

Grins and groans

THE ISSUE | Grins and groans from news of the week.

OUR OPINION | Groan to emboldened freshman. Grin to congressional comeuppance.

Groan

If the freshmen members of the House of Representatives aren't careful, they'll find themselves on the outside looking in for the next year and a half.



Democrats and Republican leaders are reportedly close to reaching a budget deal to keep the government from shutting down for the remainder of the 2011 budget year.

The two sides have already agreed on a spending cut amount in the \$30 billion range. Now they just need to agree on the specifics of the spending cuts.

Standing in the way like a fat, waddling possum blinded by the lights of an oncoming car are the House freshmen.

Apparently compromise is a concept they don't teach until your sophomore year in Congress because the tea party-aligned freshmen class are demanding the Senate act on their full slate of spending cuts – totaling more than \$60 billion.

While Republicans are standing united in front of the media, House Speaker John Boehner is so frustrated with the recalcitrance of the house freshmen that last week there were reports he was seeking votes among moderate Democrats.

Once those reports reached the media, Boehner was forced to backtrack.

It's the nature of politics that election results are often misread and overestimated. If the tea-party freshmen think the way to relevance is to dig in their heels and force a government shut-down, many of them won't see a second term.

Grin

You almost have to feel sorry for Speaker of the House John Boehner.

That poor Oompa Loompa-colored, weepy son of a gun has a mess on his hands with the Tea Party freshmen. Boehner isn't the most moderate Republican ever elected to the House of Representatives, but he is a pragmatist. He knows that, in order to get anything passed, it has to be agreeable to the Democrat-led Senate and the Democratic president.

He can't move too far to the center, however, without the Tea Party freshmen yipping in his ear. It would be easy to feel sorry for Boehner, except he put himself in this position.

He's like the woman who finds a cobra near death on the side of the road. After nursing the cobra back to health, she's surprised when the cobra bites her.

Boehner campaigned for and helped raise money for the cobra that's biting him right now.

Whether Boehner survives the wrath of the Tea Party is still up in the air.

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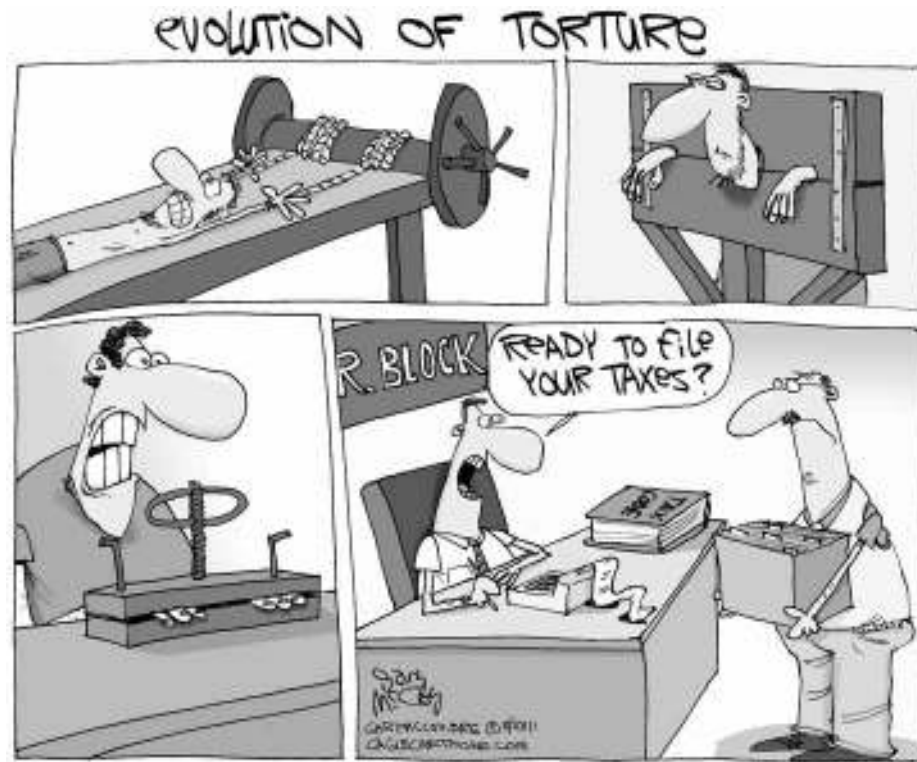
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ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

After the budget, agenda still full

How's this for a quote summing up the recently enacted New York State budget, from a constituent who left the following post on my Facebook page late last week, "It's a start, but don't break your arms patting yourselves on the back."

Never let it be said that the people you represent in this line of work won't always do their best to help keep it in perspective – to keep your head out of the clouds, your feet on the ground and, yes, even your arms all in one piece. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

Because the serious fact is, this year's budget is only a start. Far from ending the controversies, challenges, and difficult choices that have already defined it, this budget really is just the beginning of the hard work facing New York government. There'll be no let-up. This budget takes painful steps to impose the fiscal discipline that's needed for any long-term turnaround for taxpayers, but maintaining this discipline is going to be even harder. Special interest groups will come out of the woodwork now to redouble their efforts to restore Albany's tax-and-spend ways.

This budget begins a commitment to the upstate economy that's been ignored in Albany for far too long. Now the hard work starts to ensure that the cornerstones of this new upstate strategy, including a slate of regional economic

development councils, make a difference.

And one of the driving forces behind this budget is to create a better business climate in New York, where the current climate has been ranked as America's worst. The executive director of the upstate advocacy group known as Unshackle Upstate, said, "I don't think anyone is fully convinced that New York State is open for business. But I think we've opened the door a bit and let people take a peek inside." Now the hard part: how to make sure that a peek inside leads to a step through a door that's wide open to as many businesses (and the private-sector jobs they create) as possible and how to restore some confidence to New York's employers.

Because what this budget is going to immediately produce – long before its fiscal discipline and economic commitment have a chance to begin working – will be renewed shouting over what it does wrong, where it falls short, and what it ignores. We're hearing it already.

That's fair enough, up to a point. These choices have not come easy. I've already said that New York is going to have to face these economic and fiscal battlegrounds for the foreseeable future. Our responsibility will be to ensure that this budget does what it's intended to do and that we're on top of every adjustment that's going to be needed. We're not going to get it

all right, all at once, and we have to stand ready to find better ways.

That's not to say, by any means, that we don't stand strong and stay committed to what this year's budget does right:

- It was enacted on time. The late state budget has long stood as the symbol of dysfunctional state government. More effective government starts with a pretty straightforward, time-honored principle: a solid work ethic. In other words, get your job done when it's supposed to be done;

- For the first time in 15 years, this budget includes a year-to-year state spending decrease. This fiscal discipline has to remain standard operating procedure across New York government; and

- This budget reduces New York's projected budget deficit next year from \$15 billion to approximately \$2 billion, and it does it without new state borrowing or taxing.

This year's emphasis on fiscal discipline and economic responsibility deserves to stand as the hallmark of the new state budget. Because it's about time. It's definitely a good start. Now we get back to work.

State Sen. Tom O'Mara represents the 53rd Senate District.

■ **State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents the 53rd Senate District.**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Keep up the good work

TO THE EDITOR | It never ceases to amaze me what lengths that some people will go to avoid having to make an honest living. Such is the case with WETM's PhD. of politics Dr. Steven "Hurricane" Coleman. I'm not sure where the name "Hurricane" comes from, the only other person I've ever heard of with that nickname was a boxer.

Somehow I don't think he got it because of his pugilistic abilities. As a matter of fact I would suspect he bestowed this moniker on himself. Even with being someone who can throw a Dr. in front of his name he apparently doesn't

understand what most working class kids understand, nicknames are given to you by your closest friends, most often in an effort to embarrass and cause a certain amount of emotional pain. One shouldn't be doing that to themselves. Whenever Hurricane comes on the TV I find myself in a position akin to driving by a bad car wreck, ya don't want to look but you just can't help yourself. Recently Hurricane has gone as far as stating that the governor of New York should be excommunicated, and that unions are the true enemy of the USA. It would appear that Mr. Coleman is an expert on all things from theology to organized labor, and everything in between,

except apparently where one goes to procure a quality toupee. Now although I do take exception to "Hurricane's" comments about labor (leave religion to the experts) I in no way wish to silence him. This is due to the fact that sense he and people like the governor of Wisconsin have finally taken off their hoods, and come out in the open to fight, they have done with their arrogance and stupidity, more in a few short weeks to promote and energize Organized Labor, than we Labor advocates have been able to do in years of lecturing. Thanks "Doc" and keep up the good work.

Michael LeBarron
 Corning

Deal seems impossible

If anyone doubts that the prospects for Middle East peace are poor, simply consider the latest threat by the government of Israel.

An official said last week that if the Palestinians unilaterally seek world-recognition as a state, Israel would consider annexing the West Bank.

THE INSIDER



Bob Rolfe

There are currently 300,000

Israeli settlers living on formerly Palestinian territory alongside 2.5 million Palestinian inhabitants.

Israel has been building settlements in that area for 44 years. And if a peace was ever agreed upon, Israel would probably have to give back much of the territory it has appropriated.

The Palestinians claim all of the West Bank, plus East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip as the territory for their future state.

The idea that the two sides will ever negotiate a jointly agreeable deal over this territory seems utterly impossible.

Somebody is going to have to blink and, given its militant stand, it seems very doubtful this side would be Israel.

Time to look into The Insider's Mailbox again.

Someone who signs his emails "simjue" says that with all states facing major cuts in workforce and programs "it is only fair that the federal government does its part."

"For a start, layoffs of federal employees and no pay raises for all remaining federal workers.

"A good place to start is Obama's 'czars' departments. Maybe there are just too many federal employees and his friends working in the government."

The Leader also suggests "revising and simplifying the tax code and thus decreasing the size of the federal tax department."

A recent column on hearings conducted by Congressman Peter King discussing the problem of native-born Muslim militants sparked several replies.

"Your column about Peter King was right on the money," a Hornell man said. "You finally got it right. You're starting to think like a Conservative."

And reader Jeff Heller of Bradford emailed: "While I seldom agree with your editorial philosophy, I found your essay on Representative King's hearings extremely well-done.

"Having read 25 or more books on Islam and the War on Terror since 9/11, I think I know a great deal more on this subject than I did 10 years ago.

"The more you understand fundamental Islam the more concerned you have to become. Once we understand fundamentalist Islam at all, we have to remind ourselves that the Founding Fathers did not design the Bill of Rights as a suicide pact."

Reader Pat Jackson says King's hearings "remind me a bit too much of the Japanese interments during WW2 and end of McCarthyism."

■ **Bob Rolfe, a retired Leader reporter/editor, can be reached by writing The Leader, PO Box 1017, Corning, NY 14830 or theinsider1@aol.com. He is also periodic co-host of the "Coleman & Co." public affairs TV program which airs at 10:30 a.m. Sundays on WETM-TV and is repeated at 10 p.m. on WETM-2.**