

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The real facts on gun violence

It would be interesting to have Mr. Hinkley cite his sources for his recent letter. What he claims to know is contradicted by some simple research. FBI statistics show less than 15,000 firearm related murders per year in the United States over the past several years, declining each year since 2007 — not 33,000 as stated. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website shows that the suicide rate in the U.S. has remained relatively constant at about 13 per 100,000 since at least 1981. No doubt guns are used by those intent on ending their lives. According to the Centers for Disease Control, about 56 percent of successful suicides involve a firearm. Also according to the CDC, 77 percent of the decedents have mind altering chemicals in their systems. Suicide is not a “gun” problem; it is a mental health problem. Lumping self-inflicted deaths with criminal firearm activities is flawed reasoning.

Calculating the financial impact of criminal conduct involving a firearm is a minefield that Hinckley treats thoughtlessly. The figure of \$440,000 per shooting is fiction. Everyone Hinckley mentions as being required to respond to the criminal use of a gun is already on the job and being paid. According to the CDC, in 2011 the economic impact of some 487,000 non-fatal suicide attempts is about \$6.5 billion. Where did the figure he sites of \$169 billion come from? For that matter, where did any of the “facts” he “knows” come from? More fiction, I suggest. Finally, the job of the NRA is nothing more or less than preserving our constitutional rights.

Larry L. Lawrence
 Horseheads

Many reasons pantry closed

The food pantry at the Catlin United Methodist Church gave away food for the last time on April 4. We had the privilege of being part of Friendship Donations out of Ithaca for the past 5 years.

Due to growing expenses, the traveling to Ithaca to

pick up the food and the fluctuation in the amount of families we helped from month to month, we regretfully had to stop the pantry. I wish to thank everyone that has helped with the pantry over the years. And a special thanks to the drivers (of which we have had many), who had to bear all types of weather, car problems and just the inconvenience of taking up their Saturday mornings.

We are sorry we will not be there for the food anymore and we will miss everyone's smiling faces.

Dawn Haverley
 Pantry coordinator

Smoking not a good diet plan

A recent study was published in the journal Tobacco Control that identified that weight control can be a significant barrier in quitting smoking. The study found women who are concerned with managing their weight are less likely to be influenced by tobacco control measures like price increases, smoke free laws, and/or anti-tobacco messaging. For example, a 10 percent increase in price was associated with a 6 percent increase in quit attempts in women who did not believe smoking helped manage their weight, while there was no significant difference in quit attempts with the women who did.

The truth is, the more you smoke, the more likely you are to be overweight, plus, quitting offers health benefits and an opportunity to develop healthier mechanisms to weight management like exercise. If aesthetics, verses health, is the concern, it is also important to mention that smoking contributes to bags under eyes, yellow teeth, tooth decay, and tooth loss, bad breath, wrinkles, premature aging, scarring, stretch marks, and other skin conditions like psoriasis, thinner hair, yellow nails and fingers, cataracts, and fat deposits (flabbiness) around the midsection, to name a few. Talk to your doctor, get the facts and learn about how smoking really affects your body.

Teresa Matterazzo
 Public health educator
 community engagement coordinator STTAC, Southern Tier Tobacco Awareness Coalition

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

No great opportunities, yet

Earlier this year, shortly after Governor Andrew Cuomo delivered his 2015-2016 budget message to the Legislature, my gut reaction was that the governor wasn't being aggressive enough on creating Southern Tier jobs.

More specifically I said that the governor “puts the words ‘Southern Tier’ in front of a few initiatives, but that’s window dressing. I don’t see where he’s going aggressively enough after the root causes of Upstate’s decline, which means high taxes, overregulation and unfunded state mandates that have driven up property taxes. And if the Southern Tier has been feeling like a forgotten region, this budget proposal sure doesn’t send a ‘welcome home’ message.”

Remember that the governor’s budget proposal came on the heels of the Cuomo administration’s ban on developing the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry. Consequently, many of us were anticipating that he would have to give some sort of specific acknowledgement to the Southern Tier in light of the lost economic opportunities and investments that his decision inflicted on local landowners and communities. He would have to include some strategy for redressing it, wouldn’t he?

Remember what the governor’s Southern Tier-specific proposals turned out to be:

- Increased state funding



TOM O'MARA

targeted for farm preservation initiatives;

- A \$20-million competitive fund to lure “green jobs” to the region;

- A n undefined effort to jumpstart the wood products industry; and

- Allowing the Southern Tier to compete for a piece of a \$1.5-billion Upstate Revitalization Fund.

Last month, at a meeting of the Joint Landowners Coalition of New York and the Steuben County Landowners Coalition, it was reiterated that none of the above could ever begin to replace the lost jobs, the lost opportunities for economic growth or the lost investments to landowners, farmers and entire communities. Not by a long shot. They will go on suffering the consequences of the governor’s decision to close New York’s borders to any development whatsoever of a natural gas industry – a decision, by the way, that’s soon to be finalized according to state Department of Environmental Commissioner Joe Martens.

Having reiterated the ongoing short- and long-term consequences of the ban, however, where do things stand on Governor Cuomo’s budget proposals?

What’s being called the “Southern Tier On-Farm Enhancement Program” was included in the budget and funded at \$30 million but, to the best of my knowledge, it still hasn’t moved beyond broadly defined details of its eventual implementation. It’s going to provide some help to some farmers to cover the expenses of eligible construction and renovation projects.

But I’ll go back to my initial reaction: Only \$30 million?

Same goes for the effort to spark an expansion of the Southern Tier wood products industry. So far, a non-starter. According to one recent news report, “Three months after the expansion was announced, the administration has yet to meet with the industry, said Eric Carlson, president of the Empire State Forest Products Association. He said the wood products industry in the Southern Tier needs investment in job training, roads and broadband to connect companies located in places without cell reception to the world’s wood market.”

And it was just announced that the plan to attract new companies and “green jobs” to the Southern Tier by way of a \$20-million clean energy competition has been cut in half — \$10 million for attracting new companies and jobs, and \$10 million to existing companies for “support services” to existing businesses. In other

words, a scaled-back effort.

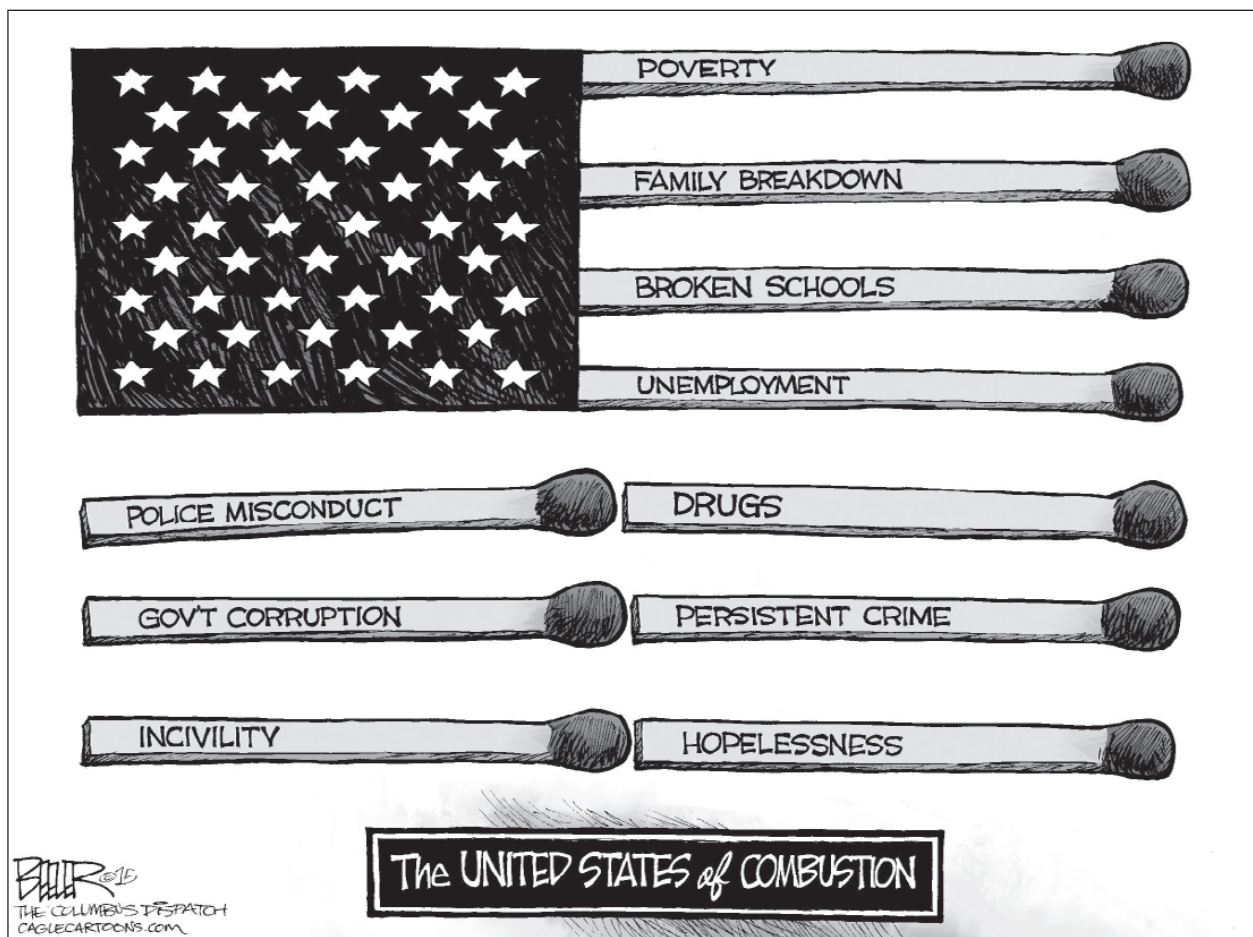
The most positive news, at the moment, remains that the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) will lead the region into the Upstate Revitalization Fund competition. The council has been highly successful over the past several years in securing more than \$300 million for critical economic development initiatives. I have every confidence that we can compete with any other region anywhere. But there’s no guarantee that we’ll maximize the proposed opportunity, which is just getting underway.

So I have to go back to where I started: Governor Cuomo’s not being aggressive enough on the Southern Tier economy in the aftermath of his decision to shut down the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry. As I’ve said over and over again, that decision has eviscerated the hopes of many Southern Tier farmers and landowners.

And what’s coming out of Albany at the moment simply does not do enough to acknowledge, let alone begin to replace or restore, the economic opportunities we’ve sacrificed.

—*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



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COLUMN | MAYOR SHAWN HOGAN

Congressman Reed looks out for super wealthy

Our U.S. congressman Tom Reed, R-23, frequently refers to himself as a champion of district residents; a defender of our liberty and working on our behalf to improve the lives of residents in the 23 Congressional District of New York.

So, can Congressman Reed offer an explanation as to why he joined 239 other Republican congressmen to lock arms and vote to reduce taxes for the mega rich? That’s correct, the mega rich, yet he offers the explanation that he is looking out for the poor farmers in our district.

On April 16, only one day after the deadline to pay federal income taxes,

Mr. Reed voted in favor of repealing the estate tax, which would eliminate all federal tax on estate inheritance. Understand this, however, the current law provides an exemption for almost everyone in the United States, except for a very small number of wealthy individuals - projected to be 0.2 percent of the population.

Mr. Reed and his fellow Republicans claim they did this to protect local family farms from being sold off upon the owner’s death and the need to pay estate taxes to the federal government. Really? Well if the value of the estate inherited is less than \$5.4 million for an individual or \$10.9 million for a married couple,

then they are exempt from paying such a tax already.

I guess there are a lot of local family farms in Steuben, Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chemung, Yates, Schuyler and the other counties of the district that will benefit from Mr. Reed’s concern for us. But the facts say otherwise. This is a give-away to the Republicans’ favorite people - the wealthy, actually the super wealthy.

A total of 5,400 estates in the U.S. are expected to pay this tax this year from about 2.6 million deaths according to the non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation, under the current law. I wonder how many of these are local farm estates?

Mr. Reed opted to help

the super wealthy and remove nearly \$27 billion a year from the federal treasury reaching about \$270 billion in lost tax revenue in the next 10 years alone. So, Mr. Reed has chosen to add \$270 billion over the next 10 years to the federal deficit as he provides a tax break to 5,400 wealthy individuals a year. So, who is going to make up this loss of tax revenues? Not the mega rich 5,400.

Well done, Mr. Reed. Again, thank you for looking out for us here in the 23rd congressional district.

—*Shawn D. Hogan is the mayor of Hornell and chairman of Steuben County's Democratic Party.*

The LEADER

The Leader (ISSN #10501983)
 The Leader is published daily at
 34 West Pulteney Street, Corning,
 New York 14830

by Liberty Group Corning
 Holdings, Inc. Periodical postage
 paid at Corning, N.Y. 14830-0817.
 USPS code | 0586-160

Postmaster:
 Send address changes to
 The Leader, West Pulteney Street,
 Corning, New York 14830

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Classifieds 936-4651, Ext. 651
Retail 936-4651, Ext. 653

Postal rates

Steuben County
 One month \$33.50
 Three months \$100.50
 Six months \$201.00
 One year \$402.00

ELSEWHERE IN USA
 One month \$43.00
 Three months \$129.00
 Six months \$258.00
 One year \$516.00

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