

OPINION

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GUEST VIEW | U.S. ATTORNEY WILLIAM J. HOCHUL JR.

We must address teen dating violence

At the U.S. Attorney's Office, prosecutors regularly handle the most horrific cases of violence. One type of violence which is often hidden and unreported is teen dating violence. Unfortunately, the physical and emotional damage from such an event can be long standing.

In a nationwide survey, 9.4 percent of high school students report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the 12 months prior to the survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey).

About 1 in 5 women and nearly 1 in 7 men who ever experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, first experienced some form of partner violence between 11 and 17 years of age (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey).

Reasons for such violence vary, but they include that fact that teens may lack the experience to navigate romantic relationships, or are unable to voice their feelings or communicate when emotional situations take a turn for the worse. When adolescents find the courage to tell their friends about being in an abusive relationship, statistics show that more times than not, their friends won't know what to do to get them help.

To help address this situation, February has been designated as National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. To further add to the resources parents and teens can utilize, I'm happy to report that our Office will host a round table discussion of teen dating violence on February 28, 2013.

This event will draw approximately one dozen young people from across the region to discuss real-life situations of teen dating violence. The round table panel will include a member of a local assistance organization, as well as a young person who herself was victimized. Canisius College has



WILLIAM J. HOCHUL JR.

Educate yourself, and assist young people in locating services if they or someone they know is experiencing a physically or emotionally abusive relationship.

graciously agreed to serve as the host location for this event.

My hope is that the participants will be able to shine the light of day on this troubling phenomenon. Because the entire event will be available via webcast to schools, the round table discussion can be more broadly used as an educational tool, as well as a starting point for further discussion.

Let me also recommend that parents continue to stay involved in the lives of their children, and work to keep the lines of communication with them open. If you are a parent of a teenager, do you know the names and faces of three of their friends? Chances are, one of them—maybe your own son or daughter—will be in an abusive relationship.

Model healthy, non-violent relationships in your own homes. Learn how to identify the signs of abuse. Educate yourself, and assist young people in locating services if they or someone they know is experiencing a physically or emotionally abusive relationship.

Working to end violence in the community remains one of the highest priorities of the U.S. Attorney's Office. By addressing the issue of teen dating violence with your children, and by encouraging your local school to view next week's free web event, you too will not only help address this serious issue, you will join me in protecting all of our area's children at the same time.

William J. Hochul Jr. is U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York.

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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GUEST VIEW | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Albany cleanup plans long overdue

One of the Cuomo administration's earliest initiatives in 2011, one that was rolled out with great fanfare as a cornerstone for a total makeover of New York government, was the call for a state-level commission to drill down deep into the operations of state agencies — especially their spending practices.

To put it bluntly, a commission to start cleaning up the mess. Many had long suspected that the state bureaucracy had become like a rundown house — old windows, an outdated furnace, a leaky roof and all that. A victim of homeowner neglect.

So this new commission, the Spending and Government Efficiency Commission (commonly called the SAGE Commission) set out to take its own inspection after it was established as part of the 2011-12 state budget.

I've written about it from time to time over the past few years to keep you updated, because I think it's important. SAGE has been charged with producing recommendations for the first major overhaul of the state bureaucracy since the late 1920s. In fact, the last similarly extensive reorganization took place in 1927 under the administration of Gov. Al Smith.

Keep in mind that we're not talking about the big-ticket items here, like Medicaid spending. The



TOM O'MARA

programs and services responsible for the state's largest expenditures, like Medicaid and education, deserve — and have been getting — their own, separate looks.

What we've been talking about with SAGE are those behind-the-scenes actions that might seem like minor news until you start stacking them one on top of the other and they start to add up to real savings. It's like the old saying, "A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money."

Let's recall exactly what we're talking about. Shortly after SAGE's creation came reports in the New York Times and the New York Post about investigators uncovering "massive waste" in New York State government.

State agencies paying \$9 a dozen for ballpoint pens. Millions of dollars being spent on toll-free telephone numbers that hadn't received a call in months. One top administration official said, "There is no end to the horror stories."

I wrote about these so-called "efficiency probes" at the time and basically said this: Keep turning the page

on the state's fiscal practices. We've long suspected that out-of-control spending has undermined the state bureaucracy. Now we're finding out that's exactly the case. And now we need to get our own house in order. We can't focus enough on rooting out the waste, inefficiencies and mismanagement that have clearly taken hold of state government in too many places and throughout too many operations. Keep going.

The SAGE Commission has kept going — to the point where I can provide an update on its final recommendations. It went largely unnoticed in the swirl of other actions taking place at the Capitol around the same time, but two weeks ago SAGE released its final report. The recommendations are "expected to save over \$1.6 billion once fully implemented, improve service to citizens and businesses, and increase transparency and accountability."

I'll make two points.

Point No. 1: At a time when government resources are stretched to the breaking point, nearly \$2 billion in potential efficiency savings is a big deal. So the SAGE report deserves attention. It may not have been headline worthy, but it's the kind of nuts-and-bolts agenda that can make a difference. I'm still going through it. You can find the full report online here: <http://www.governor.ny.gov/assets/documents/SAGEReport.pdf>

ny.gov/assets/documents/SAGEReport.pdf

The specific recommendations are far too detailed to review one-by-one here, but the agenda breaks down into the following three categories:

■ Reorganizing the state bureaucracy through consolidations, rightsizing, modernization, mergers and better planning.

■ Reducing costs and improving service.

■ Building a long-term culture of performance and accountability.

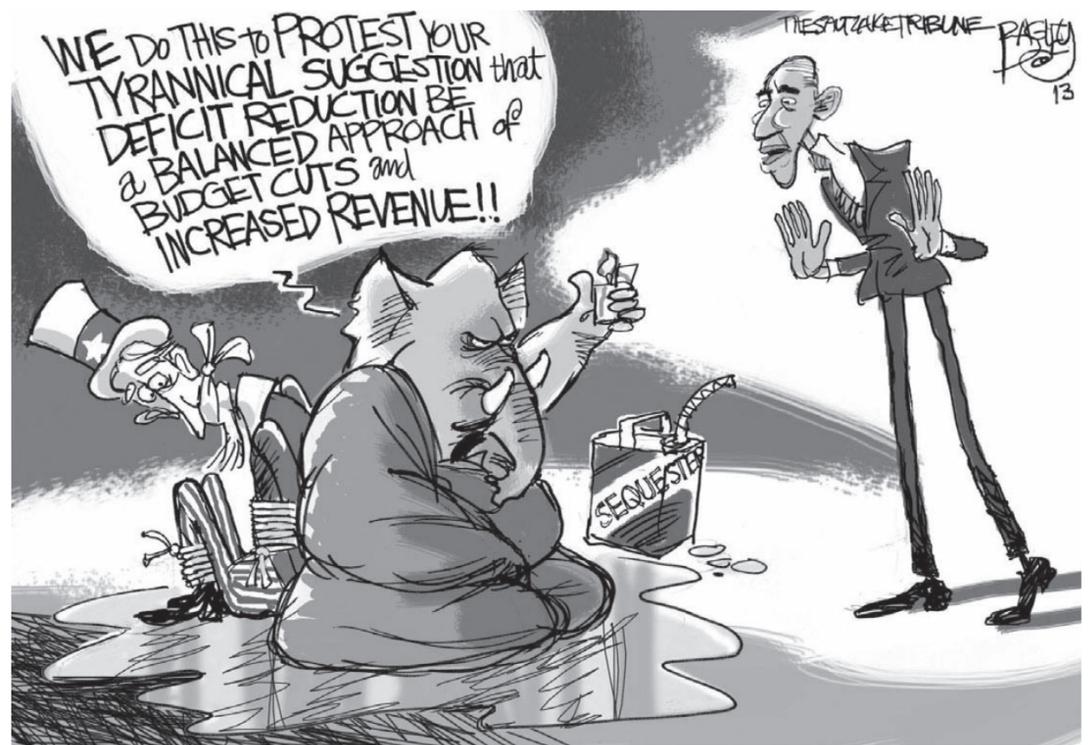
Point No. 2: Actions need to follow words. We've seen reports come and go in New York government for decades. But they've come and gone and nothing's changed.

I'm under no illusion that every single SAGE recommendation is going to be swallowed hook, line and sinker, or that this chapter is now officially closed on cleaning up the state bureaucracy. However as I've said so many times before over the past several years: there can be no turning back this time. That, I think, is the real difference this time.

The taxpayers I hear from are demanding this long-overdue accounting. And they're right.

State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County.

ANOTHER VIEW



READER VIEW | MICHAEL MORRONGIELLO

Cuomo should show moxie, allow fracking

Moxie means courage combined with inventiveness, which is what we need to revive our ailing upstate economy. This is just what Lycoming County, Pa. is going to get. A company called Moxie Energy will invest \$800 million to build a new power plant called Moxie Patriot to generate electricity powered by locally produced natural gas. The project will begin in March 2013 and employ 200 to 500 construction workers. The total payroll for this endeavor is estimated at \$40 million injected directly into the local economy.

When completed, Moxie Patriot will produce electricity to light 750,000 homes, employ 30 people in high-paying jobs and provide cheap, clean power. Why?

Natural gas is cheaper when it's local and not shipped long distances. This puts money in the pocket of every electrical customer and makes job creation easier because businesses will have reduced energy costs. Also, natural gas burns cleaner than any other fossil fuel, resulting in a cleaner environment.

In the Southern Tier of New York, we're losing jobs. Sikorski recently closed, taking with it 575 jobs, but those jobs aren't the whole story. The Sikorski plant paid \$815,000 in property taxes, including \$465,000 in school taxes to the Horseheads School District, \$200,000 to Chemung County and \$100,000 to the town of Big Flats. How do you replace all that tax revenue, and those jobs? Answer: In

the weak upstate economy, it's not likely. But it gets worse. In Steuben County, Philips Lighting closed its doors, saying goodbye to 280 jobs. Unemployment in Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties now stands at an inexcusable 9.8 percent.

Because of gas drilling you could throw a rock and hit prosperity and hope in Pennsylvania; in New York, the same rock hits unemployment and despair.

We need jobs right now. Natural gas drilling will provide those jobs. But we've been waiting more than four years. And now we're waiting on yet another study, this one by the NYS Department of Health — which already issued a report in February 2012 declaring that "significant

adverse impacts on human health are not expected from routine HVHF" (high-volume hydraulic fracturing).

Yet, there have been no reports of ill health in Jamestown, a town of about 31,000 people. Hydraulic fracturing has been going on in the Jamestown aquifer since at least the 1980s.

Governor Cuomo acted with blinding speed to pass an assault weapons ban; meanwhile, the study of hydraulic fracturing drags on into its fifth year. The NYS Department of Health and the DEC are slated to complete their work soon. It's time, Governor Cuomo, to show some moxie. Act for the people of upstate. Let's begin drilling.

Morrongiello is a Corning resident.