

# OPINION

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### OUR VIEW

## Pay the way to better roads

The City Council has a big decision to make before it approves the 2015-16 budget Monday night: Whether or not to spend more money on road repairs.

Councilmen have been debating the issue for weeks now, but we're not sure why.

To us, spending more to fix the city's streets is a no-brainer.

We cannot afford to ignore the poor condition of our city's streets. The Council must spend more on road repairs.

Don't agree? Take a ride down Chestnut, Wardell or Dodge. Drive slowly; it will be a bumpy ride.

Now, we know no one likes to see their tax bills rise. However, adding an extra \$100,000 for road work would barely be noticed.

Let's do the math: City Manager Mark Ryckman's \$21.6 million budget

plan - which would spend \$967,063 on road work - includes a 1.53 percent tax increase. A taxpayer with a house assessed at \$85,000 would see a bill increase of \$13.60.

If the Council decides to spend that extra \$100,000, the tax increase would be about 3 percent. The tax bill for a \$85,000 home would increase \$27.

That's only \$13.40 more - about the cost of three lattes.

So why the debate? Adding the extra \$100,000 would mean exceeding the 2 percent tax cap. And that means homeowners would not qualify for a state property tax rebate. The owner of that \$85,000 home would lose about \$13.

We're willing to give up a \$13 rebate and three lattes if it means saving hundreds on car repairs.

We can pave now, or pay later.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## No excuse for burning, looting

I'm a racist; at least that is what the left-leaning liberals would probably label me. What I am is a senior citizen, Caucasian, Korean War veteran, former small business owner and patriotic American.

I was not born a racist, not raised a racist, but have developed a racist attitude over recent national events the past few years of police bashing. I was born in a large city in Pennsylvania, attended school with blacks, played sports with blacks, served in the military with blacks, shared a barracks room with an African-American, and was a character reference at a court martial for a colored soldier in my outfit. Nothing racist, so far.

Let's fast forward to the riots in L.A. - the burning and looting, the reverse discrimination rulings, the job quota fiasco, the constant drone of being "entitled", the Jesse Jacksons and others preaching about the unfairness of the few black managers in pro sports or the large percentage of blacks vs. whites in the penal system.

Whatever works to get the pot boiling!

This is the land of opportunity. Blacks are afforded the same chances for education as whites. Those that took

advantage of these opportunities and work hard have achieved much, are respected members of our society, and are deserving of much credit. Then there are the others that took advantage of the social welfare programs, chose not to work, destroyed government-subsidized housing, accepted ever-increasing government handouts, and learned to blame the "white dominated system" for their problems - especially white police.

There is absolutely no excuse for burning and looting and using these criminal acts to demonstrate against perceived injustice. These are violent acts of criminal behavior and should be dealt with accordingly. Severely. Think of the cost to the taxpayers, the innocent small business owners who are victims, the police who are tasked with maintaining the peace. Walk a mile in their shoes. What happened to civil pride, moral values, the work ethic? More social "do good" programs haven't worked.

Watching the gangs in Baltimore riot and loot with reckless abandon has made my blood boil. Guess I have become a racist.

**Ralph Outwait**  
 Painted Post

### WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O'MARA

# Accountability and fairness, for starters

In New York State it always seems, sooner or later, to circle back to jobs and taxes.

As in lack of jobs, and high taxes.

So it's no surprise that one of the state's most highly touted job creation initiatives has been under the microscope over the past week. And - just to make it clear where I'm coming from at the outset - rightly so.

I'm talking about Start-Up NY, the roughly two-year-old initiative that offers tax-free zones to try to lure qualifying businesses to locate, relocate or expand in designated areas, mostly on or near college campuses.

The attraction to a business is undeniable, and it's expected to benefit and create jobs regionally in places like Corning Community College, Keuka College and Cornell University. That's always positive.

But here's the central question being raised, and it's a legitimate one: What's the broader benefit to state taxpayers, and workers? From the start, I expressed reservations about Start-Up NY. Namely, is it worth the money? But also, is it fair?

Let's start with whether Start-Up NY has been a worthy use of taxpayer dollars to date, because that's what been in the news lately. I'm sure most of you have seen or heard one or two or a whole lot of these Start-Up NY advertisements declaring our state "Open for Business" among other slogans.

They've made for good-sounding ads, but what's the story behind the storylines?

An audit released last Monday from the state comptroller's office reached a pretty damning conclusion, "When government spends hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to send a message that New York is a place to visit and open for business, it should have clear objectives and show the public actual results... (The state's) attempts to measure the results of this advertising campaign were weak at best, leaving real questions about whether the results justify the cost."



SEN. TOM O'MARA

Specifically the comptroller's audit found, for example, that the state spent \$45.1 million between October 2013 and October 2014 to advertise Start-Up NY. The Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), the lead oversight agency, reported receiving commitments from 41 businesses to create 1,750 jobs over the next five years. If you're interested, you can find the full audit at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/>

Other, similar assessments have been equally critical. In April, a headline in the New York Post read, "Government logic: Spending \$28M to create 76 jobs." The accompanying article reported \$28 million worth of Start-Up NY advertising has created just 76 jobs (or a cost of \$368,000 per job).

Now we all know that numbers can tell just about any story you want. In their defense, ESDC officials have roundly criticized the comptroller's findings. While acknowledging that they don't expect immediate

results, they argue that the investment can only be fairly judged over the long term. Furthermore, they say, New York's reputation, based on ESDC's in-house evaluations and measurements, is already being viewed more favorably by top business decision makers as a result of the advertising campaign.

Regardless of which side you're on here, two overriding concerns should stand out.

The first is accountability. Who's deciding if the investment is worth it? Even more to the point, who can pull the plug on it if it doesn't seem to be going so well? Right now, it would appear that that's all in the hands of the Cuomo administration. Which means that the comptroller's office, the Legislature, news organizations and other government watchdogs are absolutely right to pay close attention and raise these concerns whenever they arise.

After all, up to now there's no denying that millions upon millions of dollars have been spent to create what just can't be considered a jaw-dropping number of paying jobs. So there's a lot of taxpayer money being spent and it's more than fair to wonder, as many of us have, if it's money better spent on more broad-based tax,

regulatory and mandate relief actions that might better benefit a more broad-based, middle-class segment of the workforce - a workforce, by the way, which has been devastated by manufacturing's decline in so many of our Upstate communities.

The second overriding concern is fairness.

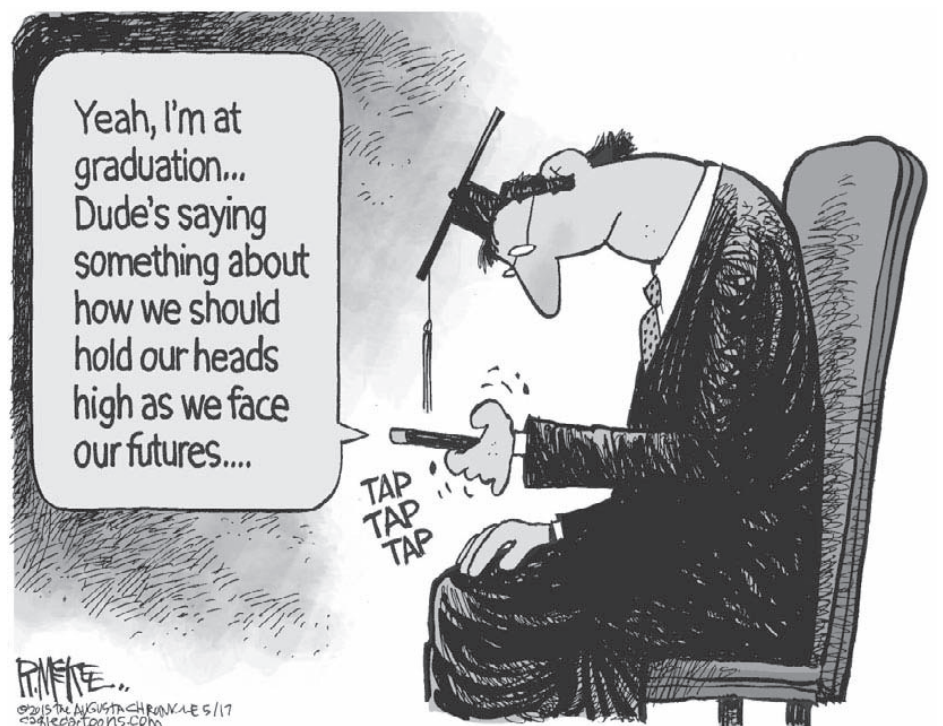
In all of this ongoing assessment of Start-Up NY, don't overlook the question of fairness, which is even harder to answer. What message is being delivered to New York State business owners who have fought long and hard to survive, and create and preserve jobs under what has arguably been the worst business tax climate in America?

How is it fair to make these loyal, successful New York State job creators, large and small, compete with a program that lavishes state-funded incentives to a select few without leveling the playing field for all?

How does creating a competitive disadvantage for any existing New York State business make good, sound business sense for the long term?

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

### ANOTHER VIEW



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Private business again threatens public property

Firstly, the notion that a "vote" occurred on Monday with the sticking of green dots on wish-list photos by people who were present at a meeting hosted by the project developers who "hijacked" a public comment session is worth an article by itself. Did these "residents" have to show ID? Were these options presented with associated costs to the taxpayers?

Who really asked to initiate this study and the possibly illegal "vote" to convince the citizens that

there are problems that only more tax money can fix with the promise of more revenue to approve giving away rights to this public property?

Why any private entity thinks it's their domain to command and own the development is out of step with the term Public Property. The sign placed on the shoreline by Stanley Clark says it all, "This Dock and Ground Improvements Given to the Citizens of the Town of Urbana and Their Guests by Stanley M Clark 1988"

Studies about the lakefront date back to the sixties. Why is SCIDA working so hard

to ram this particular plan through in such a rush? Why Glenn Curtiss Memorial Park has been starved for attention for years now while this "new plan" has a two month deadline is worth a real investigative article and real public scrutiny, not green dots.

There is only ONE Keuka Lake. Lets not ruin it for the sake of a select few, after all it's OUR shoreline, not theirs, whoever "they" are.

**Geoffrey Grimsman**  
 Hammondsport

#### 50 million gifts returned to sender

If we sent a present to someone and it came back obviously unopened marked returned to sender, how would we feel? If it were stamped refused by addressee, how would we feel? If that same gift was opened, smashed to pieces and then repackaged and sent back to us, how would we feel?

What must God feel when 50 million-plus babies from the U.S. alone are refused, cruelly mutilated and returned to sender?

Think about it. How would you feel?

**The Rev. Lewis S. Hults**  
 Beaver Dams

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