

# Primary Day -- September 13

Primary elections perform an important function. They give the individual, registered voters power to determine for themselves who will be the best representative for their party in the general election.

Primaries give individuals the right to place their name on the ballot if they have not been able to secure the official designation of the party's committee. The primary system opens up the political designation opportunities to the rank and file, and should be an important event for all registered voters who seek input into their party's operation.

We think it is important for voters to explore the philosophies, the qualifications and the reasons the individual candidates are seeking office. Philosophies should be very important to primary voters. How do the candidates' beliefs stack up and compare with the principles of the party? As an example, should liberal voters vote for a very Conservative/Republican as their standardbearer just because the Republican wants to be on their line? The answer should quite obviously be no.

Parties must stand by their principles and should not allow them to

be prostituted. A Republican by nature and philosophy would find it difficult to remain true to the Republican Party while voicing liberal beliefs on taxes and social issues. Interparty squabbles sometimes create this kind of scenario, as do cross-endorsement deals.

The rank and file should examine the qualifications of each of the candidates, their backgrounds, their past and their potential for remaining true to their philosophies and the philosophy of the party they wish to represent. Primaries give the rank and file this opportunity. It allows them to be the final authoritative decision-maker on who will be that party's standardbearer. The most important vote you can cast as a registered member of a political party is at the polls on Primary Day, September 13.

This year the Democrats, Republicans, Conservative and Right-to-Life parties all have primary races in some of the contests for elected seats. We encourage every voter to turn out and vote. These races often are won or lost by a narrow margin. Your vote does count and will make a difference.

And why not?

## United States Congress

It should be easy for registered Republican voters in the First Congressional District to select Michael Forbes as the man to oppose Democrat George Hochbrueckner in November.

Forbes has prepared himself for this position. He has a strong working knowledge of Washington. Forbes has proven his ability in running the Northeast Regional Office of the Small Business Administration office. He was the clear-cut choice of the Republican committee. He gives the Republicans their best opportunity in 30 years to win the First Congressional District.

Forbes is being opposed by John Scott Prudenti. Prudenti is running almost exclusively on his family name and reputation. He has advanced his name as a candidate for a number of other elective offices, but was turned down as it was felt he had not done his homework or prepared himself for public office.

Prudenti is likeable, but he has not distinguished himself on the issues nor does he seem to have the credentials for this important position. His chances of winning in the general election are narrow as he does not have Conservative cross-endorsement, nor did he enter a primary campaign for it. The Conservative line is considered critical for a Republican to take out the incumbent. Prudenti doesn't have it. He won't have it.

Michael Strong is an independent candidate for this office. He is counting on name recognition to aid him in this race. While the Strong name is

well known on the East End, the Strongs of East Hampton have made it known that he is not a relation of theirs.

Strong and his wife have mounted an aggressive grass roots campaign and they must be given credit for this endeavor. Like Prudenti, he is not on the Conservative line and stands little chance of winning the general election.

In the Conservative primary for the congressional seat, Forbes is being opposed by Daniel Fennessy. Forbes' background and his position on issues key to Conservatives are almost identical. Forbes was designated to be the Conservative candidate by the Conservative committee which is controlled by Pat Curcio.

Fennessy entered his name in competition not in opposition to Forbes but to Curcio, who he claims denied him a leadership role. Fennessy went to court and lost. He then accused the court of being fixed. This is a personal vendetta and a fight over Conservative leadership and the way the party is run. It has nothing to do with Forbes' Conservative credentials, or the quality of the candidate to face Hochbrueckner and become the United States congressman. This is sad because it could deny the First Congressional District of having a right-thinking congressman who will vote as the district wishes rather than how they are told to vote by Bill and Hillary Clinton.

Forbes by far is the best candidate. He should be the Republican

standardbearer, as well as that of the Conservatives.

A three-way primary contest is underway for the Republican nomination in the Fifth Congressional District, which extends from Huntington to Queens. Edward Elkowitz, Grant Lally and Allan Binder are going head-to-head for the GOP slot, while Binder and Lally are in a race for the Conservative line. Of the

## Anybody but Cuomo

The Republicans and the Conservatives have the opportunity of dumping Mario Cuomo if they can keep their act together.

George Pataki has the designation of the Republican committee. He is being opposed by Richard Rosenbaum, a former state Republican chairman who describes himself as a Rockefeller Republican.

Pataki is being opposed by Robert Relp in a Conservative primary.

On the Democratic side, Cuomo is being challenged by Lenora Fulani, who has made no attempt to be a serious candidate. This race has not been closely defined. The media has paid almost no attention to it as it is believed that Cuomo, no matter what, will win this primary hands down.

three, Binder is the best known in Suffolk with a track record as a county legislator, and a losing effort against incumbent Rep. Gary Ackerman two years ago. Elkowitz and Lally are Nassau County residents. It is likely the outcome in this race will be controlled by the Nassau and Queens voters.

The date is September 13, your opportunity to have a voice in the system.

The Democrats have a four-way primary for attorney general that is ill-defined with no candidates making any particular points.

In the race for United States Senate, the Democrats have a primary between Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Al Sharpton. This is based on race and comments that Moynihan has made in the past. Sharpton desires to voice black positions.

The Republicans and Conservatives can beat Cuomo in the race for the governor's seat this year if they stay united. A vote for anyone other than Pataki in these two races is a vote to keep Cuomo around for another four years. Can anything be worse?

## Surrogate Court

Conservative and Right-to-Life voters have the choice in this race between two very different individuals.

State Supreme Court Justice Gail Prudenti is being opposed in both of these primaries by former Family Court Judge James Doyle.

Prudenti won her Supreme Court justice seat by being a front-runner in a 20-person contest. She has an extensive background and experience in the Surrogate Court, having been employed there. As an attorney, her private practice specialized in Surrogate Court matters. She is a registered Republican and has run with the Conservative and Right-to-Life support before.

Prudenti's opponent, James Doyle, is a registered Democrat. He won one race with Conservative endorsement. He lost three other races for judgeships, including a re-election bid for Family Court judge. He currently is on staff at the State University at Stony Brook in a teaching position. He recently was appointed to fill a judgeship by Mario Cuomo. He has not been confirmed as of this

writing.

Voters should be cautioned not to confuse James Doyle with Supreme Court Justice Robert Doyle. They are not related. Judge Robert Doyle is a registered Conservative who won his judgeship with Republican endorsement.

Based on qualifications and political philosophies, this race should be fairly clear-cut. Independent Conservatives are revolting against the leadership. Some will support Doyle as a protest to the iron hand that the chairman has wielded over the party. In good conscience, however, do the Conservatives prefer to have a Democrat appointed by one of the most liberal politicians in New York State as their standardbearer?

The choice should be clear. Gail Prudenti has the qualifications, the experience and the desire to serve. By the nature of her registration, she is more attuned to the Conservative philosophy of the party than someone who has chosen to be a lifelong registered Democrat.

## It's still summer!

Although Labor Day has become the unofficial "end of summer," that's really not true. There's still lots of time left to enjoy the beautiful natural resources our county has to offer--the beaches, recreational opportunities and especially the esthetic quality of eastern Suffolk.

Fall doesn't begin until September 21, and even then the joys of our area

are abundant. After Labor Day the temperatures are still warm during the day, and evenings are refreshingly crisp and cool. One of the biggest advantages is the pressure is off, it's as if Mother Nature saved the best part for those who have labored in the vineyards, serving the visitors. Let's take advantage of it!

And why not?

# Government at its worst

A firestorm has developed over County Executive Robert Gaffney's decision to lease cars from a Maryland firm. The controversy has resulted in angry banter hurled between Gaffney and members of the Suffolk County Legislature. The financial ramifications of this action, and the questions raised, however, are such that Gaffney should apply the brakes on accepting additional vehicles until the questions are answered and all doubts about the matter are put to rest.

In the past, the county has purchased cars either through a state contract, which offers lower prices, or in open bidding. The cars have been maintained by county employees. There are approximately 1,700 cars in the county fleet. We say approximately because no one who should know seems to know with absolute certainty the number of cars the county has in operation. An inventory of the county fleet is not computerized as to age, condition, or mileage. Only recently has there been an attempt to clarify the makeup of the fleet and its mechanical condition through a survey of county departments. There was, a county official said, a 95% compliance of the request. We would suggest the 5% who did not return the survey be targets of a reduction in the fleet. The county should clearly state: "No response, no car!"

Just about everyone agrees that a good portion of the fleet is antiquated. There has been no plan for replacement. Each year, the county executive budgets for the replacement of some vehicles. During budget negotiations, Gaffney claims, the legislature has regularly taken the money allocated in the executive's budget for cars and transferred it to meet other budget items. There was a consensus, both by the executive and the legislature, to make the fleet suffice during austere times.

## 'We don't do cars well'

As the fleet has aged, the cost of

maintenance has increased. Gaffney declared in his budget message, advancing a proposal for leasing, "We do not do cars very well." Fleet management has been subject to severe criticism both in quality, efficiency and cost. Most governments have looked to privatization as a method for reducing costs. It was natural for Gaffney to explore the possibility of leasing automobiles rather than buying them. This would allow the county executive to close the county garage and to save on the cost of salaries and operation, which, he claims, is a primary reason for the leasing action.

However, couldn't private sector maintenance be contracted for leased cars? No, claims James M. Catterson III of the county attorney's office, who claims county-owned cars must be maintained by county employees. Not true, reports a county legislative spokesperson who points to current contracts with private sector firms for county car servicing. In fact, the county budget has included more than \$500,000 each year during the past three budgets for service and maintenance by outside vendors. Questions have also been raised on whether the higher cost of leasing could be offset by the savings in eliminating the county garage.

## Lease cost questioned

The legislative Budget Review Office (BRO) released a critical report indicating that the whole procedure by which the county entered into leasing arrangements was questionable. The report declared the cost of leasing cars is far more costly than either the outright purchase of the cars out of operating revenues or the financing of the fleet through short-term bonding mechanisms. The difference under the terms of the lease between buying and leasing was on average \$5,000 more costly for leasing, according to the BRO report.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) process is fraught with possibilities for deception and does not allow for clear-

cut comparisons so that you are comparing apples to apples. This has created most of the controversy and has led to the accusations that have come forth.

Under a normal bidding process, the make, model, quantity, and equipment specs are detailed. Bidding can be structured to include the value of the vehicle with or without maintenance.

## Common sense approach

If part of the fleet is replaced each year, which is a common sense approach to the problem, the funding could come out of operating funds. If the majority of the fleet must be replaced in any one year, the funding for this would be beyond the ability of the available funds and bonding would be required. In leasing cars, the county pays a flat fee each month for the duration of the lease, requiring a smaller outlay of funds at the outset. At the end of the lease, the cars are replaced either with purchased or leased vehicles.

Gaffney chose to avoid the bid procedure. He circumvented the strict bid requirements by opting for a Request for Proposal. RFPs are normally used for non-tangible services that are subject to many variables. Those being solicited give a proposal based not only on fact but their imagination. There are no standards and it is very difficult to determine either the base cost or the final cost.

## Bond is eliminated

When the county put out their Request for Proposals, it set forth certain guidelines that made it difficult for businesses to conform to. As a result, only two firm proposals were submitted for county consideration. Neither came from local leasing companies or car dealers. The firm that was awarded the proposal, PHH Vehicle Management Services Corporation, subsequently changed, after its selection, numerous provisions that had been outlined in the county proposal,

including one which local dealers said they could not accept, a \$1,000 bond per car requirement, which was dropped.

Legislators have rightfully questioned the acceptance of these changes and have asked how the county can be assured the PHH deal is the best for the county if they do not have a bottom line cost comparative from other fleet companies to compare it to? A good question, which has led to many others that leaves no one on the outside with a sense of well being.

## Very costly deal

The deal is a terribly costly one for the county. We not only were unable to take advantage of up to \$5,000 savings per vehicle offered through state purchase but we are paying finance and management charges that will run millions of dollars under the terms of the lease.

The savings from the proposed elimination of the garage may be more mystical than real. The employees are reportedly to be transferred from General Services to the police garage or other departments, so the dollars are just being switched from one taxing account to another.

## Back to the beginning

We believe if the county executive had stayed with a true bidding procedure where apples could be compared to apples, there would not be the firestorm that has developed. We question whether a request which, in this case, led to the selection of PHH and followed by "negotiations" as to the terms of the deal, as was done in this instance, is in the best interest of the taxpayers. Considering the reports of "political ties" involved in the selection of PHH, those questions increase.

The legislature probably will refuse to fund appropriations for future continuation of the lease. This may well leave the county government without a means to replace cars and create even more chaos. Both the legislature and Gaffney should go back to the beginning. Establish a real inventory of every car and vehicle that the county has on the road. Require a criteria and a justification for each alleged need for a vehicle. Eliminate those vehicles which are under-utilized or being utilized primarily for commutation purposes. Develop a long-range replacement schedule for all necessary vehicles. Purchase the necessary vehicles that are absolutely needed out of general operating funds and, as a last resort, explore bonding under the short-term to bring the fleet up-to-date where necessary.

## Eliminate RFPs

The county should eliminate its current method of securing RFPs for vehicles which, because of the non-binding provisions that can be changed after the fact, as happened in this case, can easily bring about both founded and unfounded allegations of wrongdoing. Develop specific bid specifications and disseminate them to all that are qualified to make a bid. Hold all bidders to the same specifications and requirements, without changing the rules for one after the fact. That action leads to the suspicion and doubt that currently exists.

This county is still in deep financial trouble. Let's stop adding to it. Let's make sure the taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely. County legislators questioning the PHH lease deal appear to have that goal. Gaffney should as well.

And why not?

## A question of values

# So, we're going to invade Haiti?

If you read the daily papers and listen to news and talk shows, it's all but a done deal, the United States is going to invade Haiti.

Speculation has it that it will be done before Election Day, in anticipation that somehow this will be positive for President Bill Clinton and the Democrats.

Put politics aside, and ask why? Why should one United States serviceperson have to give up his or her life to invade this country? It is almost inevitable that someone will get killed. Will it be your son or daughter who will be spilling his or her blood on foreign soil for no apparent good reason?

Is our national security at stake? Are the Haitians running a covert operation with the intention of overthrowing the United States? Are our economic interests being threatened? Can Haiti in any way interfere with the United States economy or trade?

Are the human rights of the Haitian

citizens being impaired by their current leadership? Of course they are. Are they suffering any worse than the other people in hundreds of other countries who live under equally as bad dictatorships?

If we invade Haiti and take control, how long will we have to stay? Last time we entered Haiti we could not get out for 19 years, and we didn't leave it much better off than the way we found it. What is going to be the cost not only in lives, but in real dollars paid by taxpayers? Will it be \$100 million, \$500 million? Once we are in Haiti, what will be the cost? Wouldn't this money be better spent here in the United States on our poor and oppressed?

If the Haitians are successful in provoking an invasion, who will be next? Cuba? We believe it is up to the people who live in a country to settle their own state of affairs. Any time you look around you, you can find crying needs for a super cop, but is that the role the United States should be playing around this globe?

Our values are our values and they may not mesh with others who are brought up under different cultures, religions and ethnic heritages. In the United States we have trouble patrolling our own streets against criminal elements. We don't do a very good job making people feel safe and secure. If we can't take care of our problems at home, how can we take care of problems that we have no control over?

Everyone pretty much agrees, Clinton doesn't have a firm foreign policy on anything. He has waffled all around the globe in Serbia, Rwanda and Haiti. By invading Haiti for no real legitimate reason, he is not going to make points with the public or foreign nations. He will come off as a bully who blunders from one fight to the next without ever winning.

Keep Americans home, solve our problems here and let people in other countries settle their own disputes.

And why not?

# Don't even think about it!!

The New York State School Boards Association is circulating a proposal amongst local boards of education which seeks their opinion on the elimination of public voting for school budgets. To which we can only say: Don't even think about it!

An official from the state group confirms there has been much discussion, stormy at times, about proposing the cessation of the public vote on school budgets with replacement by a potential capping of budget increases by a certain percentage. The theory behind the proposal is that because of the present contingency budget provisions, the public vote on school budgets has become meaningless.

It is true that the contingency budget provisions are an abomination, sorely in need of reform. The bright lights that created these provisions specifically designed them to be punitive to the taxpayers and the students when school budgets failed. Those provisions call for the elimination of busing

to the state allowable limits, which were established, apparently, by people who lived in a country setting with no traffic factors to consider. They also chopped out lunch programs, many school supplies and extracurricular sports. They have been used for years as threatening measures designed to cause parents to flock to the polls to ensure busing and sports for their children.

There are inclusions in the contingency budget that impact on the taxpayer to the benefit of others. For example: some school boards include coaches' salaries in an austerity budget even though the sports program is eliminated. In one district, at a time when the district was seeking approval for restoration of normal busing, the contingency budget included about \$379,000 for coaches' salaries. "Why not take those dollars and apply them toward transportation, which would make any added impact on the taxpayer minimal?" we wondered. Be-

cause, a district official said, "If the area's booster club raises enough money to field a team, we have to have the salary to pay the coach." Why not have the coach's salary added to the cost to reinstate the sport? Because salaries are mandated, was the reply. There is, in our view, something terribly wrong with that logic.

Instead of considering the elimination of the school budget vote, the outdated contingency budget provisions should be reformed. Take away the punitive measures and eliminate the opportunities for irresponsible school board members to hike the cost of austerity by including items to suit their own will in retaliation for the public's rejection of their budget proposal.

If there are people in the state association who might be in favor of this proposal, they just don't get it! The problem may well be that they achieved official positions not by public action, but through the votes of local school board members who cast the

only votes for these positions. It's a "good old boy" club attitude that completely puts the public out in the cold.

Giving the public an opportunity to pass judgment on budget proposals, which they will have to support, should not be eliminated. The realization that the taxpayers will reject unreasonable tax increases has caused many school boards to search out cost cuts. Not enough, in our view, but some at least. Take the power of veto, in the form of a no vote, from the public and get ready for soaring budgets and tax hikes in the future.

If you think the budget votes are not important, do nothing. If you believe, as we do, that the taxpayers must have the right to approve or reject budget proposals, make that view known to your local school board members. Write a letter, or, better yet, attend the next meeting.

Tell them in no uncertain terms: "Don't even think about it!"

And why not?

# Campaign 1994 is now underway

With the primaries over and November 8 just seven weeks away, candidates are going into full swing.

Suffolk Life will again do its utmost to bring to the voters the maximum amount of information about the candidates and the issues. Candidates have already been assigned to reporters who will cover those campaigns noting anything that is newsworthy.

The candidates have been sent questionnaires containing approximately 125 different issues or philosophies. The answers to these questionnaires will be published during October. Readers are encouraged to read the questionnaires, answer them themselves and then compare the candidates' answers to their own

personal beliefs. Some candidates refused to answer some questions. Voters are warned to be very leery of those candidates who refuse to allow you to know where they stand. Expect the worst.

We have already started to interview the candidates. It's a frustrating process. We bring candidates from both major parties together. The interviews take on the form of a mini debate in which both our editorial board and competing candidates ask questions. During these interviews, we try to find the truth, the depth of knowledge possessed by both candidates not only of the issues, but well thought-out, sound solutions to the problems facing the public.

At the conclusion of the inter-

views, and after the questionnaires have been read and evaluated, the editorial board, which is comprised of the publisher, the managing editor, the publisher's assistant and various members from the news staff that have been involved in the day-to-day coverage of the campaigns, meet and discuss the candidates. We try to find those candidates we feel will best represent the public. The editorial board votes on the candidates, and the candidate who receives the majority of those votes is offered our endorsement.

If any member or members of the editorial board disagree strongly with the majority's choice, they have the option of publishing an opposite viewpoint. This privilege has been evoked on a few occasions by both the management and the staff members.

Suffolk Life Newspapers is non-partisan. We are not affiliated with any political party. Traditionally our endorsements are split between the major parties. We seek to find the best candidate to represent the people of Suffolk County.

This year on the state level, we will be covering the gubernatorial, comptroller, attorney general, Assembly and Senate races. On the federal level, we will be covering the U.S. Senate, and the congressional races. On the county level, we will be covering the race for comptroller and county clerk. We also will be involved in some of the local races.

The process is grueling and time consuming, but we feel it is worth the effort because we do believe in our system of government, and know that quality leaders can make the difference. We go the extra step in hopes that you will do your part by being registered to vote and voting.

Four years ago, during the gubernatorial race, Mario Cuomo was elected governor by less than 15% of the people who had the opportunity of selecting him. Forty percent of the voters failed to register to vote. Only about half of those who were registered turned out to make their selection. Not even half of those who voted elected Cuomo.

Were you one of those who hadn't registered? Were you one of those who did not turn out to vote? Your decision to stay away from the polls cost you dearly in taxes, new regulations and a government you probably complain about. This year, we ask every voter to take part in our great democratic system of selecting our leaders. This is your country, take part in it.

And why not?

## Florida vs. New York

# A different taxing system

We own property here in Suffolk County. We also own property in Florida. There is a world of difference in the rate of taxation and a world of difference in how the municipality goes about collecting its taxes in each state.

In New York, we are kept in the dark about our taxes until the middle of December. Along with the Christmas cards, we receive a bill and it states that if this is not paid by December 31 you will be fined late charges, which amount to approximately 13% of the taxes demanded, and an additional penalty of \$100 that goes into the general fund of the county to be squandered by the sitting politicians.

Florida takes a totally different ap-

proach, one that makes sense and makes the tax more palatable. In August, landowners are sent a notice of proposed property taxes. The notice spells out the taxes that were charged the year before by district and expenditure. The proposed taxes are shown adjacent to the old taxes so you can easily see what increases will be proposed and how much of an increase you might expect if the budgets are passed. Adjacent to the charges are the dates for public hearings where the public is invited to hear justification for the budget and then voice their opinions. After the public has been heard and the final levy is set, landowners receive a notification of their final tax liability. This bill comes in October.

Guess what! If you pay your tax bill in November, you get a 4% discount. The discount goes down to 1% in February, and if not paid by April, it is then assigned a late charge.

We should emulate Florida. Its notification system allows the taxpayers to make a comparison. The public hearings encourage taxpayers to turn out and voice their opinions. The discount for early payment rewards the thrifty and the late payment system ensures that those who are delinquent are charged reasonable interest without obnoxious penalties.

No one likes to pay taxes, but at least Florida tries to make it palatable. New York should as well.

And why not?

# The Summit missed the mark

The Long Island Association Summit to solve the problems of Long Island missed the mark. There were approximately 250 proposals presented, many good, many self-serving. Unfortunately, the summit missed the big one—how people can afford to live on Long Island. The summit chipped at the problem but did not tackle it head on.

In 1994 people can afford to buy houses on Long Island. There is sufficient inventory of houses for sale from \$100,000 and up. The runaway prices of the mid-80s have come down to earth. There are starter houses and there are mansions now realistically priced, but there aren't buyers.

The reasons are threefold. One, job insecurity. We have not recovered from the recession. Companies that were once stable like Grumman, are still announcing massive layoffs. Few companies are growing and hiring. Businesses are still moving off Long Island because of the effects of problem number two and problem number three, which are both directly related to the affordability of Long Island.

Problem number two is the high real estate taxes driven by the very high school costs. On Long Island, we spend

the equivalent of college tuition, including room and board, to educate kids from kindergarten to 12th grade.

Long Islanders, both those who own homes and those who want to buy homes, cannot afford their taxes. The solutions to this problem are quite evident but few are willing to take the bull by the horns and do what should be done.

The basic curriculum leading to a Regents diploma is prescribed and mandated by the state. On average, local school districts currently receive between 38% and 40% of their total budget in state aid to pay for this basic education. The cost of the state mandate is between 41% and 48% of the average budget. The balance of the budget is curriculum and electives selected by the local school boards and are offered above and beyond the subject matter required by the state.

To eliminate or reduce the burden on real estate taxes, the state should take over, as their sole obligation, the funding of the basic core curriculum, buildings and building operations and transportation. The funding for this would come out of the current state aid and would require additional funding out of the general revenues raised by

the state. In essence, the state would provide the same education from Montauk to Buffalo, funded and presented by the state.

Local school boards would continue to enjoy home rule over the districts. Boards would select additional curriculum that would be offered in the school districts. These courses would have to be voter-approved on a menu item basis by the taxpayers. If the taxpayers approved of the added curriculum, these items would be funded out of real estate taxes. Districts that could only afford a basic, quality education, could limit their tax liability. Districts that are more wealthy could approve those enhancements that would be funded out of real estate taxes. Voters would have the final authority on the quantity as well as the quality of education that would be given within a district.

The third problem is the cost of utilities here on Long Island. The Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) has a virtual monopoly the way the rules have been changed and subverted to keep this company financially healthy. The financial health of LILCO has resulted in companies being forced to move and homeowners to give up their

homes. LILCO has no competition. This can change.

The wholesale wheeling of electricity has been approved by the federal government. California and Michigan, whose Public Service Commissions represent the public as well as the utilities, have allowed the communities to bid for electricity and this is bringing rates down.

The New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) has done little to meet their responsibility of keeping rates low and stabilized while keeping the utility healthy. They have failed their mission. As a result, Long Islanders pay two-and-a-half times the nation's average for electricity.

The PSC commissioners are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. The PSC commissioners should be elected by the public so they would be forced to be responsive to the public's needs. A pro-ratepayer governor could foster more responsiveness by changing the chairman or appointing a pro-consumer commissioner. Cuomo failed to do this.

The PSC should be encouraged to rapidly develop competition here in New York by allowing wholesale wheeling of electricity and capping wheeling rates charged by utilities. It seems like the governor and the legislature have just discovered that the tremendous taxes they have placed on energy are part of the reason we pay such high rates. Now, during an election year, they are making promises to reduce these taxes. Their feet should be held to the fire to make them keep their word. If real estate taxes can be substantially reduced and the utility rates brought down, residents can afford to stay and Long Island can be made a more appealing place to do business.

If only these two ideas were implemented, Long Island would have a chance. If all the other ideas that came out of the summit were developed, Long Island could become a mecca. It takes leadership, it takes courage. Does Long Island have it?

And why not?

## Applause for volunteers

Putting all attorney jokes aside, performing pro bono services is really nothing new for many in the legal profession. But a group of Huntington attorneys, much to their credit, have taken the pro bono effort to a new level. They are driving senior citizen program vans.

This unique volunteer effort began when town officials, because of mounting financial problems, were forced to curb senior citizen transportation events. Hearing about this, lawyers decided to volunteer their efforts to drive the vans.

We applaud the actions of these attorneys. Offering free legal advice to those in need is the profession's usual way to volunteer their services. Responding to a need that is out of their usual area of expertise is a commendable step above their usual activity.

Volunteerism touches people's lives in many ways, through the volunteer ambulance companies, fire departments and the various groups that are created to meet specific needs. Too often we take for granted the actions of those who give of themselves and their time to work for others. They all de-

serve our sincere thanks.

Seeing a need in our communities, or in our governmental services, and responding is something worth repeating whenever that need develops. Borrowing, and revising slightly, the words of President John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your town can do for you, ask what you can do for your town." Follow the lead of the Huntington attorneys, and our towns will become a better place to live for those who need the help, and for those who offer it.

And why not?

## Promises, promises, promises

It's becoming pretty clear why Long Island roadways have been receiving so much attention in recent months. Could it be to smooth the travels of Governor Mario Cuomo who has visited the county more times in this election year than he has during his whole term?

Cuomo has been the perfect guest on each of his frequent visits, he has brought us "gifts" to remember him by. He has come with dollars, not a bunch but some; he has become actively concerned with a major problem faced in our area, breast cancer, and has spoken out about that issue. Just last week he came to tell us how he is going to resolve one of our major problems, the highest energy rates in the nation.

The governor called for rate reductions, not a rate freeze as the Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) has proposed. He has taken a seemingly firm stand about the actions of the Public Service Commission (PSC). In fact his energy commissioner, Frank Murray, commented after the recent press conference that the commissioners of the PSC "have gotten the word

loud and clear" that the governor wants rate reductions from LILCO and not rate freezes. His head of the state Consumer Protection Board (CPB), Richard Kessel, stated that the CPB will be filing a brief this week with the PSC that calls for a LILCO rate reduction of 2.5% per year for the next three years. Ratepayers have been begging for such action for years. Apparently Cuomo didn't hear. Now that he is running for re-election, did he get a hearing aid?

Cuomo said he has called upon the CPB to re-examine the issue of a public takeover of LILCO by the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) or the New York State Power Authority. He will authorize \$200,000 for a study to be conducted. LIPA has already initiated an exploration of a LILCO takeover. Apparently the governor didn't know that. But Kessel does, he's the Cuomo handpicked chairman of LIPA.

The governor also spoke of bringing competition to LILCO through various means, including the increased influx of lower cost power into the area through the use of municipal electrical distribution agencies that allow munic-

ipalities to purchase cheap power from other sources and "wheel" it into their communities for residential and industrial users. Cuomo apparently didn't know that Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney has already addressed this possibility and is exploring its feasibility through federal law.

Cuomo has developed a reputation for being very eloquent; his words can be smooth and soothing, or sharp and critical, depending on the circumstances and subject. But the accuracy of his comments sometimes leaves much to ponder. For example, "LIPA was my idea," he said during his recent visit. He knows better. We certainly do. And so does everyone else that was involved in the creation of this Long Island authority. He had nothing to do with its creation. In fact, when he was asked for support of the LIPA legislation, he demanded changes in the bill which, in effect, gave him control, including the designation of the chairman.

The legislation called for the election of LIPA trustees from Long Island, which would give local ratepayers a voice in their future energy needs, something they do not now have with

the PSC. Cuomo said during his recent visit he would ask the state legislators to prepare the district boundaries so that public voting for trustees can take place in November of 1995. We can only hope Cuomo will live up to that promise, that it isn't just more political campaign rhetoric. LIPA must be taken out of the hands of Cuomo and given back to the people it was designed to serve. LIPA was created because of Cuomo's refusal to take the PSC out of the pockets of the utilities it was designed to regulate. Abolish LIPA, as some politicians would like to do, and remain under the control of the PSC which has allowed the rates to soar to the highest in the nation.

Aren't election years great? They bring out the public officials in droves to tell us what they are going to do for us, what they should have been doing all along. They are going to make all the tax cuts they should have made, cut our electric rates, boost our economy and make our lives great.

We've been down this road before and have come to the conclusion every politician should be plugged into a lie detector when these campaign promises are made.

And why not?