

# OPINION

## LETTERS POLICY

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### DAD!!!

## Don't feed the greed



**TOM BEISWENGER**

I want to say something today that probably is going to tick more than a few of you off.

Here goes.  
 Stay home!

In four days, we will celebrate one of the biggest holidays of the year. It's a day that we traditionally take time to gather as families and friends and share a meal, to put politics and religion and family quarrels aside and simply say thank you. Thanksgiving Day is a secular holiday, but nonetheless sacred.

Unfortunately, this year the day is being truncated or spoiled by a few greedy big retailers who fail to understand the basic family values of this holiday and, in the name of making a few bucks, will be open on Thursday, forcing their employees to work on this national holiday.

Shame on you, Walmart, Kmart (opening at 6 a.m.), Sears, Macy's, JC Penney, Target, Kohl's, Best Buy, Staples, Toys R Us, Sports Authority and Big Lots (opening at 7 a.m.).

Says a corporate executive of Sears Holding Corp., the company that owns of Kmart (from the Huffington Post, Nov. 18): "This holiday season is all about giving more to our members and because many like to start shopping well before Black Friday, we're excited to open our doors early on Thanksgiving and offer other early access opportunities for them to shop and save."

Excited? Bull!

Opening on Thanksgiving Day (and at 6 a.m.) has nothing to do with "giving more to our members." It's about money. Greed. Absolutely nothing else. Period.

Now, for the part that probably is going to make a few of you angry.

Attention shoppers, is that deal on a limited supply of big screen TVs really worth interrupting your family's celebration of Thanksgiving? Shame on you, too! How would you feel if you were one of the few hundred of low-pay clerks at these stores

in our area who won't be able to enjoy the day, the WHOLE day, with their families because the jerks who run the companies that own the stores that employ them are making them work on this day?

Sure, they may make a few extra bucks and may even get an 'atta boy for "volunteering" to work, but I'm just as sure that most of those corporate executives who run these stores won't be in them.

They will be enjoying the day, ALL of it, with their families and friends. But you won't. You'll be in their stores, trying to grab some kind of bargain, and feeding the greed.

What in the name of heaven is wrong with us that we can't take one day out of the year and pause to say thank you, to find a way to bury old grudges, to reach out and hug those who are closest to us despite our differences?

So often, I hear people I know complain about the loss of family values in our nation. What is more American family values than Thanksgiving?

If you are planning to go shopping Thursday, please re-consider. Maybe if you didn't shop, the people who run the stores that will be open might decide that being open on Thanksgiving really wasn't all that worthwhile. Maybe next year, they'll stay closed on Thanksgiving and give their employees the full day off.

If you are planning to shop on Thanksgiving Day, please don't.

Stay home. Please.

*Tom Beiswenger and his wife live in Corning with their children, all of whom they try to raise to be good, honest, and always humorous enough to write about occasionally. Write to Tom at [tbeiswenger@stny.rr.com](mailto:tbeiswenger@stny.rr.com).*

### POLITICS | TOM O'MARA

## Don't let online crime ruin the season



**TOM O'MARA**

First and foremost – before moving on to a few less heartening reminders – my very best wishes to all of you throughout the upcoming holiday season, which of course gets into full swing later this week on Thanksgiving Day.

It's been said, recalling the history of this particular holiday, that "Thanksgiving Day is the one day that is purely American." And there's no denying the meaningful simplicity underlying this celebration: gathering with family and friends to prepare and share a good meal, watch a little football, enjoy a few laughs and reflect on what's truly important.

Let's hope this is one American tradition that never goes by the wayside.

That's not always the case nowadays. While it's reassuring that some time-honored traditions keep on going strong, like turkey at Thanksgiving, it's less settling to think that others are constantly changing or, sometimes, even disappearing altogether.

It used to be, for instance, that the day after Thanksgiving, "Black Friday," marked the time-honored kickoff to the holiday shopping season that many people looked forward to. Lately, we've seen this shopping tradition starting earlier and earlier until it's virtually nonexistent anymore. And now there's just no ignoring so-called "Cyber Monday," the day after the traditional Thanksgiving weekend start to holiday shopping (which this year falls on Monday, December 1st).

Talk about change. One thing we know is that e-commerce has become big, big business. It's the beginning of a rush of online purchasing that, according to reports, generates more than \$1 billion in spending by American consumers.

Going hand in hand with this modern economy, however, the unprecedented exchange of online information raises concerns over cyber-crime, especially identity theft.

Identity theft is widely considered this era's No. 1 and fastest-growing financial and consumer crime. It costs millions of American consumers

\$40 billion annually by some estimates. According to the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Consumer Sentinel Network, which annually tracks these crime reports, in 2013 identity theft was the nation's top complaint category. New York State ranked 9th in the nation in per capita identity theft complaints in the network's latest report.

Over a decade ago, New York became the 43rd state in America to enact an identity theft law. It's become increasingly clear since then that the availability of information in computer databases and the rapid growth of Internet commerce have produced a class of sophisticated criminals who constantly change their tactics to abuse technologies and steal consumer information, rob bank accounts and ruin consumer credit.

Security studies continually point to the need to update laws as frequently as cybercriminals update their means to break them. But it's not easy.

One important law approved several years ago enabled consumers to place a "security freeze" on their credit reports if they suspect

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identity theft. We've also strengthened New York's protections by enacting laws to restrict the ability of employers to use an employee's personal information and to allow identity theft victims to obtain restitution equal to the value of the time they spend fixing the damage, which is substantial. It takes an estimated average of 14 months for an identity theft victim to discover that his or her identity has been stolen. Victims then spend at least \$1,000 and devote more than 175 hours of their own time to clean up their credit reports after an identity theft has occurred, according to the federal General Accounting Office. Additionally, identity theft victims have been subject to other complications, including denial of loan applications and false criminal records.

In short, it's costly and it's time-consuming. So the first line of defense is for every consumer to be aware of identity theft,

how it's committed, and ways to protect against it.

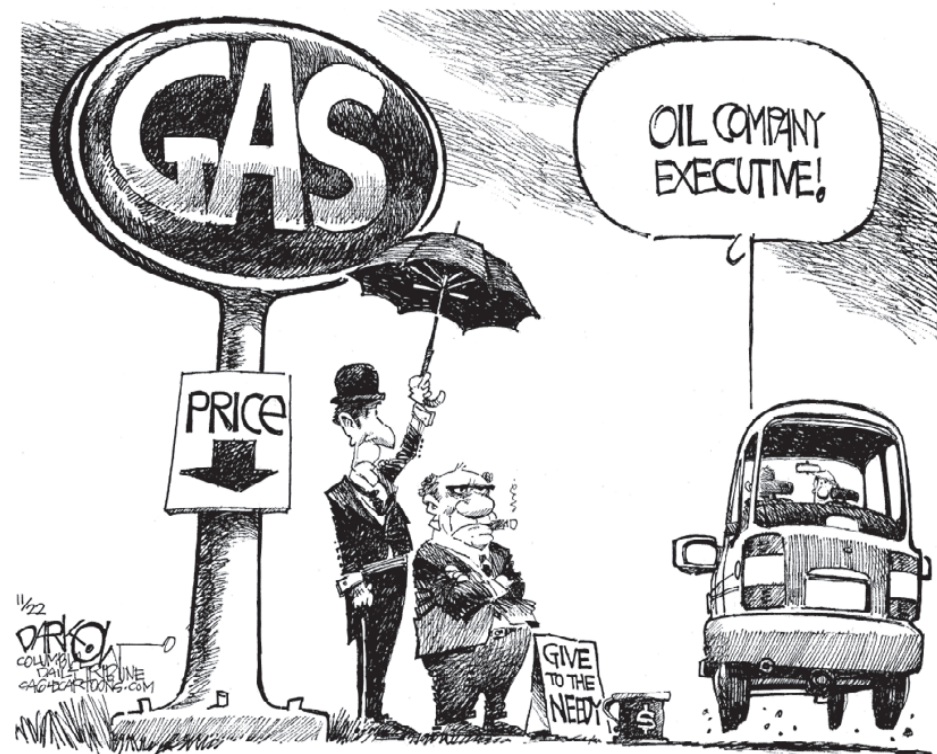
If you'd like a copy of a well-received New York State Senate brochure, "Protect Yourself from Identity Theft," just e-mail your request to me at: [omara@nysenate.gov](mailto:omara@nysenate.gov).

Valuable information can also be found on the New York State Division of Consumer Protection's website, [www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection](http://www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection), by clicking on the "Identity Theft/Privacy" link at the top of the home page.

Finally the FTC, the nation's lead consumer protection agency, dedicates a portion of its website to promote online safety. Go to [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) and click on the "Privacy & Identity" icon at the top of the home page.

*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.*

### ANOTHER VIEW



### OTHER VIEW | SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

## Tech industry must lead privacy fight

The Senate charade last week allowing the National Security Agency to continue spying on Americans' phone records would be laughable if it didn't have such dangerous implications for both the tech industry and consumer privacy.

One by one Senate Republicans stood up and announced their support for the NSA's "collect it all" mentality on the grounds that it's a crucial counterterrorism tool. Never mind that the United States has been able to point to only one, single case that came to light through a search of domestic phone records. And that one example was an Anaheim cabbie

sending the vast sum of \$1,000 to an al-Qaida affiliate in Somalia. Yep, that makes all the spying worthwhile.

Silicon Valley and the American public must increase the pressure on Congress to come to its senses.

Consumer confidence in Silicon Valley's tech products continues to fall at alarming rates around the world. The latest projections are that it will cost the tech industry over the next three years. Don't buy it? The Pew Research Center recently reported that the percentage of Germans believing the U.S. government protects personal freedoms fell from 81 percent to 58

percent in the last year. In Brazil, it dropped from 76 to 51 percent.

Fortunately the fight is not over. The Senate failure to curb the NSA's data collection sets up what should be a lively debate next June on the future of the Patriot Act, the post 9/11 legislation that authorized the NSA's bulk collection of data. The Patriot Act needs to be reauthorized by the end of 2015 or it will expire. Senate Republicans are likely to learn that it's much harder to marshal the necessary votes to approve measures than it is to block them. What's needed is a reasonable compromise that balances the nation's need to keep would-be terrorists

in check with reasonable privacy protections.

Technology firms would have a much better case in Congress and with the American public if they were more forthcoming themselves with consumers about how their personal information is being used. Tech firms successfully blocked a bill in the state Legislature in 2013 that would have accomplished that goal.

It's unlikely that the valley will be able to innovate itself out of this mess. The right to privacy is one of the nation's most treasured principles. Silicon Valley needs to take a more active role in protecting Americans' privacy – and restoring public trust in its products.

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