

## **Water Quality Protection Must be a Priority for Long Island** **by David Reisfield, Executive Director L.I. Environmental Voters Forum**

My name is David Reisfield. I am Executive Director of the Long Island Environmental Voters Forum. 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.

We're here today, to echo the call for enhanced state commitment to reverse declining water quality across Long Island. The greatest need is for a recurring funding stream aimed at helping Long Island families upgrade their home septic systems to newer technology that reduces nitrogen – the largest contributor to contamination of drinking water and surface waters.

Our preference is for a small fee on the cost of water supplied by water purveyors – particularly in Suffolk County where there are some 360,000 homes using antiquated cesspools or septic tanks which discharge nitrogen directly to groundwater.

An increase of just \$24 per person/ per year, would produce \$100 million to subsidize individual home wastewater systems. That would, at least, get Long island started on the long road to water quality improvement. The state legislature need only permit Nassau and Suffolk to place on next November's ballot, a referendum allowing residents to approve a small increase in the cost of water, which currently is among the lowest in the United States.

If however, the legislature prefers to create a different, but effective recurring funding stream, LIEVF would welcome that. The only policy unacceptable is one that provides no choice for voters and ignores the urgent need to halt contamination of Long Island's critical water supply.