

OPINION

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COLUMN | MICHAEL MORRONGIELLO

A tale of 2 counties



MICHAEL MORRONGIELLO

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the spring of hope in Bradford County, PA; it was the winter of despair in Steuben County, NY. These two beautiful, mostly rural counties, separated by only 21 miles, are economically worlds apart.

Taxes, regulations and the ban on gas development are killing Steuben County. A family of four would save \$1,389 in yearly taxes by moving to Pennsylvania. Gas development has been an economic game-changer for Bradford County.

Unemployment in Steuben County is 6.6%; Bradford's is 5.7%. Steuben's median household income is \$43,867; in Bradford it's almost \$47,000. From 2006 to 2010, Bradford County's tax revenues soared by 35%. Gas royalties paid to landowners from January 2008 to December 2012 total an astounding \$386 million plus, and lifetime royalty payments are projected to be \$4.3 billion. This massive investment was an economic jumpstart, electrifying the Bradford County economy. Landowners don't stuff their money into mattresses; they buy new vehicles, improve their homes and buy new farm equipment.

For many family farms, gas development has enabled them to survive and continue the noble work of feeding their community and the nation.

Bradford County saw an increase of 1,383 jobs from 2007 to 2012. Bringing one well on line requires 420 people in different occupations: welders, laborers, office workers and truck drivers, regular folks all, just looking for a chance to succeed. The average pay for gas industry workers is \$90,000; for ancillary employees,

\$47,000. Between 2010 and 2014 six new hotel projects in Bradford County employed carpenters, bricklayers, laborers, electricians and plumbers.

What about Steuben County? "Start Up New York" has cost \$53 million and has produced 76 jobs across New York State. The Regional Economic Development Council has recycled \$303 million dollars of our money across the entire Southern Tier and has produced absolutely nothing. If Governor Cuomo wanted to see the grim results of a command and control statist economy he needn't have gone to Cuba - he could have come to Steuben County.

Governor Cuomo fumbled a golden opportunity to revive upstate; it's not rocket science. Just look across the border and do what they do. But he banned gas development based on phony future health risks. He's really looking after his political future, not our future. Cuomo's decision is an epic blunder that will become a case study in executive management books and training courses on what NOT to do.

Recently the EPA, staffed with Obama greenies, has again said that gas development has no widespread impact on drinking water. Wouldn't it be great if our governor green-lighted gas development in New York to rescue Steuben County from slow economic death.

—Mike Morrongiello is a member of the Corning Town Republican Committee.

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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 the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Spreading info about Lyme disease



TOM O'MARA

It's the official start of summer, which means there's no better time to issue a public health reminder about Lyme disease.

Yes, it's that serious. Lyme is a debilitating disease that needs to be taken seriously by everyone who enjoys the outdoors, even if that means doing yard work or gardening. Those afflicted by Lyme disease can endure years of frustration, to say the least, seeking effective diagnosis and treatment.

Approximately 300,000 Americans are diagnosed with Lyme disease annually, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>). More than 450 new cases were reported in New York State alone last year - a number that's expected to keep rising each year as disease-laden ticks spread to more and more communities.

Lyme disease was once considered mostly a "downstate" concern.

But over the past several years it's been a rapidly growing public health challenge throughout Upstate New York and has drawn heightened warnings from public health officials across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. In fact, a report from the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, based upon statistics from the state Department of Health (DOH), identifies Chemung,

Schuyler and other regional counties as having experienced dramatic increases in cases of Lyme disease.

In an article earlier this year, Chemung County Environmental Health Services Director Tom Kump told The Leader, "Those little ticks don't know about political boundaries. They're all over the state."

He also shared the following warning about where and how we come into contact with ticks, "It's not just a problem if you're hiking in the wilderness. Ticks can just as easily be found in your own back yard. Any time you're going to be in direct contact with vegetation, it's a concern. And even if you're not going to be in contact, if you have pets that are outside, they can pick them up and bring them into the home."

So while it didn't receive the attention it may have deserved recently, legislation developed by our Lyme disease task force was given Senate approval as part of an ongoing legislative effort that we hope will encourage and guide the development of federal- and state-level action plans to address the rising concern.

Since 2013 the Senate task force has continued to review research, consult with experts, conduct public hearings and work to develop legislation and other recommendations that can ultimately be incorporated into a New York State Action Plan on Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases. That's our overriding goal: to put in place a statewide plan that will serve as a comprehensive roadmap for the state to prevent additional illnesses by improving research, education, diagnosis and treatment. Towards this end, the Senate recently approved legislation I'm co-sponsoring to:

- Require the state Department of Health to design, develop and disseminate an aggressive, comprehensive and statewide public awareness, education and prevention campaign to reduce the public's exposure to Lyme and other tick-borne infectious diseases - recognizing the effectiveness and importance of early education and prevention in preventing the spread of these diseases (S.5803).

- Complement the statewide DOH awareness campaign by requiring the development of age-appropriate instructional materials and tools that will be made available to schools and libraries to help reach school-age children with the awareness and prevention message. Supporters of the legislation cite an increasing

demand for school and libraries for instructional materials geared towards children.

Additionally, the task force is preparing to launch our own awareness and prevention website as a way to complement any and every other effort to combat the spread of Lyme disease by spreading information about past, current and future disease trends; safety and prevention recommendations; and diagnosis and treatment strategies.

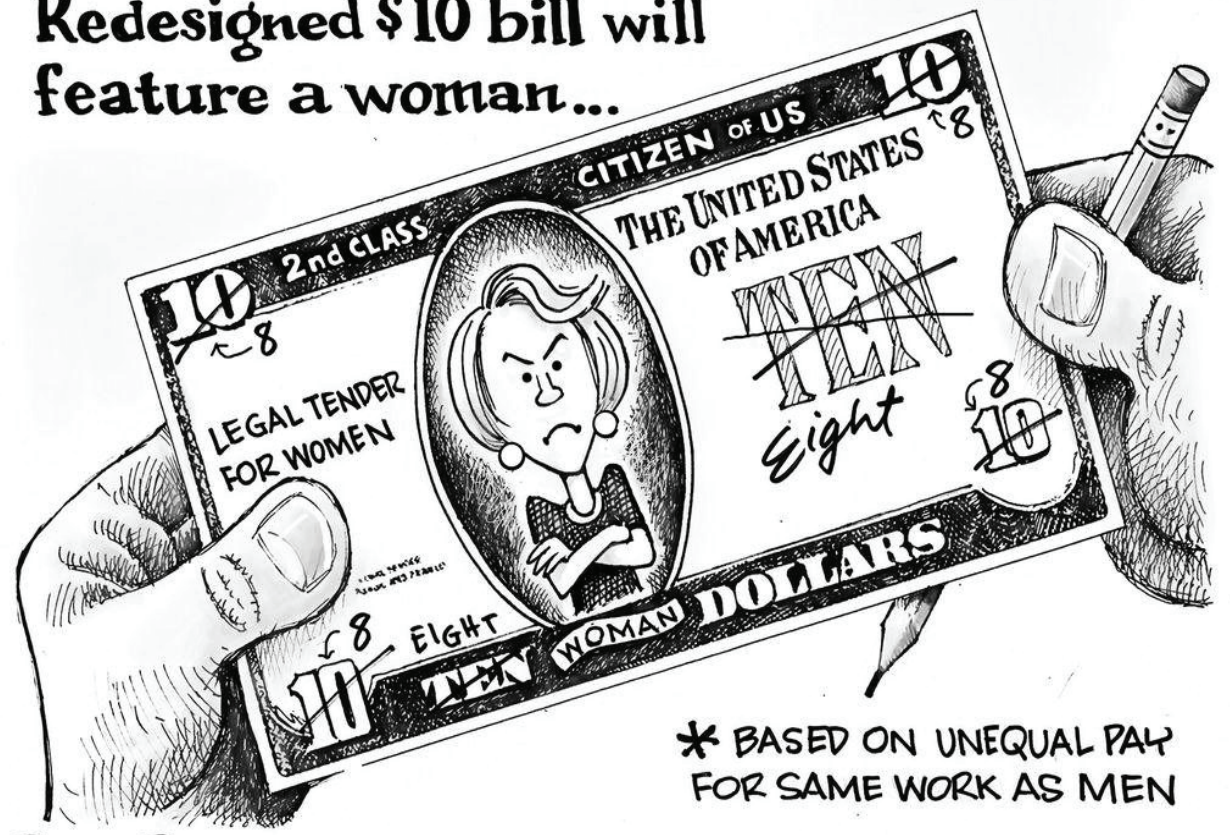
As stated in the executive summary of the task force's initial report, "The geographic spread of Lyme and Tick-Borne diseases demand a comprehensive response by the State to encourage detection and prevention initiatives, and facilitate diagnostic and treatment advancements. While the impact of Lyme disease is widespread, a large number of the cases remain unreported. This lack of reporting is a cause of concern given that Lyme disease remains the most prevalent Tick-Borne disease in New York State."

Additional information and ongoing updates from the Senate Task Force on Lyme Disease and Tick-Borne Diseases is available through my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov by clicking on the "Combating Lyme Disease" icon.

—State Sen. Tom O'Mara represents New York's 53rd Senate District.

ANOTHER VIEW

Redesigned \$10 bill will feature a woman...



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COLUMN | JIM CARR

Give Medicare the right to negotiate drug costs

For half a century Medicare has provided America's seniors with guaranteed health care.

Retired Americans know how vital these earned benefits are! This year we are celebrating Medicare's 50th birthday this great program brings health security to more than 54 million Americans, mainly 65 and older. The golden anniversary of Medicare is a perfect time to consider how to keep it strong for the next 50 years. I recently read that AARP has a longtime policy recommendation; giving the secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to negotiate prices for prescription drugs covered by Medicare.

It seems to me to be a very good idea and no brainier

for congress if they really care about the high costs of health care!

Americans pay a lot more for prescription drugs than people in other advanced countries do!

Yet, unlike private (for profit) insurance plans, Medicare is not allowed to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices. For example in 2013 a new drug for hepatitis C (Sovaldi) US retail price to Medicare is \$1,000 per pill but when negotiated the cost goes down to \$534 a pill which is the price the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs negotiated. The VA is not bound by Medicare rules and can negotiate for the best price. Medicare should also have the ability to negotiate the best price, but it doesn't therefore we pay

\$84,000 Medicare price for 84 pills.

The same 84 pills cost \$66,000 negotiated price in Germany and \$57,000 negotiated price in The United Kingdom! High prices for medications push up health care costs for all of us and constantly exceed inflation. While Americans with health insurance drug coverage do not pay the full amount, the high prices are passed on to tax payers and health care consumers.

Medicare is a great program which brings health care security to over 54 million Americans, who mainly are 65 or older!

Here are some recent poll numbers on Social Security another great low cost high benefit program:

Benefits are more important than ever!

- 84% of Americans don't mind paying Social Security taxes because it provides security and stability to millions!

- 75% of Americans believe we should consider increasing Social Security!

Source: Data from National Academy of Social Insurance survey, September 2012. If you agree call your senators and ask them to co sponsor S.31, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act! Why do drug companies need to spend millions on advertising and marketing when their product must be proscribed by a physician?

—Jim Carr, the statewide president for PEF Retirees, lives in Millport.

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