

LI group pushes for power plant re-assessment

By: [David Winzelberg](#) November 4, 2016

While some local municipalities continue to defend the current assessment of power plants leased by PSEG-Long Island through the Long Island Power Authority, the Association for a Better Long Island wants the property taxes on the aging plants reduced. ABLI, an advocacy group for developers and business owners, contends that politicians in this election season have avoided the controversy that's been festering for the better part of the last decade.

ABLI maintains that the \$550 million in payments in lieu of taxes that the utility pays for three obsolete plants and one that's already been demolished in Glenwood Landing represents 15 percent of all ratepayers' bills and a correction of the plants' assessments is long overdue.

"These over-assessed plants are Long Island's version of Dracula," ABLI Executive Director Desmond Ryan said in a written statement. "They are sucking the lifeblood out of our economy, extracting over half a billion dollars every year from the ratepayer to pay for payments in lieu of taxes to school districts that host these aging plants."

Ryan added that the three remaining obsolete plants in Northport, Port Jefferson and Island Park, which are owned by National Grid, are "industrial relics," but their real estate taxes deceptively state they are worth multi-billions in fair market value.

"It's a sham when the only thing being generated by those facilities is political power designed to prevent them from being closed and dismantled," Ryan said.

LIPA has challenged the plant assessments in court and those actions are still pending.

Ryan is urging voters to confront state lawmakers running for office and ask their position on addressing the ratepayer's financial burden.

However, elected officials, especially those in communities that host the power plants, have been



E.F. Barrett Power Plant in Island Park.

reluctant to allow for re-assessment in fear of the impact it will have on local school districts.

The refunds LIPA is seeking from these taxing districts is estimated to be about \$1 billion.

"Over decades, the school districts have become addicted and dependent on this over-assessment to fund their budgets," said attorney Lauren Harris, ABLI president and a partner in the Uniondale-based Cronin, Cronin, Harris & O'Brien law firm. "It has to stop and none of the candidates have addressed this."

Cris Damianos, a member of the ABLI executive board and a principal of the Damianos Realty Group, said all ratepayers are footing the bill for the assessment inequities and called the situation a ticking time bomb.

"Only a handful of communities on Long Island benefit from these outrageous taxes LIPA is paying," Damianos told LIBN. "Let everybody in those communities pay their fair share."

Ryan agreed and said elected officials need to be compelled by voters to confront the harsh math.

"All Long Island ratepayers are literally paying for a handful of school districts' dependency on the power plants' illegal over-assessments of fair market value," Ryan said. "Lawyers seeking to block a fair resolution of this crisis only stall the end game while homeowners suffer and businesses debate looking for cheaper areas to relocate their corporations."