

# OPINION

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## ANOTHER VIEW



## OUR VIEW

# Grins and groans

### Grin

We were glad to hear Friday that Guthrie Health is taking steps to demolish the former hospital on Denison Parkway.

The vacant property is more than an eyesore located on a busy roadway, it is taking up a good chunk of property – nearly 8 acres – that could be put to much better use.

Once the building is torn down, we're sure the property will be more attractive to a developer.

Whether it's apartments, a business or a community center, anything is better than a building and parking lot sitting vacant for years.

Chase Pitkin, anyone?

...

### Grin

We enjoyed reading the responses to two recent questions we asked on our Facebook page.

Earlier last week, we asked folks to tell us where we could get the best fish fry.

More than 100 folks weighed in, with several local restaurants getting "votes".

While this was a fun exercise with the goal of engaging readers on another cold, wintry day, the debate also brought attention to the mom-and-pop restaurants serving good food in our area.

If you don't have a "go-to" place for fish fry, check out one of the many

restaurants our followers suggested on our Facebook page. Most are but a short drive away. Please, do what you can to support our small businesses.

Friday, we asked what people would like to see replace the former hospital on Denison Parkway.

Again the responses flowed in and were quite interesting.

Developers should take note that an indoor athletic facility - such as a field house for soccer and lacrosse - was popular.

Also receiving support were KFC and Trader Joe's.

On the other hand, a plea for affordable housing created quite a debate.

We've posted some of the responses below and welcome you to join the conversation on our Facebook page.

Just remember, be respectful of other opinions, play fair and watch your swears. Kindness matters. Always.

...

A grin and a groan to the news that Corning Hospital President Shirley Magana will retire in July.

We'll be sorry to see her go, but realize she deserves to put her feet up and take a break. Shirley worked hard to see a new Corning Hospital built at a better location. She did not do it alone, but was the driving force that saw a long-sought goal finally achieved.

## POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

# Medicaid audits remain maddening

A team of state examiners has been at work highlighting the continued loss of millions of taxpayer dollars within, you guessed it, the state's Medicaid system. It's maddening – especially if you're a taxpayer.

One mid-January report from the state comptroller's office found that the state Department of Health (DOH) wrongly paid more than 29,000 pharmacy claims, worth nearly \$1 million, for thousands of Medicaid recipients already covered by managed care plans. And just last week, a second comptroller's report found that the DOH failed to collect an estimated \$120 million in available rebates from prescription drug makers.

"Taxpayers have invested heavily in the Medicaid system and have a right to expect that health care dollars are being spent as needed," the comptroller said.

Go back 10 years, probably even 20, and you'll find report after report highlighting abuse, fraud and waste within the Medicaid system.

Finding after finding characterized New York's system as the most expensive in the nation, and one of the most wasteful. Rip-offs and scams were rampant. The federal General Accounting Office (GAO) at one point estimated that 10 percent of state Medicaid spending was lost to fraud and other abuses.

Spending on Medicaid stood at around \$42 billion a year in New York a decade ago. This fiscal year, the cost could soar past the \$60-billion mark.



TOM O'MARA

Prior to being elected to the state Senate in 2010, I was serving in the Assembly as the chairman of the Assembly Republican Task Force on Medicaid Waste, Fraud and Abuse. We explored ways to reduce Medicaid spending, including the utilization of cutting-edge technology to pinpoint misspending, mismanagement and other waste. The state Legislature created the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG) in 2006. At that time Medicaid oversight sprawled across six state agencies. The OMIG office has helped tighten up the oversight ship but it hasn't plugged all the leaks.

In some ways, it can't be expected to.

During budget testimony before the Legislature's fiscal committees last February, then-Medicaid Inspector General James Cox called for a stronger state-local partnership to further prevent abuses. I've long agreed. Legislation I continue to co-sponsor in the Senate, for example, would enhance the incentive for counties undertaking successful Medicaid fraud prosecutions. The inspector general has also highlighted the effectiveness of data-mining programs like one developed by the Horseheads-based Salient Management Company.

Salient's technology, already successfully used by Chemung and a dozen or so other counties, as well as the OMIG to some extent, helps point the way toward significant Medicaid savings -- which is why for years I've called for its more widespread use across the state bureaucracy and localities charged with administering Medicaid, especially the state health department.

On that front, it's been over a year since the state signaled its intention to award a five-year, \$500-million contract to Xerox to construct New York's next Medicaid management system. The publication Capital recently reported that the contract remains in limbo. It was delivered to the state comptroller in December and is still under review. This new management system is a huge and complex undertaking. But it's vitally important to taxpayers. It's something that the state needs to get right.

The Capital article further noted that "New York State has a long history of delays and cost overruns with its prior Medicaid management system."

The state paid Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) roughly \$1 billion to build the current system, which became operational in 2005. The CSC-built system was supposed to cost \$357 million. It ended up costing three times that much. It was completed three years late. Now, according to Capital, CSC and another Xerox competitor for the Medicaid contract, Hewlett-Packard, are

protesting and questioning Xerox's ability to do the job. Xerox, of course, begs to differ. My point is that none of this inspires any confidence that New York is on the verge of putting an end to mismanagement and waste in the Medicaid system.

We're still seeing far too many reports like the comptroller's recent discoveries. They keep pointing the finger directly at inefficient state agency policies and processes. Collecting rebates should be pretty straightforward – yet New York State is leaving \$120 million uncollected.

Not double-paying a pharmacy seems like it should be an equally straightforward fix. So why can't the state figure this stuff out, and put a stop to the waste? That's a question many legislators and government watchdogs have been asking, repeatedly, for years.

Positive Medicaid reform efforts are underway at the state and local levels. But huge amounts of Upstate tax dollars go to support vast Medicaid spending statewide, especially in New York City, and there remain far too many instances of mismanagement. One report a few years ago even revealed that New York City's Medicaid fraud detection program was costing taxpayers \$4 million more than it was recovering in misspent funds.

Like I said, it's maddening.

— State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 53rd Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and a portion of Tompkins County.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Congrats to Reed on hunger bill

TO THE EDITOR | While U.S. Rep. Tom Reed and I rarely agree on state and national issues, I must congratulate him on his proposed bill, H.R. 644, the Fighting Hunger Incentive Act.

I sincerely hope that this bill passes the House and Senate gets enacted into law.

Rosalie Niemczyk  
Bath

### Quit meddling in ISIS situations

TO THE EDITOR | In regards to ISIS, why hasn't anybody been informed that all these people have been held hostage all these years? I have my concerns because the American public weren't and aren't aware of it. My concerns are, if they have such a great God, he certainly isn't a loving God. I find it hard to believe that these people are not compassionate toward human lives, and the American families here in the states are helpless and I'm sure losing faith in our government.

I can only imagine the pain these families are living with.

Why isn't the president using his powers rather than having justifications for allowing it to continue on? I suggest we just leave it alone and stop sending our people over there when it's really

not necessary. They have nothing we are interested in do they?

To see them line these people along the beach and then kill them isn't fair to those who aren't being protected by our president, by our government. We need to let them be, if there people aren't happy with what's going on they can revolt and change their government. I am saddened that we continue to meddle in the ISIS situations. A human life isn't worth risking especially one of our own. If we continue to allow ISIS to slaughter and make it known by putting it on YouTube, our national television, it's gonna continue to incorporate fear in our American people and our feelings toward the government our founding fathers based our principles on. I'm sure they would focus on our country and not someone else's. We need to make our country stronger than ever before, even if it means to shut other countries out.

I pray we somehow find a resolution to this solution, it's putting fears in the American minds. Please ask President Obama to put a stop to this before they try and take it to our American soil. Thank goodness we have respect for our God and a loving God, cause he will not allow them to carry on in this fashion. I assure you.

Mr. Free Spirit  
Corning

## WHAT YOU'RE SAYING ABOUT ... DEVELOPING THE FORMER CORNING HOSPITAL SITE.

We asked our Facebook friends what they would like to see built at the site of the former hospital on Denison Parkway. Here are some of the many responses:

**Michelle Wilson** – "Apartments for low income or disabled ...the apartments around here r too expensive for certain people."

**Cindy Swimley** – "I totally agree with you, There's not enough housing for lower class people, I'm not talking about Ghetto People either, i'm talking for People that are on Disability, Work but can't afford all the higher priced apartments. Corning is loosing good people because they can't afford to live here!!!! The Locals are leaving!"

**William James Atherton** – "put a KFC in there." Suzy Halm – "Covered ice arena.....indoor lacrosse, soccer youth sports complex..."

**Doug Aranda** – "I could see Arnot Health consolidating their Corning area offices in one location. I don't think retail is an option because of Market St. Senior housing would also be an area need."

**Mikey James Johnston** – "It should be a combination of street level businesses, studio space and high rise apartments. The cost of renting an apartment in Corning can be astronomical. And for as artistically friendly Corning is, there is a serious lack of affordable studio space. One or two high rise towers on top of commercial space will generate a lot of money, draw more people into the core of the city and help bring down the cost of living so renters aren't getting priced out of living in Corning."

**Sheila Weiner Sutton** – "Indoor soccer and ice rink! It's time to do something that will help keep kids and adults active year round. Could do LAX there too."

Visit our Facebook page to join the conversation.

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