

GREEN GROUP WON'T BACK LEGISLATORS WHO WON'T SUPPORT REFERENDUM ON CLEAN WATER

Endorses Only Englebright & Thiele Among State Legislators

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The Long Island Environmental Voters Forum will not endorse any state legislator who refused either to support legislation placing a referendum on water quality improvement on the Suffolk ballot or to advance an alternative approach.

“The foremost job of an elected official is the public health and safety,” said Voters Forum Chairman Richard Amper. “Restoring water quality is Long Island’s number one environmental and economic challenge. If legislators didn’t like what was proposed, they had the obligation to advance a better alternative. Instead they did nothing. That’s unacceptable,” he said.

Only two incumbent state legislators were endorsed – Assembly Members Steve Englebright and Fred Thiele. LIEVF Executive Director David Reisfield said, “These two legislators sought to improve the proposed bill to create an \$8 per month increase in the cost of water, which is currently nearly the lowest in the country. The funds would have been used to help homeowners with cesspool or septic tanks to upgrade their individual wastewater systems.”

The environmentalists said their group would not automatically endorse challengers, but would instead use questionnaires and candidate screening to determine who the organization would support. They brushed off charges that opponents dismissed the proposed referendum for substantive reasons, pointing out that Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan declared the measure “dead On arrival” before it ever reached his desk.

“The excuses some lawmakers used, such as fear that county officials might steal the money for other purposes or that the proposal constituted a tax on water, were totally bogus excuses,” Reisfield said. “This was a political hit, plain and simple.” Environmentalists have won appeals court rulings that prevent any use of the funds not authorized by a subsequent mandatory public referendum, and Suffolk residents are paying less for water than the actual cost of delivering it and disposing of it.

“Nobody should vote for a public official who feels that he or she has no obligation to protect the source of Long Island’s drinking and surface waters,” Amper said.

The Environmental Voters Forum has already endorsed Tom Suozzi in the Democrat Primary in the Third Congressional District and Dave Calone in the Democratic Primary in the first Congressional District. Those votes are set for June 28th. The Long Island Environmental Voters Forum is a non-profit, non-partisan grassroots organization created to identify, recruit, endorse and support pro-environment candidates for public office.