

### Monday, October 29, 2007

On a Sunday, before the House Majority Leader, Steny Hoyer, came to Long Island to discuss our battles in Washington, I fought a battle of my own.

And lost.

My hard-fought battle was against pine needles on my front lawn. They fall from two towering trees, like a blizzard, coating my green grass with a thick veil of yellow. They blow across my driveway and into my neighbors' lawn and their neighbors' lawn. Every weekend in the fall I attack these enemies with a leaf blower, rakes and huge trash bags provided by the Town of Huntington. And every weekend, those pine needles taunt me, conspiring with the wind to undo whatever feeble progress I have made.

In the course of two hours, my lawn goes from yellow, to a temporary hint of green, to yellow again.

I have a confession. I have a very strong environmental record in Congress (some might even call me a "treehugger") but I hate those pine needles!

I don't mind spending time on weekends on Congressional business. However, I do grumble about having to wake up early to clear the lawn of those pine needles before attending congressional events.

As I was muttering about this while raking and blowing and stuffing leaf bags this past Sunday, I wondered if there should be some kind of federal initiative to assist my war against falling pine needles.

Perhaps a Congressional Pine Needle Caucus. Or maybe someone is seeking an appropriation for a Pine Needle Protection Research Institute. Or manufacturing tax incentives for bigger and better rakes? Or outlawing the wind.

And then I noticed something. My pine trees had small splotches of yellow paint on them.

"Who did that?" I asked my wife.

"LIPA," she replied. "They came by and said our pine trees are too close to the power lines. They asked if they could remove them."

Sure enough, my two pine trees have immense branches that lean precariously against the power lines on my street.

## MY WAR AGAINST PINE NEEDLES

Sunday, October 28, 2007

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Victory! I thought. The rest of my chore was slightly more pleasant, even when a few gusts of wind brought a new layer of pine needles atop the areas I had just cleared. I raked with a smile, if not a last laugh. Until my wife stared almost forlornly at the two massive trees.

"You know what I think?" she said.

"What's that?"

"A cherry tree. A cherry tree would be a perfect replacement."

A cherry tree.

I can not tell a lie: On this, I'm pro-lawn seed.