwhelmingly approved the Clean Water-Clean Air Bond Act. The votes were but hardly counted when the fight started over how this \$1.75 billion (plus interest) is going to be spent. Although the voters mistakenly thought that all this money was going to be used for the environment, they were fooled. What the voters have done is create a big barrel of pork that the politicians are lining up to get their hands on.

The money does not have to be spent on any of the projects that the proponents outlined in their propaganda. In fact, paragraph "A" of the amendment negates paragraphs "A" through "G," which indicate where the money is supposed to be spent, by saying "notwithstanding." This money does not have to be used specifically as outlined. The ambiguous language will allow the governor and the legislators to allocate these funds for whatever they deem necessary or a priority.

There is \$630 million of this bond that can be spent simply with the agreement of Governor Pataki, Senate Majority Leader Brunt and Assembly Speaker Silver. This money, you can bet your bippy on, will be spent in a purely political manner. The balance of the fund of over \$1 billion will be spent at the discretion of the governor.

The bond proposal outlined was deliberately loosely worded. The monies can be

spent for putting a new roof on a school because the outdated insulation is not environmentally sound. Oil furnaces in public buildings and schools can be converted to gas utilizing these funds because gas burners are cleaner than oil. Sing Sing can be turned into a park under the historical environmental language of the act.

It is going to be up to the citizens, you and me, who will be paying for this bond issue over the next 45 years, to keep our eyes and ears open. We have indebted ourselves and our children for about \$3 billion and \$4 billion when interest is calculated. We did it because we wanted a better environment. Don't count on getting it--if the politicians can find a way to circumvent our will, they will do it.

We warned about this possibility prior to the vote. The majority of the voters threw caution to the wind and now we are stuck with the consequences unless the opponents win the lawsuit they filed alleging that the bond issue was illegal. The New York State Constitution specifically states that for a bond to be issued, it must be for a specific purpose. This bond act obviously covers a huge range of projects that are loosely covered in the generic term 'environment'.

If we were in Albany, we would not spend a penny until the suit goes to court and there is a ruling.

And why not?

## Now, That's Justice

The last session of Congress passed a controversial gun/crime bill. The assault weapon ban portion of this measure received media attention. The second part of the bill, which we believe was more important, dealt with mandatory sentences for the use of a gun in the commission of a crime.

Last week, while in Florida, we read a story in the Palm Beach Post of the first sentencing under this law. A repeat offender had been apprehended and convicted of using a gun during an armed robbery. The business that was robbed imported merchandise from out of state, and therefore, the crime became a federal offense. Under the old system, he would have gotten 10 to 20 years and been out in less than five. Because of the new law, he received 120 years with no possibility of parole. He is gone for life, off the streets and will not repeat his crime again. That is justice!

We believe this new law will have a huge impact on criminals using guns in the commission of crimes. If they know that sentences are being handed out that are going to put them away for life without the possibility of parole, they will think twice and, hopefully, leave their guns at home.

For years, the National Rifle Association has lobbied for the passage of mandatory sentences for crimes in which a firearm was used. The NRA is more adamant about the illegal use of guns than most people. They have long said that it isn't the gun that kills, it is the person who uses it. The NRA has long since lobbied Congress for maximum sentences for the use of guns in the commission of crimes.

When Congress passed these severe penalties for the use of a firearm in the commission of a crime, it went a long way toward putting the emphasis where it belongs. As more convictions and mandatory sentences are obtained, the appeal of using a weapon will become less attractive. Once the criminal element in our society knows it is going to pay big time for committing a crime with a gun, it will change its behavior.

Once gun-bearing criminals know that lawyers cannot plea bargain their sentences and the judges no longer have discretion, they will realize that they are now the victims instead of the perpetrators.

And why not?



## Out of Touch With Reality

Elected public officials have lost touch with reality. They are in the process of granting themselves unprecedented raises.

On the town level, Brookhaven gets the "Pig in the Trough Award" for increasing the salaries of the town board members and the supervisor by 15%. Board members are going from \$45,000 per year to \$52,000 per year. This is for a part-time job. In addition to this exorbitant salary, board members drive luxury cars, have car phones and beepers, excellent medical plans and generous pensions.

Town board members, on average, work less than 15 hours a week on governmental business. Some have businesses or law practices on the side. Board members will tell you, if you will listen, that they work 50 to 60 hours per week. Foolishly, they expect you to believe that when they are politicking, pressing the flesh and running for reelection, they are doing real work.

Islip town officials take a more realistic approach. They've increased their salaries by 2%. This would be a fair percentage, but when you consider the town just recently negotiated a contract that gives municipal employees no raises for four years, they are not being fair either.

Town officials in Southampton, Southold and Riverhead are awarding themselves with a 4% salary increase, with Riverhead's tax receiver getting 8% and 9% for the town highway department superintendent.

Huntington, Smithtown, East Hampton and Babylon Town officials are working with last year's salaries and Babylon Supervisor Richard Schaffer announced he is taking a 5% salary cut like he did last year.

On the county level, Gaffney released a report dealing with legislative and exempt employees' salaries. The authors of this report work in government, education and only one for-profit organization. Therefore, it was not surprising that they came back and recommended increases of between 17% and 66%.

Exempt employees, including the elected officials, under law, receive a salary increase each year. The raise is tied to the consumer price index and this year it amounted to 2.2%, about the cost of inflation. When the legislature enacted the automatic increases in salaries it was intended to do away with periodic, substantial increases in their salaries.

The State Legislature is expected to be called back into session between now and the first of the year. Allegedly, this is being done to deal with the volatile welfare reform issue. We believe it has as much to do with the welfare issue as it has to do with the legislature looking to increase its salary structure.

For the legislature to increase its salaries, it must do it the year before the raises are to take place. The legislature believes that voters will forget about this raid on their pocketbooks as it will be two years before they run again.

New York State Legislators currently receive salaries that are next to the highest in the nation. They receive \$57,500 a year. In addition, they receive "lulus" which run \$89 per day, reimbursing them for food and lodging. The tab for their

commutation between the home district and Albany is picked up by the taxpayers. In addition, most legislators receive stipends for serving on committees or being a committee chairperson.

The legislature goes into session in January and they are supposed to complete their business in Albany by April. Over the last few years, they have remained in session through June and July because of their inability to come to a budget agreement. Each day they are there, they pick up an additional \$89 per day as a reward for grinding the government to a halt. Many of these legislators have law practices, businesses, farms and outside sources of income. Obviously, our elected officials living high on the hog have not felt the pain of recession.

Long Island's economy has not rebounded. We are still struggling with the recession. Many of the constituents of these legislators have not seen even cost of living increases. The economy for Long Island businesses has plummeted and profits are at the lowest that they have been in 20 years.

One of the advocates for increasing salaries said we must be realistic, running a government is the equivalent of running a business. He is dead wrong. A business generates profits, pays taxes that allows government to exist. In most cases, the income for CEOs and business people is tied to the profitability of the respective enterprise.

Government is in the business of absorbing taxes, not generating revenues. If elected officials feel they need additional compensation, then let's make it a business proposition. For every 1% they cut the cost of government and it results in a 1% drop in taxes, elected officials can be compensated with a 1% increase in their income.

Likewise, if they increase the cost of government and increase the amount of taxes we pay, their salaries should be reduced by the same percentage. You will find few elected officials, after being elected, supporting this concept.

We urge you to write or call your elected official and express your outrage. Only if they hear from you in record numbers will they stop this raid on your pocketbook.

And why not?

## Thieves Must Make Restitution

It is common to pay restitution when thieves are caught stealing and have the resources to be forced to make that reparation.

Suffolk County's County Executive and the Legislature passed an illegal bill that resulted in taxpayers who were delinquent with their taxes being charged an illegal \$100 late fee on top of interest and penalties.

The court, in effect, ruled that Suffolk County government has stolen this money from the citizens. The court ordered that the county must pay back this late fee to those who had protested it. Only about 25% of the victims had written on their checks, "paid under protest," and thus they are eligible for a refund. The other 75% who did not write this on



## Take Off the Gloves

Supreme Court Justice Thomas Stark changed the course of Suffolk's history when he awarded LILCO a \$700 million to \$1.1 billion judgment for being overassessed on the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant.

This judgment will literally bankrupt the Shoreham/Wading River School District. It will crush Brookhaven taxpayers and will have a major impact on all Suffolk County taxpayers.

The Shoreham/Wading River School District spent LILCO's money with reckless abandon. During the construction of the plant, the school district was spending \$15,000 to \$20,000 per student each year while the surrounding districts were spending only \$4,000 to \$5,000. Nothing was too good for them, and now they must pay the price.

Brookhaven Town officials continued to assess the plant at the high rates even though they knew the plant was not going to open. They used these ill-gotten tax dollars to hold down tax rates even though they knew that the day would come when they would have to pay the piper.

their check, the county does not feel it has any obligation to repay.

The late fees amounted to almost \$8 million, money that was illegally taken from Suffolk County residents, and it must be paid back. Can the County Executive or any one of the Legislators who took part in this scheme look at themselves in the mirror and be proud of what they see? Can any of them be content with themselves knowing that they have done wrong and are refusing to make restitution?

Come on, let's show some common sense, some ethics and morals. You got caught, now pay up. These are your constituents that you have abused. Make restitution, now.

And why not?

Suffolk County, by law, had to go along with Brookhaven's overassessment. The county received approximately 20% of the assessment and we heard nary a word of protest from our elected officials.

The governments involved have three choices: appeal Stark's decision, which would continue to run up the amount owed because of interest. It is estimated that this would cost \$1 million a week. If this is the choice for Brookhaven officials, they can bite the bullet and increase taxes to raise the funds to pay off the judgment. They can bond out this debt over 20 or 30 years, which will double the amount when interest is factored in.

But the only real hope and avenue of salvation is for the state to take over LILCO. A complete takeover would require the state to pay for this judgment and then work it back into the rates.

Taxes are part of the cost we pay for electricity. In theory, LILCO has charged the ratepayers for this overassessment and must return it to the ratepayers. This is LILCO's liability. This should be nothing more than a pass through.

In the past, when LILCO has won certiorari suits, they have avoided paying the ratepayers back. The Public Service Commission (PSC) has allowed them, through some magical formula, to use these funds to offset rate increases. It is time now for the PSC to take off the gloves and demand that LILCO, upon being paid by the governments, return dollar for dollar in a cash rebate to its customers.

The PSC cannot allow LILCO to weasel out of refunding these monies or using some magical formula that, on paper, allegedly holds down ratepayer increases while at the same time the company increases those electrical rates.

Governor Pataki should order the Long Island Power Authority to move with all due speed to effect the proposed LILCO takeover.

And why not?



# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## When You Thank God For Your Blessings

Tomorrow, most of us will gather with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving. Most will acknowledge God as the benefactor who made it possible for us to gather and feast. We will celebrate our love for each other, the bountiful harvest that our work has enabled us to provide.

Consciously, we may even know how lucky we are to have so much. In the back of our minds will be the knowledge that some are not as fortunate. We may even think about reaching out and helping those who haven't made it.

A special group of Suffolk residents do this every year. They are called "The Group." They pool their resources, their time and their energies to provide Christmas for children of parents who this year won't be able to do it on their own. These are parents who come from the working class. Due to unforeseen health problems, deaths, accidents or

loss of income, Santa will not be coming to their house this Christmas.

"The Group," using several different sources learn of their needs and the legitimacy of their circumstances. They anonymously provide Christmas. The children will be clothed from outerwear to underwear, depending upon their needs. The children will wake up Christmas morning to find an array of gifts just for them from Santa.

"The Group" is not incorporated. It does not spend a single cent on administration or over-head costs. For almost 20 years, it has made Christmas something extra-ordinary for kids who had only despair to look forward to.

This year, we expect to take care of close to 50 families. Last year there were over 250 children who were included. Every child is individually shopped for. It's a mammoth effort. The families do not know who we are and

outside of a few members of "The Group," we do not know who the families are. We just know of their needs and know that "there but for the Grace of God, go I." Anyone of us could be in their shoes if the cards of life turned against us.

We depend upon the generosity of others to pull this mammoth feat off. This Thanksgiving as you reflect upon your fortunate circumstances in life, we invite you to become a member of "The Group." A donation of any size will help a child this Christmas. You may send

your contribution to "The Group," c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers, P.O. Box 167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

You will not receive a receipt or even a thank you note because the cost of sending these out takes away from the money that we spend on the children's needs.

From those of us in "The Group," we extend a heartfelt thanks to those who have contributed in past years and invite anyone who can, to join us in Christmas 1996.

And why not?

## Suffolk Schools Flunked

The state has conducted its first round of state-wide testing of school students. Twenty-six Suffolk schools flunked the minimum testing requirements in reading and math.

This is tragic. These children are being held hostage in their schools and they are having their minds wasted and their lives irrevocably affected.

The educational establishment has complained that the tests are not fair and are jockeying for position to explain away their failures. These tests, just recently given, were deliberately designed as the first test to be lenient. Harder and more progressive tests are expected to follow.

Residents of Suffolk County contribute a disproportionate share of their income to real estate taxes to fund schools. We spend more on education on Long Island than

any other part of the country. It costs, on average, over \$12,000 per year to educate every child in our public school system, from kindergarten to 12th grade. Money obviously has not been the solution to the problem. The system itself is broken.

The problems start at the top. Superintendents do not supervise. School principals are not actively motivating the teachers or involved in the classrooms. This was the constant cry we heard from legislative candidates from both sides of the aisle.

School boards have failed to establish criteria for accountability. This is left up to superintendents and principals and most fail to review or evaluate the individual teachers within the system. Without accountability, you not

only have a waste of taxpayers' money but a waste of children's minds.

This has led to the public outcry for tenure reform. Teachers, after three years, are granted tenure. A lifetime guarantee of employment. As long as they meet an ambiguous standard, they continue on year after year in their classrooms, without much chance for removal.

We have been involved with the school issues for over 25 years. We have constantly encouraged the teachers to reform from within. Teachers who teach each others' grades are in a good position to know whether the last classes had a good teacher or one who missed the mark.

Every school building should set up a peer review system. It should be made up of teachers, administrators, parents and members from outside the educational establishment who might be skilled in personnel or business.

Every teacher should be examined, reviewed, and given grades in order for them to improve. Failure to meet reasonable standards and improve areas of weaknesses should be grounds for suspension. Persistent failure should be grounds for expulsion.

The educational establishment would be wise to consider cleaning up its own act before the public makes the elected officials do it.

Long Island, with the investment that we are making in education, should be leading the world in academic achievement. We should not tolerate one school or one child failing.

And why not?



## Can't Have It Both Ways

Most of us were sickened and shocked last week to learn that two new mothers had allowed their children to be killed or had killed their newborn children.

In the Commack Cinema, a woman gave birth to a baby in the ladies' room and disposed of the baby in the toilet bowl. Two college students birthed their baby in a motel room in Delaware and they allegedly killed the baby and disposed of it in a dumpster.

How horrible. How terrible. We have heard people say they should be killed. In fact, the prosecutor in Delaware intends to charge the couple with first-degree murder and ask for the death penalty.

We are a proponent of life. Yet, we can't get very upset about either of these killings. If either mother-to-be had gone to a doctor just a few days before these slaughters and said, "I am in such a mental state because of this pregnancy that I think if I give birth I will kill the child, the doctor could legitimately order a partial birth abortion because he could claim that the mother's health is at stake.

A doctor in a clinic or a hospital would then extract the baby partially out of the uterus, would deliberately crush the child's skull, suction their brains out then remove the remains. Of course, the child would have been born partially alive, partially dead. Totally dead when the doctor got finished with it. A life would have been eradicated legally and without fanfare.

It is estimated that between 3,000 and 15,000 of these legalized murders take place each year. This is infanticide, the legitimate killing of baby children.

Last year, Congress passed a ban on this procedure. The president vetoed it, and today we legally continue to kill children using this method.

Why should these new mothers and in the case of the couple, the father, face first-degree murder charges when others do it on a regular basis and are paid for their services?

During our political interviews, we listened to the arguments of those in favor of allowing these procedures. Some argued that it is a woman's right to choose right up to the time of birth. Others argued that a mother's mental and physical health should be the overriding factor.

Some who opposed the procedure argued that life begins at conception and that one of the very basic responsibilities of government is to protect life.

Some of those who are in the middle of the road would tolerate first trimester abortions that are allowed under Rowe vs. Wade but could not support abortions in the second or third trimester when the baby is fully formed and can live outside of the mother.

These recent murders of newborns cannot go unaddressed, but neither can the question of killing babies as they are being born. You can't have it both ways.

And why not?

**We spend more on education on Long Island than any other part of the country. It costs, on average, over \$12,000 per year to educate every child in our public school system, from kindergarten to 12th grade.**