



# SUFFOLK COUNTY COMPTROLLER JOHN M. KENNEDY, JR. PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 13, 2019

**CONTACT:**

Doug Segall – 631-853-5045

Cell: 631-875-1235

[doug.segall@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:doug.segall@suffolkcountyny.gov)

## Comptroller Kennedy Stands Up To LIPA

### Comptroller Kennedy and Local Officials Call on Governor Cuomo to Reign in LIPA's Aggressive Behavior

**Northport, NY** - Suffolk County Comptroller John Kennedy joined several local officials to stand up for the taxpayers this past Monday June 10th, calling on Governor Andrew Cuomo to intervene in the recent actions taken by LIPA. In its capacity as a state agency, LIPA has initiated several lawsuits against local municipalities and school districts in order to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. This loss of tax dollars would be devastating to local communities, massively reducing funding and spurring significant cuts to local government operations and the functions of schools in the area. Speaking to a crowd of approximately 100 taxpayers, parents, and students, Comptroller Kennedy took part in a press conference in front of the Northport Power Plant to highlight this issue.

Comptroller Kennedy stressed the importance of this issue, saying “Suffolk County’s finances are as tight as a piano wire right now” and that “New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli’s office in September said Suffolk was under the most severe fiscal stress of any county in the state, in terms of fund balances, cash on hand, short term-borrowing, and other issues.” He made clear that in “no way, shape, or form can Suffolk County absorb a \$650 or \$700 million” cost incurred as a result of these actions from LIPA.

Comptroller Kennedy was joined by local officials from the Town of Huntington, including Councilman Mark Cuthbertson, Councilman Eugene Cook, Councilwoman Joan Cergol, Councilman Edmund J.M. Smyth, Town Attorney Nicholas Ciappetta, Receiver of Taxes Jillian Guthman, and Town Supervisor Chad A. Lupinacci. Supervisor Lupinacci stressed the importance of this fight: “this runaway State agency—a public utility with unlimited resources—has come after the Town of Huntington and we are fighting back with everything we have. LIPA refuses to negotiate. They have also engaged in a public disinformation campaign and spent the public’s money on advertising, pitting community against community.” He made clear the consequences at play if this is allowed to continue, saying “LIPA is now threatening to grieve the taxes on all of the property that it owns, where its transmission and distribution equipment is installed across Long Island. These challenges will affect every school district and municipality on Long Island.”

Northport-East Northport School District Superintendent Robert Banzer detailed the effects this loss of revenue would have on the community. He said, “the damage that LIPA would impose on the staff, schools, and community of our district will make our schools unrecognizable. It should be noted that this financial threat is

no longer contained to just a few school districts who host power plants. In January, LIPA announced that they would be seeking further reductions to the \$289 million dollars of assessments to the 185 substations across Long Island, thus creating a shortfall for school districts and communities island-wide.”

Comptroller Kennedy was also joined by County Legislator Robert Trotta, a representative from Assemblyman Andrew Raia’s office, and a representative from County Executive Steve Bellone’s office. Robert Trotta represents part of the Northport-East North Port School District in the Suffolk County Legislature. Jack Vobis, President of the Island Park Public Schools, Lauren Schnitzer, Counsel for the District, and Superintendent Dr. Peter Giarizzo, attended to show their support, joined by School Board Trustees from South Shore Central School District.

Local officials are asking Governor Cuomo to intervene and prevent LIPA from taking these drastic actions. After the press conference finished, attendees could be heard chanting “Stop LIPA now.”

###