

# OPINION

TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

## Day by day, one day at a time



Tom O'Mara

I hope all of you are doing your best weathering this storm that has thrown our daily lives and institutions off course like we never could have imagined.

First and foremost: Keep looking forward. Day by day, one day at a time, let's keep doing our individual best and looking out for our families, friends, neighbors, and communities.

It's all hands on deck and, at the very least, we can all stay together by staying informed and taking the recommended steps to aid the collective response that is needed to help protect our most vulnerable populations.

Assistance is available in many ways.

Toward that end, response updates continue to be shared across local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. Pay attention to them. To help facilitate this access, my office has established a "One-Stop" webpage on [omara.nysenate.gov](http://omara.nysenate.gov) to help compile, in one place, a range of COVID-19 information. Among others, this one-stop page provides links to the:

- > New York State Department of Health, the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and regional hospitals for the latest on personal safety recommendations and practices, as well as other important information;

- > county Health Departments and county Offices for the Aging covering the 58th Senate District;

- > Food Bank of the Southern Tier for local food relief updates;

- > NYS Department of Labor and Empire State Development for the most up to date information for employers and workers;

- > Southern Tier and Finger Lakes library systems; and

- > American Red Cross (Finger Lakes Chapter) at a time when there is now a severe blood shortage.

These are just several examples. The page does not include everything under the sun, because the speed and volume of information being thrown at all of us can be overwhelming. I understand that. We are simply trying to point to sources of straightforward and commonly held information, recommendations, resources, and updates.

State government offices, including mine, have been advised to have our staffs, as broadly as possible, work remotely until further notice. Nevertheless, please continue to contact us, preferably by e-mail because it lets you provide more detail, more efficiently. Otherwise, if you contact us by phone, please leave a message and we will respond in short order. Full contact information is available on [omara.nysenate.gov](http://omara.nysenate.gov).

Bottom line: Throughout the challenging weeks ahead, my offices will continue to be available to constituents. Like everyone else, we will have to adjust and accommodate the ongoing public health and safety requirements and recommendations, and we will absolutely do our part. Nevertheless, we will be monitoring the situation on the ground locally across the communities we represent, and no one should hesitate to reach out to us if they believe we can be helpful in any way.

Above all, let's remember that there are health care professionals, emergency services experts, first responders, business leaders, educators, librarians, service organizations, government officials at every level, and incredible, incredible volunteers -- throughout the public and private sectors -- working around the clock to combat and control this threat, and provide diligent public outreach.

I can only commend their commitment and dedication.

To do our own part as individuals, then, practice the seriousness and personal responsibility that this emergency demands.

Thank you for your cooperation. Thank you for staying strong, smart, and safe -- and we will get through this together.

ANOTHER VIEW



VIEWPOINT | HARTFORD COURANT

## Stop hoarding, start trusting

Even if we are feeling legitimate anxiety about society these days, most people seem OK with keeping a few feet away from others, working from home, distance learning and washing their hands a lot -- practices aimed at taking care of other people.

But we're not purely altruistic. Panic shopping -- for toilet paper, hand sanitizer or really anything that doesn't have an expiration date -- shows that when this is all over, we will have some lessons to learn about ourselves.

Hoarding is humanity at its worst. It's a me-first attitude that we must move beyond if we are to survive this health crisis and the next, which could be orders of magnitude more severe.

What caused our toilet paper shortage? Fear -- not of the coronavirus but of each other, fear that someone else would buy up everything before we could get to it. A few people took what might have begun as a need to have a sense of control in the chaos and went into self-protection mode, looking out for No. 1. That started a chain reaction of shortsighted selfishness as more people saw that their own legitimate and often humble needs were suddenly at risk.

Toilet paper factories aren't burning down. Toilet paper factory workers aren't on strike. Toilet paper raw materials aren't in short supply. There

was no legitimate economic reason for a run on toilet paper except for the expectation of a shortage. And if people had bought only what they needed, there would likely be more than enough to go around.

Of course, the sudden shift to a home-based economy is going to mean some changes -- no more using the facilities at work or school, more cooking at home. So some temporary shortages might have been expected, and personal conservation measures warranted, as supply chains adjusted. And adjust they will -- toilet paper will soon return to a supermarket near you, and there should be plenty for everyone, as long as the hoarding stops.

There are reports that some retailers are limiting how much people can buy at once. It's a step short of rationing, but it makes sense to stem the panic-buying instinct.

It comes down to this: Do we act in our own immediate self-interests, all of the time, or do we act with a sense of trust that the hoarding will stop? In times like these, when our interconnectedness is on full display, it should be easy to see how critical it is that we take care of each other if we intend to take care of ourselves.

A popular thought experiment in the field of game theory is known as the prisoner's dilemma. The idea is

that the best overall outcome arises only when everyone trusts each other blindly -- even if they can't be assured that trust will be returned.

It's a tall order, especially in this nation where we're taught the virtues of personal, not community, responsibility -- but that's the task that faces us. We must trust each other to buy only what we need; we must trust that everyone adheres to self-quarantine when recommended and social distancing at all times.

When the coronavirus fades, our condition will depend completely on how we have treated each other now, at the beginning. If we act selfishly -- buying up all the hand sanitizer, all the masks and medical supplies for which other people will have a genuine medical need -- the odds increase that the health crisis will be worse, there will be more shortages and more deaths.

For some, having that much trust will mean a significant change of mindset. But we must trust each other not to be selfish if we're going to take care of each other.

Putting the good of the community before the needs of the individual might cause some mild but temporary discomfort, but it's a challenge that other generations have successfully shouldered in times of war, famine and disease.

It's up to us now.

©2020 The Hartford Courant (Hartford, Conn.)

**FOLLOW US ON TWITTER**

The Leader: @thenewsleader1

Stephen Borgna: @theleaderborgna

Jeff Smith: @theleadersmith

Shawn Vargo: @theleadervargo

Eric Wensel: @theleaderwensel

LETTERS POLICY

Letters should be typed or neatly printed. They must be signed and include an address and phone number.

Letters may be edited for space considerations. The publication of any letter is at the discretion of the editor. All letters become the property of The Leader and cannot be

returned to sender.

**Mail:** Letters To The Editor, The Leader, Po Box 1017, Corning, NY 14830

**Fax:** 607-936-9939 **Email:** [svargo@the-leader.com](mailto:svargo@the-leader.com)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Response to Morrongiello letter

To the Editor,

To our fellow community members, Mike Brenning, Stuart Sammis and myself are writing this letter in response to Councilman Morrongiello's repeated misinformation to the public regarding the remodeling of the Town Hall.

Currently the hall is in need of repair and for the security of the building and employees to be addressed. How do we do this? What are our options?

None of us being engineers or architects - we contracted with architect, Larry Foor, who presented a study on how to remodel the building in phases and what it would cost. This allows us a starting point in deciding how to manage a 62-year old school house in the most fiscally responsible way.

Currently, the building is in immediate need of a new

roof, floors are cracking, the HVAC system is on its last legs, and security is a concern.

Although we have approved another security guard per the Judge's request, this is not enough. Recently there have been several physical confrontations directed at the Town's employees, (one involving a gun).

Stuart and I are working with other Town employees to segment costs to be fiscally responsible and determine what is the best avenue to proceed in order to keep the building functional and safe.

None of us are in favor of raising taxes and that is why we are trying to have a well thought, well researched plan in place as we move forward.

Councilman Morrongiello has not reached out to Mike, Stuart or myself to obtain accurate information but instead repeatedly presents misleading and

fearful rhetoric that disparages the board as a whole.

I am disappointed at the lack of professionalism and integrity held by Councilman Morrongiello and I hope in the future that teamwork and the town's best interest becomes part of his agenda.

As we gather more data, we will make sure it is presented during meetings and placed on the Town of Corning website for transparency and feedback.

Jennifer L. Mullen, PhD, RN, CHPN,

Councilwoman Town of Corning

What would Amo do?

To the Editor,

On the day Amo Houghton passed away, the sky was as beautiful as I can remember and the winds made the Corning flag wave true and proud.

While I didn't know him like so many others, and had only met him a few times, there's no doubt that it's his and his family's legacy that has given me a home here in Corning, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Since that day, the horizon has darkened and our lives have been upended with no end in sight. The deluge has been happening one drip at a time, but the storm is now here, and like the Flood of 72, it has the power to alter our community in unimaginable ways.

In the coming days and months our community members, whether they be families struggling to make rent or restaurants with no customers to serve, will need unprecedented financial support and reassurance.

And the question we have to ask ourselves isn't, "What would Amo do?"

No, the question we have to ask ourselves is, "What did Amo already do?"

The answer lies in plain sight in the thriving community that surrounds us. It's in Amo's calming words after the Flood, it's in his keeping the company here to stay and rebuild, it's in the zero interest loans, and it's in so many other acts of leadership that assured this town, its people, and the communities around us that it would endure.

The current generation of leaders must take up the Houghton mantle, resolve to shore up the foundation the family built before it crumbles away. I cannot begin to fathom the great enterprise that must commence, but they must act now to ensure that we not only endure, but that the Corning flag continues to wave true and proud.

Chris Walters, Corning