

OPINION

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

Either government delivers, or it doesn't

Governor Andrew Cuomo opened his third term as New York State's chief executive with an inaugural address on Ellis Island.

While that's an undeniably dramatic place to deliver a major political address – and many commentators have noted that the symbolism of the setting serves Governor Cuomo's purposes in numerous ways – the speech itself was noteworthy as much for what it did not emphasize as for what it did.

In other words, Governor Cuomo began his new tenure as New York's governor with an inaugural address that was decidedly "national" in its details, its focus, and its tone.

One news analysis described the Cuomo inaugural this way: "New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo was sworn in for his third term pledging to fulfill an ambitious, progressive Justice Agenda: voting reform, strengthening gun laws, protecting health care, legalizing marijuana and reforming the criminal justice system."

The governor is clearly entitled to his emphasis, but some of us have some different ideas for what constitutes a justice agenda in New York State. So far for the governor and a Legislature that will be under one-party control, the emphasis on justice has largely fallen on what was described above: voting reform, stronger gun laws, legal marijuana, expanded rights for illegal immigrants, and a criminal justice system that will often fall more on the side of criminals than victims and their families.

While details are coming in the days and weeks ahead, what's troubling overall is what

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is not being emphasized.

No focus on broad-based, lower taxes for workers and employers alike. Nothing about the pitfalls of overregulation. Or the drain of unfunded state mandates on counties and local property taxpayers. Or the glaring need for workforce development. Or the high cost of living that is driving people, especially young people, out of Upstate New York.

Not a word of emphasis, in other words, on what might constitute "justice," after decades of struggle, for New York's middle-class working families, small business owners, manufacturers, farmers, and taxpayers.

"There is now a fundamental questioning of the viability of the American promise," Governor Cuomo said.

Some argue that there's a fundamental questioning of the viability of New York's promise. Governor Cuomo arrived in office in 2011 proclaiming that New York State could not survive as the tax capital of America. We remain one of the nation's highest-taxed states.

In 2011, Governor Cuomo promised that his top priority, a cap on local property taxes, would include an aggressive mandate relief effort. While the cap has been significant and needs to be permanent, the governor's failure to pursue mandate relief means that the cap will never achieve its ultimate goal, which is property tax cuts and not just holding the line on tax growth.

Therefore, yes, it is fair

to question the viability of the New York promise under Governor Cuomo.

Not long ago I said, responding to Governor Cuomo's call for drivers' licenses for illegal immigrants, that this state was about to get turned upside down at breakneck speed. Let's just say that beginning this week it sure looks like we're about to come out of turn one and head down a liberal reform straightaway at a pace we have never experienced.

"I feel liberated," Governor Cuomo said on Ellis Island. "I felt like I was fighting with one arm tied behind my back." He was referring to having to compromise with a Senate Republican Majority that often stood against parts of the "progressive" agenda the governor now feels free to ram through a Legislature under one-party, Democratic control.

"New Yorkers know the difference between rhetoric and results," Governor Cuomo said on Ellis Island. "We either perform by delivering real solutions that restore hope and progress in people's lives or we fail. It is that simple... Either the government delivers or the government doesn't deliver."

Middle-class taxpayers will be watching and waiting to see if New York State government finally delivers. So will small business owners, manufacturers, farmers, law-abiding gun owners, property taxpayers, and local governments.

New Yorkers will indeed know the difference between rhetoric and results. It is that simple.

ANOTHER VIEW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The plastic plague

To the Editor,
The CBS televised program "60 Minutes" on Dec. 16 dramatized the serious pollution issue of plastics everywhere on the planet and especially in the oceans.

Soon, there may be more plastics in the oceans than fish.

A young Dutch man, Boyan Slat, is attempting to clean up some of the ocean with his plastic skimmer - long trails of pipes towed by ships. But it has problems.

Meanwhile, China stopped taking our recycled plastics and 90 percent of plastics don't get recycled anyway.

So what can we do?
Stop using plastic bags for our groceries is one small step. As you leave Wegman's, notice the suggestion box just near the exit. Write a note suggesting that Wegman's phase out plastic bags as you promise to use canvas bags instead.

Frank Anastasio
Corning

Boland leaves out tax problem

To the Editor,
I would like to respond to Mayor Bill Boland's year in review letter.

First let me say that I think Bill is doing a great job. He is not only a fellow Rotarian, but someone I can have political differences with and we still can remain friends and respect each others' differences.

He should be proud of the accomplishments of the last year.

My good friend Bill left out the most glaring problem facing not only the city, but the county and New York state. That problem is property taxes.

As some of you know, my wife and I had the good fortune of being able to purchase a home in Arizona in 2010 during the housing crisis for a huge reduction in price. As a result of that, our house in Arizona is now worth approximately what our house is worth in Corning.

The real estate taxes, however, are 10 times higher here than they are in Arizona.

Why?
I have not heard a satisfactory answer to that question. Governor Cuomo says it is because of the weather. That is BS and we all know it. One of the main reasons people are leaving New York State is that it costs so much more to live here than other places.

I have been trying to get local county and state officials to 'really' look into this and come up with solutions that would 'substantially' reduce the tax burden on property owners in city, school district, town, county and state.

I think that all officials in this state should put as much attention to the property tax problem as they do in pursuing re-election. If they did, they would come up with a solution in no time flat.

I am talking a complete redesign of taxing and spending at all levels of the state with the goal of reducing property taxes by a minimum of 50%. I believe that doing so would show the country that New York State is 'serious' about becoming the Empire state once again.

P.S. We were the economic powerhouse of the USA when the weather was much colder if you believe in global warming.

Rick Davis
Corning

Clinton, Patterson book a good read

To the Editor,
I just finished reading "The President is Missing" by Bill Clinton and James Patterson.

After completing graduate school, I was so tired of reading textbooks that I have only read fiction since, but let me tell you, these authors do an incredible amount of research.

Of course, Donald Trump would call what they write "fake news" or lies; but then he should know one lie from another since he lies so often. Even the Corning Leader prints a "Fact"

column writing about what Trump says and what is actual.

Thank you to the Leader for Non Fake News!

January 3's headline: Reed stays positive during shutdown.

What kind of person stays positive while others are not getting paid for their work (except for him and his cronies)? This is totally unacceptable from the supposed leadership of our country.

Republicans are refusing to work with Democrats on a bipartisan deal to keep the government open. Instead of compromising, they are once again prioritizing their unpopular, racist, and xenophobic agenda.

Some of us have memories of the Berlin Wall which Russians and Germans built to prohibit some people from entering or leaving. Is this what our country has come to under Trump and the GOP?

Because of their partisan tantrum, hundreds of thousands of people worked over the holidays without being paid, even more will be furloughed indefinitely, and millions of people will not have access to critical services. And I bet all these politicians attended church services for Christmas.

WWJD? What would Jesus Do?

Think about it: what would you do if through no fault of your own, you found yourself working for nothing, especially during the holidays when most people are spending more money on gifts and food.

To close, I leave you a quote from the above-mentioned book: "Our democracy cannot survive its current downward drift into tribalism, extremism, and seething resentment. Today it's 'us versus them' in America. Politics is little more than blood sport. As a result, our willingness to believe the worst about everyone outside our own bubble is growing, and our ability to solve problems and seize opportunities is shrinking."

Flo Fender
Pine Valley

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Fax: 607-936-9939 Email: svargo@the-leader.com

The Leader

GateHouse Media
Partnered with
ThriveHive

INFORMATION STAFF BOX

The Leader (ISSN #10501983) The Leader is published daily at 34 West Putney Street, Corning, New York 14830 by Gatehouse Media, LLC. Periodical postage paid at Corning, N.Y. 14830-0817. USPS code | 0586-160. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Leader, 34 West Putney Street, Corning, New York 14830.

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AQUAMAN
(Jason Momoa, Amber Heard, Willem Dafoe) PG-13 (2 Hr 23 Min)

Fri. 1/4	3:15, 6:15, 9:15
Sat. 1/5	3:15, 6:15, 9:15
Sun. 1/6	3:15, 6:15
Mon. 1/7	6:15
Tues. 1/8	*CLOSED
Wed. & Thurs.	6:15

MARY POPPINS RETURNS
(Emily Blunt, Emily Mortimer, Meryl Streep) PG (2 Hr 10 Min)

Fri. 1/4	3:00, 6:00, 8:45
Sat. 1/5	3:00, 6:00, 8:45
Sun. 1/6	3:00, 6:00
Mon. 1/7	6:00
Tues. 1/8	*CLOSED
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PG-13 AQUAMAN	1:10	6:55	9:45
PG-13 AQUAMAN 3D		4:00	
R THE MULE	1:20	4:15	7:10 9:35
PG SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER VERSE	1:30	4:10	7:00 9:40
PG-13 BUMBLEBEE	1:30	4:25	7:00 9:30
PG-13 ESCAPE ROOM	1:15	4:05	7:15 9:20
PG-13 HOLMES and WATSON	1:35	4:20	7:20 9:15

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