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***Re: Member Items are payoffs***

Greetings:

Every major newspaper has condemned earmark spending in government budgets. I have been informed by a friend that the source of all true knowledge, *Newsday*, has dipped a toe in the water. Last year its editorial blockheads lamented the delay of earmark money to build a Little League field. As you all are aware, former Assemblyman Brian McLaughlin obtained \$80,000 for the Electchester Little League. He pocketed the money. Now, in an editorial entitled, *New York's Budget Is a Disaster Plan*, *Newsday* writes: **“Member items, at a cost of \$170 million, serve as payoffs politicians use to boost their popularity. The money will go to many groups that have nothing to do with social-service spending, where Paterson says it’s aimed: the Greater Long Island Running Club, the Pat-Med Youth Football and Cheerleading Club, the Oyster Bay Railroad Museum.”**

Last year, Senator Flanagan, you held a Town Hall Meeting. Lenore Cernitz, in effect, asked that in light of hard times shouldn’t these member items be eliminated or curtailed? You said that the groups receiving member item money were **“well established and well vetted.”** Senator, you lied to the woman’s face and those hundred assembled. I stood 8 feet behind her -- the videotape is available. If people want to see where their money is being thrown away by elected officials – such as yourself and Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick -- they need only go to the Attorney General’s link, which is **[Sunlightny.com](http://Sunlightny.com)**. The list is inclusive. There, one may look up all the member items from State Senators and Members of the Assembly – how much, to whom and what for. If they look up these items they will be outraged and disgusted at the *how much, for whom and especially for what*.

Legislator Lynne Nowick and Legislator John Kennedy, each of the County’s 18 Legislators gets \$35,000 in Member Item money that they can just give out. Added to this is up to \$500,000 per legislator in Omnibus Spending – Member Item money that must be voted. Thus all 18 legislators scratch each other’s backs and vote out each other’s member item giveaways. It’s bull. Once public money is in the coffers of a favored private group it is not subject to public audit. Hard times being upon people, all of you should return “your” member item money to the public treasury. Funding chambers-of-commerce or bee houses violates the New York State Constitution. All of you get free campaign flyers in the *Smithtown Messenger* every week courtesy of the taxpayer-funded legal-ad money that is voted to the *Messenger* each year. Rein member items in.

Respectfully yours,

**Lawrence N. Gray, Esq.**