

# OPINION

## COMMENTARY |

STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA, R-BIG FLATS

### And the highest taxed state in America is...

In early February, the state Senate Majority put forth a comprehensive "Jobs and Opportunity Agenda" calling for new tax cuts, broad-based regulatory reform, workforce development strategies, and a major refocusing of the state's economic development initiatives including shutting down the controversial START-UP New York program.

A study released last week by the financial news site 24/7 Wall Street (247wallst.com) is a reminder why an agenda like ours is fundamental to the future. The bottom line of this new study could not be more straightforward: New York State has the highest tax burden in America.

New York taxpayers on average pay 12.7 percent of their income in state and local taxes – more than taxpayers in every other state in the nation do. Specifically, according to the study, New York is the second-highest ranked state in income tax collections per capita and fifth highest in property tax collections per capita.

In his very first State of the State address in 2011, newly elected Governor Andrew Cuomo said, "New York has no future as the tax capital of the nation. Our young people will not stay. Our business will not come. This has to change...the people of this state simply cannot afford to pay any more taxes, period."

"New York has no future as the tax capital of the nation." It produced one of the best applause lines in any State of the State message ever and it set the stage for true progress in New York on cutting taxes.

Clearly, however, the tax cut momentum has faltered. In fact, in his 2018-19 proposed state budget, Governor Cuomo includes upwards of \$1 billion in higher taxes and fees. Equally critical, the governor's commitment over the past eight years has simply not been aggressive enough on fundamental actions like comprehensive mandate

relief and regulatory reform. The governor created, with great fanfare, a Mandate Relief Team in 2011 and, as part of the agreement to enact the two-percent local property tax cap, he promised a comprehensive rollback of the unfunded state mandates that keep local property taxes high.

The Mandate Relief Team failed. The mandate relief promise has mostly not been kept.

New York cannot continue as one of the highest taxed and overregulated states in America. It's that simple. We are losing our way again after eight years of the Cuomo administration. We are not staying focused on getting residents and businesses out from under one of the nation's heaviest tax and regulatory burdens.

That's the message delivered by the 24/7 Wall Street study.

In response, the Senate's "Jobs and Opportunity" focus in 2018 includes, among other proposals:

- legislation I sponsor to enact new tax cuts for small businesses and farms including, among others, increasing the corporate tax threshold from \$390,000 to \$500,000 and lowering the rate to 2.5 percent;

- allowing real property owned by a small business to be eligible for the STAR property tax savings program;

- extending the zero percent Corporate Franchise Tax parity to all manufacturers in New York regardless of how they are organized. Currently, only approximately 25 percent of manufacturers – those organized as C corps – can receive the zero percent rate on business income; and

- reforming the regulatory, licensing, and permitting processes to make them easier to understand, more responsive to business concerns, increase transparency, improve consistency, and reduce overly burdensome or unnecessary requirements.

It is time to reorder New York State's priorities so that we tax less, regulate less, mandate less, and create more and better jobs.

## ANOTHER VIEW



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Editor's Note: The Leader has allowed some letters to exceed its normal 300-word limit in regards to the recent high school shooting.)

### Can anything be done about shootings?

To the Editor,

A distressing part of our concern at recent slayings by gunfire is that, burdened on the one hand by grief and dismay, we also feel despair whether anything can be done about it. Our political leadership appears to be paralyzed, bogged down in inaction. To whom can we look?

Can anything be done about it? Many Americans own a gun; the NRA seems invincible. Even so, most Americans believe we need stricter gun regulation. Politicians appear not to know how to respond to this rising sentiment.

The United States is the foremost of only a few countries that hold owning a gun is a right, formalized in the Second Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights. The 2008 decision of the Supreme Court, *District of Columbia v. Heller*, confirmed the view, in a narrow decision (5 to 4), that citizens have the right to own a gun of any sort for reasons other than service in a militia.

Though not Law, the Declaration of Independence, sets out principles central to our Nation, affirming our inalienable rights include the rights to life, liberty, and happiness.

Now, however, school children will take part in regular drills how to behave if a gun-toting, crazed person invades the grounds, and where high-school students state they are the first generation who, for their entire school experience, have lived in the possibility that disaster might visit their school. This constitutes a grave public mental health problem of growing proportions.

Other nations, such as Switzerland, Finland, Denmark, and Australia, have demonstrated that strict regulation of gun ownership can procure very considerable reductions in the risk of harm from irresponsible gun owners.

Here, in the United States, the means for achieving this already exists but needs improvement and more responsible use by law enforcement agencies. The responsibility for this lies mainly with the States. As responsible citizens, our task must be to call our elected leaders, local and in our legislatures, to take the initiative, and to discuss among ourselves how to make our communities safe for our children and ourselves.

This is my call to action, but how to begin? One obvious way is for civic leaders to establish forums where concerned citizens can exchange ideas about that can be done.

I consider myself fortunate to live in New York State, which has effective gun ownership regulation, the lowest rate of gun ownership, and belongs to that group of US States having the lowest gun related deaths.

I call upon my fellow citizens to share their views on what action our community can take to lead our nation in reducing the horror arising from out of control gun use.

**Robert Duckmanton**  
Corning

### Seeking help from our Congressman

To the Editor,

Congressman Reed's empty response to the Parkland, Florida murders ~ "We must not take away Second Amendment rights" ~ endangers all Americans.

The following letter was signed by over forty people gathered outside Tom Reed's office on Wednesday 21 February 2018.

"We, the residents and voters of the 23rd Congressional District, call on Congressman Reed to lead the way and enact meaningful, common sense gun legislation. This would include, but not be limited to, 1) a minimum 14 day waiting period before purchasing a gun, 2) minimum age of purchase at 21, 3) a ban on bump stocks and cranks, 4) a background check for all sales and 5) registration of each firearm.

In a country where it is necessary to register a driver's license, a car, a boat, a motorcycle, a scooter, a drone and a dog, Congress can no longer simply call mass murders a mental health or a political issue. America's present lack of gun control is a domestic threat to every American.

Finally, and most important, the call for Meaningful Gun Legislation can no longer be an issue whose agenda is driven by the National Rifle Association nor is it any longer enough to simply send 'thoughts and prayers to the families of innocent victims.' Quoting Emma Gonzalez, a survivor of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School murders: 'It is time to start doing something.' ~ Not one of the suggested legislation takes away Second Amendment rights.

**Gary McCaslin**  
Corning

### The costs after the shootings

To the Editor,

Another mass shooting. This one in a high school where kids regularly practice in case of such an occurrence.

Seventeen died and fourteen injured. When I first heard I was mad but realized that our elected officials will do nothing. In fact we will do nothing. After Las Vegas Nevada where fifty-seven were killed and over five hundred were injured at least there was talk about bump-stocks (No action taken).

No conversation that a man was able to fire one thousand one hundred rounds in less than fourteen minutes. No news about how seriously some were injured. Sure some most likely just got scratched.

But what about those who may

be paralyzed for life, or handicapped, or disfigure or now have PTSD. Their medical costs must be tremendous and now do they face bankruptcy on top of being hit by one two or three bullets.

Let's not talk about it. Let's not ask our lawmakers to talk about such things.

Oh, they will talk about how the high school shooter must have had mental problems. But they will not even discuss an eighteen-year-old having an assault rifle and all the ammo wanted legally available.

You will not hear about the physical and mental damage done to survivors. "News Week" estimates that when the medical cost, which may be required over a survivor's life time, police costs, EMT cost, court costs, jail cost are totaled, a million dollars per survivor per incident is the average. That means the Las Vegas shooting will only come six-hundred million dollars I hate being crass but putting mass shootings in these terms is the only way to get some people attention.

Of course, they see this as the cost of our right to bear arms. Of course, they are the ones bearing the arms and not the costs. You have got to love the empathy.

The lobbyist for the armaments industry, the NRA, put thirty million dollars into Mr. Trump's Campaign last year. Tom Reed also received a donation from the NRA last election year as did many other politicians.

With this administration and its foot soldiers we knew we were not going to be asked to aspire to our better nature but only accept their version of reality. So why should there be any conversation or action in regards to mass shootings? Apathy when paying physically, mentally or financially is what our NRA political representatives require.

**Richard B. Hinkley**  
Corning

### Standing up to bullies

To the Editor,

I believe that most of us Americans have been victims of bullying and/or some form of abuse at some time in our lives. As a former counselor and therapist, I worked with and tried to help many victims of everyday bullying, as well as various other forms of abuse.

I found that the biggest problem, issue, and challenge that they dealt with was that they did not stand up to their bullies and abusers. The best question that I have ever heard a counselor or therapist ask their clients and patients relative to this was the following:

"What parts of yourself don't you love that allows you to let this bully or abuser to continue to mistreat and abuse you?"

This question prompted many people to finally make some serious changes in their lives and to walk away from and leave their abusers.

**Stewart B. Epstein**  
Rochester

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