

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Politicizing violence against police is shameful

TO THE EDITOR | The Deputies Association of the County of Steuben would like to issue the following statement in regards to the recent media coverage of the events occurring across our nation about the acts of violence being perpetrated against law enforcement during their tours of duty:

The Deputies Association of the County of Steuben, which embodies all sworn police officers of the Steuben County Sheriff's Office, were deeply saddened when we learned of our fellow law enforcement brothers who were assassinated by an unstable individual in New York City on Dec. 20, 2014 shortly before 3 p.m. The Deputies Association would like to publicly offer our condolences to the families of Officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos during their time of loss and mourning.

The Deputies Association would also like to speak candidly about the recent attempts of a few local, state and national public figures in an attempt to "politicize" the recent acts of violence against members of the law enforcement community. The use of media, both public and social, of a selected few local, state and national figures to use these atrocious and cowardly acts towards law enforcement to support of promote their own personal views and agendas is incredulous. The inappropriate and unethical statements by some of these public figures, both elected and private, is not only dishonorable, but serves to show that they in fact support the tension that currently exists in many areas of our nation today between our citizens and the members of society that are charged with their daily protection.

Every day a police officer, wherever they may serve their community from Steuben County to Ferguson, Missouri to New York City to Los Angeles, California, goes to work; they do so knowing that this may be the day that they are last saying goodbye to family or friends in support of making our nation a safer place to live. This is something that all law enforcement members take to heart and accept, or else they move onto another career in life. What we do not accept or expect is warrantless or heinous acts of violence against us or our fellow law enforcement members brothers and sisters in uniform and the public support from these elected or private public figures condoning acts of violence to the

people who are charged with their protection. The Deputies Association would like to remind the public that all law enforcement members of the Steuben County Sheriff's Office are highly trained individuals and that the current sheriff, David V. Cole, as well as the many sheriffs of Steuben County before him, make every effort to ensure the members of the Deputies Association charged with the protection of the citizens of Steuben County is conducted in a highly trained and professional environment.

We hope that all citizens of Steuben County will stand behind this Public Statement on the recent national acts of tragedy that have befallen members of our law enforcement family and condemn those public figures who will or have used these unwarranted violent acts and assassinations to draw attention to their own political ambitions or agendas.

Respectfully submitted to the citizens of Steuben County,
—Executive Board of the Deputies Association of the County of Steuben:
Robert McDaniels, President
Rich Lock, Vice President
Donald Lewis, Treasurer
Marc Smith, Trustee
Eric Tyner, Secretary

Police shouldn't use such deadly weapons

TO THE EDITOR | It appears to me that all the current confusion and problems associated with the deaths of African-Americans at the hands of police could be somewhat reduced if the people involved were not killed, but rather only wounded.

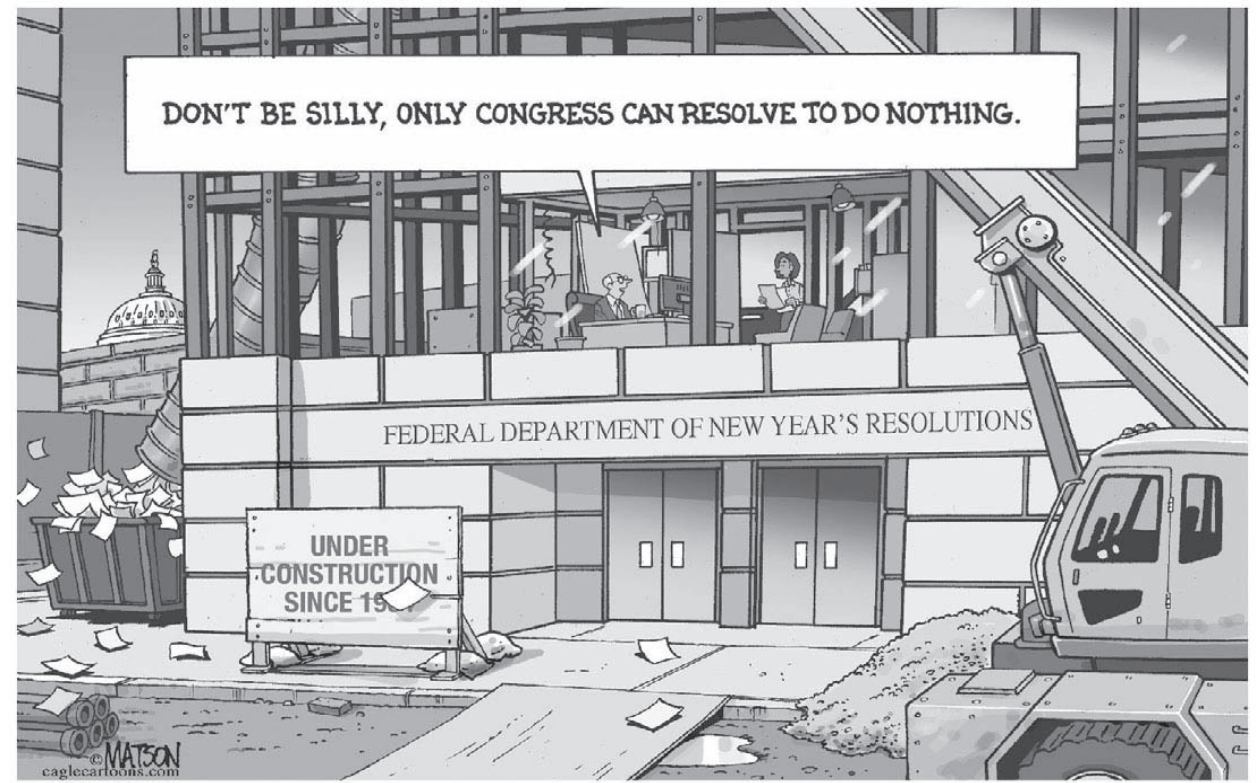
Recently it appears that virtually all police officers are equipped with multishot automatic pistols and, in most cases, they seem to fire as many as 14 rounds in succession at the target.

What would happen if the police were equipped with 6 shot revolvers? This is the weapon used by police in the past and requires the shooter to aim more carefully knowing he has only six shots and they cannot be delivered in a "spray shooting" flurry.

Another possible solution would be to selectively arm police with shot shells that only shoot BB size pellets that in most cases will disable a person and not kill him. They are available in most calibers and will reduce the likelihood of deaths at the hands of police and still give them the protection they need in situations of close range dangerous encounters.

—William A. Weber
 Branchport

ANOTHER VIEW



WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Taking a closer look at police safety

Governor Andrew Cuomo, in respecting the passing of his father, former New York Governor Mario Cuomo, has postponed his fifth State of the State message to the Legislature, originally scheduled for later this week, until January 21st.

That's entirely appropriate and understandable.

Yes, our state faces crucial issues that need swift resolution and so the sooner we can get a new legislative session underway the better. The Southern Tier in particular has been devastated by recent state decisions that have sparked deep-rooted anger and resentment, and which will demand attention in this new year.

But I know I speak for so many across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions by extending our condolences, together with our thoughts and prayers, to Governor Cuomo and the entire Cuomo family during a very difficult, very personal period of mourning.

As we move closer to the rescheduled State of the State, a sharper picture of the tough issues that are going to dominate the new legislative session will come into focus.

I'll preview just one of them this week.

The recent assassinations of two on-duty New York City police officers, in the wake of civil unrest across the nation following the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner on Staten Island, New York, have reignited, in many places, long-simmering conflicts between law enforcement and the communities they are sworn to protect and serve.

It's a highly dangerous



SEN. TOM O'MARA

time for all of us.

Governor Cuomo and other top state officials have signaled their intention to make criminal justice reform a top priority in 2015. That's a welcome development. They would like to focus this upcoming reform debate on issues like the grand jury process and procedures. In light of these stated intentions — and in response to them — the Senate Republican Conference wants to ensure that a key centerpiece of any upcoming debate is not overlooked: police safety.

Consequently, we've recently announced a set of public hearings, in Albany and in New York City, to add what we firmly believe is an important balance to this upcoming discussion by focusing on police safety and public protection.

One of my colleagues, Western New York Senator Patrick Gallivan, who chairs the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Corrections Committee, summarized our intention this way, "I believe the first step in making sure our communities are safe is to ensure the safety of those who have taken an oath to serve and protect their fellow citizens. I also believe it is in everyone's best interest to make sure our law enforcement officers across the state are the best trained and best equipped."

Well said, and I wholeheartedly agree. As a member of two of the four

Senate committees that will be conducting the police safety hearings — the Codes Committee, and the Investigations and Government Operations Committee — I look forward to participating in them. They're being held this month and will seek to provide a thorough and balanced review of the state's criminal justice systems. We'll be receiving input from law enforcement, legal scholars, city and state officials, and district attorneys on a range of issues, including:

- Police officer safety in the current climate of civil unrest and protest
- Statistics on assaults upon police officers, adequate training and equipment, and the risks police must confront in the line of duty
- The impact of community policing
- The need for state action to ensure adequate police disability and death benefits
- The need to impose stricter penalties and deny bail for people who assault police officers or make threats to them
- The need for increased treatment for criminals with mental illnesses.

The chairman of the Senate Codes Committee, longtime Finger Lakes Senator Mike Nozzolio, said, "We will not tolerate the senseless acts of violence against our citizens, nor the profoundly violent acts of cowardice targeted against our police officers and first responders ... Ensuring the safety of our police officers and first responders has never been more important."

As a former assistant district attorney in Manhattan and Chemung County District Attorney, I have

witnessed firsthand the dangerous service undertaken by law enforcement officers, in every community, the sacrifices they make, and the toll that it takes on the officers' families, friends and loved ones. Respect for this service cannot be undermined. It extends, as well, to our correction officers and first responders, who encounter similar dangers.

In my mind, and in the opinion of so many of my colleagues, these officers and first responders have earned and deserve our utmost respect.

As our region has confronted and tried to combat the twin crises of meth and heroin, I hope the overriding importance of diligent and strong law enforcement has become eminently clear. Every single day that an officer puts on his or her uniform and heads out the door to work, they risk having to confront a violent criminal. It's been an increasingly common fact of life for our officers in recent years, with far too many tragic and fatal consequences, and it's a risk, in many of our cities and other places, on the verge of becoming even more dangerous under the current climate of unrest and violence.

Yes, we need a full public airing of this conflict. Equally important, it needs to be a balanced, a fair and a reasonable discussion that can help us reach the critical common ground.

—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.

COMMENTARY | MICHAEL ORESKES

A kid from Queens who became governor

Mario Cuomo loved to tell the story of how his father, an immigrant from Italy, lost his business in the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

"A broker jumped out the window and landed on his push cart," Cuomo explained.

A joke, of course. Cuomo had a cutting sense of humor. He and I were members of the same club; he would tell my wife every time he saw her, "Ugly men married to beautiful women."

Cuomo was an

old-fashioned guy, revealing little directly. But his push cart joke went to the heart of who he was both personally and politically.

His "Tale of Two Cities" keynote address at the 1984 Democratic National Convention about a nation divided between haves and have-nots was both a challenge to Ronald Reagan's image of America as a "shining city on a hill" and a description of his own life.

Ever the outsider, he was a kid from Queens, where passengers on the subway were directed to

Manhattan with signs that said "to the city." That was his shining city — not on a hill but on an island towering toward the sky when viewed from the boroughs. He opened a law firm on Court Street across the river in Brooklyn looking from the outside in at those skyscrapers where the white-shoe Manhattan law firms operated.

He was driven by an insecurity that emerged in the oddest ways. He rarely spent a night away from home. He once had the state police drive him

hours through the snow when a storm grounded his flight back from Buffalo. It's true that merely the idea of spending 100 days in Iowa, as his advisers said he would have to, could have been enough to put him off running for president.

Trying to get him to explain the compelling attraction of home was no more successful than getting him to discuss other personal subjects. He just did not like being out of New York, is all he would

SEE ORESKES, A6

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