

# OPINION

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A Call to Arms for Mansfield

To the Editor,  
 As I am certain you are aware, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education has commissioned a comprehensive study "to ensure the 14 state-owned universities are prepared to meet the needs of students and employers in every region of the Commonwealth." That study is now underway. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) is the consulting firm selected to assist the Board of Governors with the Strategic System Review of the 14 universities and the Office of the Chancellor.  
 NCHEMS has launched a website that provides a forum in which each of us can tell the Mansfield University story. Each of us—alumni, student, parent, employee and friend of MU, can share why Mansfield is or has been a difference maker in our lives, a difference maker in our community and region, and a difference maker in the Commonwealth and our Nation.  
 Each of us knows the power and the impact of a Mansfield education and the difference it has made in our lives and the lives of our loved ones and friends.  
 I urge you to go to [www.ncchemsproject.com/](http://www.ncchemsproject.com/)

system-review to provide your input and tell your Mansfield story. The website also allows all of us to track the progress of the review and offer our thoughts on the future of the State System.  
 Here to Serve (HzS),

**Fran Hendricks**  
 President, Mansfield University

### Thanks for making pancake supper a success

To the Editor,  
 On behalf of the 120+ homebound and frail seniors we serve each weekday, Corning Meals on Wheels thanks Watson Homestead Conference & Retreat Center and Corning Catering, Inc. for their pancake supper to benefit our home delivered meal program and the Painted Post Food Pantry on March 26th.  
 Thank you to all of the 166 people who attended the benefit for making this year's pancake supper a success. The \$471 raised at the event will fund over 100 freshly prepared hot meals delivered to a homebound senior neighbor in need!  
 Corning Meals on Wheels is truly a grass-roots 'neighbors helping neighbors' charitable service. We couldn't feed the need without the generous support of our community members like Watson

Homestead, Corning Catering, and all who came out to enjoy the pancakes and real maple syrup to help those in need.

**David W. Smith**  
 Executive Director  
 Corning Meals on Wheels

### In support of Deputy Tom Smith

To the Editor:  
 The Retired Corning Police Association met Tuesday with Deputy Tom Smith of the Tioga County Pennsylvania Sheriff's Office. Tom Has an extensive background in law enforcement, is a Marine Corps veteran and is a 20 plus year member of the sheriff's department. He is also a strong supporter of our 2nd amendment rights.  
 The Retired Police Association is composed of retired law enforcement and correction officers from the southern tier of New York State and also has members from Florida, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Tennessee and Texas.  
 The membership agreed to endorse and support Tom in his candidacy in the upcoming election for sheriff. We feel he is highly qualified to serve the citizens of Tioga County.

**Tom Greven**  
 Retired Police Assoc.  
 Corning

## TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

# Paving the way for better local roads

Last week, I highlighted the historic investment that the new state budget makes in water quality infrastructure across New York.  
 This week, it's about local roads, bridges and culverts.  
 In March, Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and I once again joined New York's local highway superintendents for the annual "Local Roads Matter" rally at the Capitol. It's become one Albany's most recognizable advocacy campaigns and we're proud to continue building it. This year's effort earned the support of a bipartisan coalition of 137 state legislators, or nearly 65 percent of the Legislature's entire membership.  
 Most importantly, it is making a difference. Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders are hearing our message that "Local Roads Matter" (you can view a replay of this year's rally on my Senate website, <http://www.omara.nysenate.gov>).

Beginning with the 2013-14 state budget, CHIPS base aid has increased by approximately \$125 million to an overall level of \$438.1 million. Last year's state budget also included an additional \$400 million (\$100 million a year over four years) for local roads being allocated using the CHIPS funding formula through a new PAVE-NY program for local roads, and another \$400 million in BRIDGE-NY funding for local bridge projects. Additionally, for the first time since 2010, the budget provides parity in funding between the five-year state Department of Transportation

(DOT) and Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) capital plans, with each slated to receive approximately \$27 billion. Combined, these programs are providing significant funding increases for counties, cities, towns and villages throughout New York State. Regionally, total aid percentage increases from 2012-13 to this year have ranged from 45% to 55%.

Stronger support continues in the new state budget, which includes an additional \$65 million for counties, towns and villages through the CHIPS formula. The budget also provides an additional \$50 million for BRIDGE-NY, with \$20 million of that amount dedicated to culvert improvement projects.

In short, in an era when the competition for government resources is as difficult as it has ever been, Assemblyman Palmesano and I remain proud to be joined by an ever-growing number of legislative colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, the local roads team, numerous other local leaders and statewide transportation advocates to keep building bipartisan support within the Legislature for a more fair, equitable and stronger state commitment.

It goes without saying that the effort will be ongoing. Now more than ever, New York State must support a steady, strong, multi-year strategy to address local transportation infrastructure. Local governments face increasingly difficult fiscal constraints due to the tax cap and long-stagnant

state aid to municipalities. CHIPS, PAVE-NY and BRIDGE-NY funding is fundamentally important to local economic development, job creation, motorist safety and property tax relief.

A 2013 report from the state comptroller called 32% of New York's local bridges deficient and 40% of local roads fair or poor, and getting worse. A national transportation advocacy group, TRIP, has estimated that deteriorating roads cost New York motorists roughly an additional \$25 billion annually — nearly \$2,300 for the average driver in some areas — in lost time, fuel costs, vehicle repairs and other expenses.

The New York State Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) has said, "At a time when high quality public infrastructure is universally recognized as the key to strong communities and a growing economy, New York State must further increase its investment in our essential network of local roads and bridges."

According to the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), "The ongoing and necessary maintenance of the local road and bridge system in New York is essential for the safety of the motoring public. The costs of maintenance and repair of this vast local system is beyond the capacity of local taxpayers, and ongoing state investment is needed."

In addition, the New York State Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) notes, "At a time when high quality public infrastructure is universally recognized as the key to strong communities and a growing economy, New York State must further increase its investment in our essential network of local roads and bridges."

Yes, Local Roads Matter.

## The Leader Staff

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