

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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OUR VIEW

Crime and punishment

A story we posted Friday on our Facebook page created quite a debate.

A girl received a one-day suspension from her New Jersey school because she wore a shirt that violated the dress code, according to a story by the Associated Press.

It wasn't too revealing and did not have any pictures or words that could be considered offensive.

It was the wrong shade of green.

According to the school's dress code, students can only wear shirts and blouses that are white, dark green or navy.

The girl, 8, wore a kelly green polo shirt, and in doing so, was sent home for the day.

Her mother is seeing red, calling the suspension "a little ridiculous".

We agree. While the school is well within its rights to adopt - and enforce - a dress code for its students, the penalty was too severe.

That "off-color" shirt did not warrant removing the girl from the classroom, especially if it was her first infraction (the story did not say). A warning for a first offense, followed by increasing penalties if the rule continued to be ignored, would be more suitable. Staying in from recess, after-school detention, eating lunch with the principal - all would send the message without costing the girl a day of learning.

We could also argue that it's wrong to punish an 8-year-old child for her parents' failure to adhere to the dress code. Perhaps mom and dad should serve an evening of suspension, spend a Saturday with the "Breakfast Club" or write "We will dress our daughter appropriately" 100 times on the white board.

Yes, rules should be enforced. But let the punishment fit the crime, we say.

Some of our readers on Facebook agreed with us, while others said a

suspension was appropriate. Here are a few of the many comments we received in response to this post:

■ "Sometimes 'stuff' happens. Maybe all her white and navy shirts were in the wash. They at least tried to comply by having her wear a green shirt. The code is too vague. They need to give her a pass on this one and revise the student handbook. Kelly green is a darker shade of green than, say, mint green or sage green or chartreuse. If the school wants students to wear only 'forest green' or 'hunter' green, then they ought to specify that in the code."

— **Mary Pierce Channell**

■ "Rules are in place for a reason and should be followed."

— **Robin Smith**

■ "don't know about other places, but here in Florida the stores carry the clothing in colors for the various requirements. However, I feel the school stepped over the line - maybe the 'right' shirt was soiled - or 'the dog ate it'. And 'the punishment didn't fit the crime'. Do they have any idea what this does to an 8 year old???"

— **Anne Van Hassent Short**

■ "Rules - dress codes are put in place for a reason and are to be followed. My son and daughter can only wear a certain shade of blue - purchased from a specific supplier. However, a full day of suspension seems a bit extreme."

— **Jessica Franzese**

■ "Uniforms are required at my children's school, and if I purchase the wrong colors, my children are still expected to wear the right ones. Rules are rules."

— **Heidi Greene**

Let us know what you think! Write a letter or comment below the story on our Facebook page. Here is the link: <http://tinyurl.com/oruszwa>

Remember, watch your swears ... and kindness matters.

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

The perfect storm of higher minimum wage

Sometimes there's a perfect storm of news stories that unintentionally converge and serve to stir up a current public policy debate like nothing else could.

Lately that's been the case with Governor Cuomo's unilateral action in early September to begin phasing in a dramatic increase in the minimum wage for certain fast-food workers statewide to \$15 an hour.

Just a brief sidebar: This increase became the law of the land in New York State without legislative approval. Yes, the governor is currently granted the power to unilaterally impanel what's known as a "Wage Board" which then, essentially, allows him to skirt the legislative process, avoid widespread public hearings and other scrutiny, and authorize the approval of a higher minimum wage - in this case at fast-food restaurants in New York that are part of a chain operating more than 30 establishments nationwide.

Now Governor Cuomo's making it more than clear that his No. 1 mission in the coming year is to go well beyond fast-food workers. He's hell-bent on enacting legislation in 2016 that would require every employer statewide - across the board, large or small, upstate or down, thriving or already struggling to survive - to ultimately pay a \$15-per-hour minimum wage.

Talk about wreaking



TOM O'MARA

havoc on upstate employers, the upstate economy and, absolutely in my view, upstate workers.

First and foremost, I'm now co-sponsoring legislation to eliminate the governor's power (not just this governor, any governor moving forward) to empower a "wage board" to decide such a far-reaching public policy action bypassing the checks and balances of the legislative process.

But to say that Governor Cuomo's statewide minimum wage campaign is troubling is putting it mildly.

In the words of Unshackle Upstate, "The businesses, non-profits, consumers and local governments of Upstate New York - where we are working hard to recover from a half century of job and population loss - simply cannot afford an unprecedented 67 percent minimum wage increase. New York State is already considered one of the worst states in the nation in which to start or grow a business; this new wage mandate will only make the state's business climate more toxic."

Or as a research associate at the Manhattan Institute wrote in an op-ed piece

in the New York Daily News on September 19th, "It's clear based on the preponderance of pro-minimum-wage evidence that the governor's plan will put workers at risk throughout New York. Indeed, New York City is the only labor market that could come close to surviving this attack without suffering a decimation in the demand for low-skilled workers."

The storm we're facing starts to get even more ominous when you consider the recently reported news from the consumer service website Thumbtack, as part of its 2015 Small Business Friendliness Survey, showing, once again, that New York is already one of the toughest places in America to open and operate a small business. The Thumbtack survey is just one report reaching the same conclusion.

In that context alone, Governor Cuomo's push for a statewide \$15-an-hour minimum wage raises legitimate and reasonable questions.

In a speech in Harlem just over a week ago, Governor Cuomo told the audience there, "So we want to raise the minimum wage and we want to raise the minimum wage to 15 dollars. This, my friends, is going to be the challenge. Why? Because the companies don't want to pay the workers more. Why? Because if the companies pay the workers more, then the companies make less money. There's

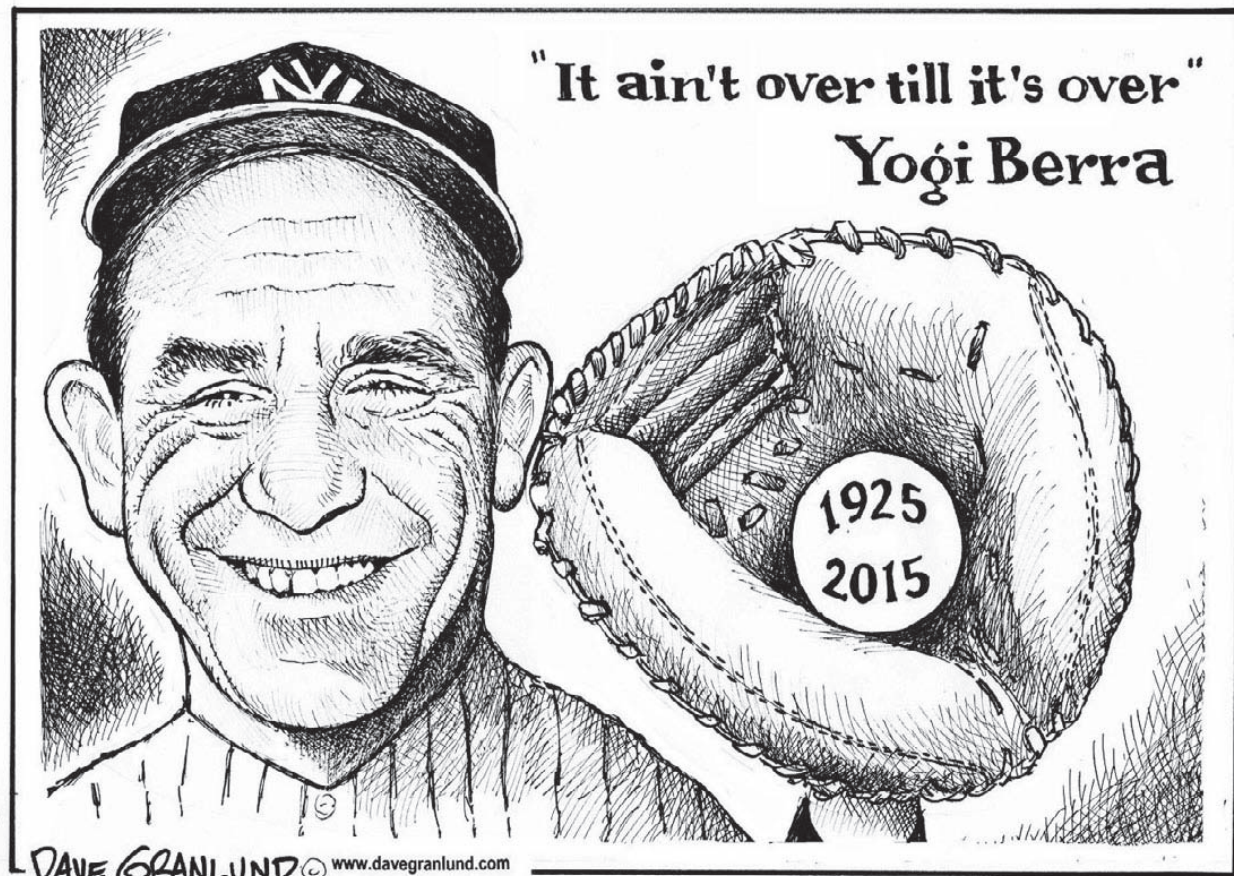
less profit, less profit, less profit. I know there's less profit, but there's something called fairness and equity and justice. And justice - that's what we're asking for. Justice."

For now, I'll turn to the words of one longtime and well-respected observer of state government, E.J. McMahon of the Empire Center, for the counterpoint to the governor's proclamation demonizing small business owners and other employers,

"Note: the governor didn't use the words 'selfish' or 'greedy,' but that was the implication. Note, also, the implication that raising the current \$8.75 minimum wage by 71 percent over the next six years (including next year's already scheduled increase to \$9) ultimately boils down to a question of whether companies make 'less money' - as opposed to whether some firms will continue to make money at all. Apparently, it has never occurred to Cuomo that there are employers in New York who could not afford to raise wages so steeply without endangering their businesses' continued existence, or slashing the number of people they employ, or both."

— *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



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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

First Responder owed an apology

TO THE EDITOR | While Erwin is dedicating a park to honor First Responders, the Lindley Town Board is mocking, humiliating and embarrassing them. At the Sept. 9 Town Board meeting, a First Responder was appealing for cooperation on a serious matter to both the First Responders and Town residents. While making his request a board member snarled and mocked him. This mistreatment was

apparently approved by the board because no member made further comment.

The board needs to publicly apologize for its actions. At the Erwin Honor Park dedication, Mr. Creath stated, "First Responders are those who come into harm's way to save life, limb or property, and they are there when we need them, and we really need to recognize that."

With this thought in mind, the board should be working on a way to honor the First Responders in

Lindley that serve all its residents.
 — **Alvin Schoonover,**
 Corning

Hamilton earned right to be on bill

TO THE EDITOR | Currently, there is a movement afoot to place a woman's face on the \$10 bill.

While I am all in favor of this move being successful, it should NOT be at the expense of Alexander Hamilton.

Hamilton, a founding father, was the first

secretary of the Treasury (1789-1795) as well as the most definitive figures of finance. How could anyone be so befuddled as to want to replace him?

Anyone may agree that "Old Hickory" Andrew Jackson would be a better choice.

Let us pray that legislators will come to their collective senses and confer this honorarium upon Eleanor Roosevelt, heroine of the Great Depression.

— **Rosalie Niemczyk,**
 Bath