

# OPINION

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

## We will remember our veterans

From among the countless words spoken or written across the generations to capture the essence of Memorial Day, I always return to former President Ronald Reagan, on June 6, 1984, in remarks commemorating the 40th Anniversary of D-Day at the Omaha Beach Memorial Cemetery, "We will always remember. We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we may always be free."

Particularly striking are those repeated words, "We will. Indeed, so many of us will continue to remember on this Memorial Day."

We will meet at cemeteries, parades, and other ceremonies, large and small, and remember a soldier's sacrifice. We will stand together in Corning and Hammondport, Hornell and Penn Yan, Dundee and Elmira, Horseheads and Watkins Glen, and so many other places across this region.

We will be proud to recognize New York State as the "Birthplace of Memorial Day," which our nation has observed since the time of the Civil War. It is a time to reflect on the greatness of a nation built on the sacrifices of the men and women who fought and died for the underlying dreams of their homeland. In remembering, we will always reaffirm our pride in this nation's military men and women. Of course, we will always turn enduring thoughts and prayers to the young soldiers, the heroes, who have been recently lost.

We will honor our wounded warriors. We will support the men and women serving in harm's way at this very moment. They are shining examples of bravery, courage and eternal honor.

We will salute all New York State veterans and the millions more across the nation. Last week in Albany, I proudly paid tribute to the service of one of these outstanding local veterans, the late Paul C. "Digger" Vendetti, a World War II Navy veteran and longtime caretaker at Woodlawn National Cemetery in Elmira. We inducted Navy Seaman First Class Vendetti into the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame, where he joins more than 400 veterans who have joined the Hall since 2005. This includes the following area veterans whom I have had the privilege to induct since 2011: Philip C. Smith of Schuyler County; J. Arthur "Archie" Kieffer, Chemung County; former Painted Post Mayor Roswell L. "Roz" Crozier, Jr.; Anthony J. "Tony" Specchio, Sr., Schuyler County; P. Earle Gleason, Yates County; and Warren A. Thompson, Steuben County [view the Senate's online Veterans' Hall of Fame on my Senate website, [www.omara.nysenate.gov](http://www.omara.nysenate.gov)].

Because of our veterans, we can look into the eyes of young people this Memorial Day, the faces of the future, and have faith that they, too, will be instilled with the spirit to keep America strong, to keep believing that the American way is a good, decent, worthwhile way.

In the end, perhaps this is the greatest justice for all of the missions flown, the foxholes dug, the hills taken, and the battles fought. Our soldiers -- American soldiers -- have made and will continue to make the ultimate sacrifice to keep America free, so that she can lead the way to a more free world.

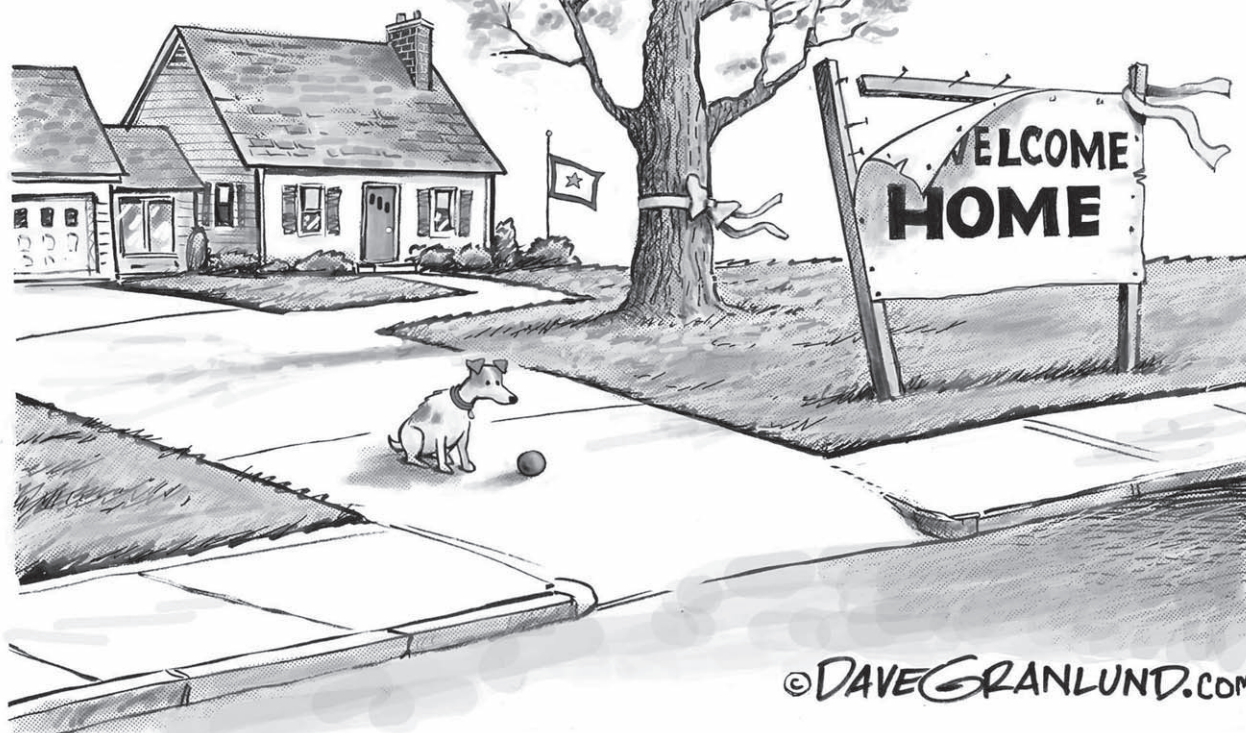
The sacrifices of our soldiers will keep alive America's promise, so that people throughout the world will look to her for inspiration.

Our soldiers will keep America strong, so that other nations will draw courage from her strength.

For as long as we remember and keep our soldiers alive in our hearts, we will stand as we do -- free in a land of opportunity and promise.

## ANOTHER VIEW

### MANY NEVER RETURN...



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### VA bridge needs new name

To the Editor,  
My name is Jean Valentine. I came to the Bath VA as just a homeless veteran. I did not want to be here.

When I crossed that bridge to get here, the bridge scared me. It was something that I didn't want to cross.

Then when I arrived inside, I was told that I would be on restriction for a month. I hated that, but I knew that I had to follow the rules.

When I got my first pass, I crossed that bridge to freedom, but then I had to come back across that bridge with anxiety knowing that I didn't want to come back here.

Then I found an apartment and I finally got to leave the VA.

But once again, I had to cross that bridge. But my thoughts were this bridge should be called 'the bridge to recovery' because that's what this place has done for me.

Everyone, the staff, friends that I've made picked me up and put my feet back on the ground and turned my whole life around.

The staff here, I can't tell you how under-appreciated they are.

My life, my health, my well being is totally 100 percent better because of them.

I am writing this letter to please ask for a sign on that bridge saying 'Bridge to Recovery' instead of welcome to the Bath VA.

People will have more hope in their life by seeing

a positive sign when they enter in the VA.

**Jean Valentine**  
Army veteran

### Reed benefits from dark money

To the Editor,  
Last week, The Leader published an excellent front page article about the organization, the Alliance for Patient Access (AfPA).

AfPA parades as a consumer advocate, but is funded by the powerful pharmaceutical industry.

Besides their radio ads and circulars supporting policies advantageous to the drug companies, AfPA also mails political brochures supporting Congressional candidates that support the pharmaceutical industries high drug pricing policies. Tom Reed has benefited from these mailings multiple times.

The AfPA does not have to disclose who funded its bid to influence Congress, or anything else it does, because it's organized as a not-for-profit under a section of the IRS tax code reserved for "social welfare" organizations, known as 501(c)4. Unlike super PACs, which are independent political committees, non-profits don't have to reveal their financial backers. They've become the preferred option for groups who want to influence politics without having their identities publicized. This is often referred to as "Dark Money" in the political process.

Over the last few years, Tom Reed has had mailings for his political benefit from numerous 501(c)4

organizations. They are cleverly disguised, usually with a Senior Citizen on the front page, asking you to "Thank Tom for protecting Medicare". In reality, they want to keep people like Tom Reed in office so that their high priced drug policies continue to be supported.

When you look at Tom's voting record, the hundreds of thousands of dollars that he has received from the pharmaceutical industry, and the political boost that he gets from 501(c)4 "non-profits" and their dark money, Tom could be the poster boy for what's wrong with our political system.

Tom just voted against the For the People Act which addresses campaign financing. Why would he vote for it, when he is such a huge beneficiary of special interests and dark money?

**Bruce Graf**  
Corning

### The abortion question

To the Editor,  
When discussing abortion, in reality, there are only two factions - pro life or pro death.

Which side are you on?

**Tim Forester**  
Campbell

### Sanders supporters need to look at Stein

To the Editor,  
The Bernie Sanders campaign, even though it was limited by the establishment in the Democratic Party, had a vital role in introducing the issues of income inequality and crippling debt to the public debate.

The Jill Stein campaign is the natural next step for those who supported Sanders because she is now the only presidential candidate that will talk about these inherent problems and their necessary solutions. The Green Party candidate specifically proposes universal single-payer healthcare and free higher education with student debt cancellation as two ways to address inequality and debt.

Medicare for all removes the \$400 billion spent on unnecessary corporate paperwork, bureaucracy, and added costs while ensuring that people do not have to go into abject poverty in order to be healthy.

Free higher education with no student debt is an investment in the future in much the same way that the G.I. Bill originally functioned. For every dollar spent on education, the country will get seven dollars back in terms of a stronger productivity and consumer base of the next generation.

And just as universally accessible education frees our future from debt servitude, universally accessible healthcare frees our present from debt servitude. These two solutions understand that income inequality will eventually lead to crippling debt and a loss of true economic freedom.

The sole purpose of inequality and debt is to keep people passive and obedient as they struggle to make ends meet in the face of corporate power and domination.

**Darin Robbins**  
Corning

## The Leader



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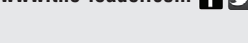
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