

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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 PO BOX 1017
 CORNING, NY 14830
Fax: 607-936-9939
Email: svargo@the-leader.com

Online at www.the-leader.com/opinions

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

Supporting America's Food Bank of the Year

The month of September is "Hunger Action Month" across the United States. Consequently, it is a perfect time to note, again, one of this year's most remarkable local achievements.

In June, area leaders gathered in Elmira to pay tribute to the work of The Food Bank of the Southern Tier, which Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization, named its "2017 Food Bank of the Year."

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier, founded in 1981, is the first-ever New York State food bank to receive this distinction from Feeding America. It is the highest designation a food bank can receive — a remarkable milestone considering Feeding America's network of 200 food banks throughout the nation. But it's well-earned here in the Southern Tier.

Earlier this year the state Legislature approved a Legislative Resolution I sponsored with local Assemblyman Chris Friend commemorating the award. It reads, in part, "The Food Bank of the Year Award honors the most outstanding food bank in the Feeding America network for going above and beyond its core mission of providing for the hungry. It also acknowledges the role the food bank plays in improving the community they serve through creative, efficient and successful programming, and is a strengthening force for the entire Feeding America network, as well as exemplifying the highest standard of operations."

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier (<http://www.foodbankst.org>) serves seven regional counties — Broome, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga and Tompkins — covering nearly 4,000 square miles. In 2016 the organization distributed more than 11.5 million pounds of food and grocery items through approximately 160 partner agencies, including food pantries, meal programs, shelters, and after-school and senior programs. Last year the food bank's thousands of volunteers contributed over 50,000 hours of their time.

Feeding America distributes food and groceries

to more than 46 million low-income people each year through a network of 200 food banks that serve 60,000 food pantries and meal programs in communities across the country.

Feeding America first announced the Food Bank of the Year Award at its 2017 Hunger's Hope Awards conference in late April in San Diego. The Food Bank of the Southern Tier was recognized "for or having strong and engaged teams in all areas of their organization," and for "its innovative practice of engaging major donors in their strategic planning processes, their extensive work in studying the issue of agency capacity, and the effectiveness of their mobile pantry program."

Feeding America CEO Diana Aviv said, "(Food Bank of the Southern Tier) President and CEO Natasha Thompson has assembled a terrific staff that we consider best-in-class. Their programs as well as their efforts to increase the amount of food and groceries they provide to their community are exemplary."

It is a tribute to their commitment, compassion, and daily work to end hunger for families across the Southern Tier.

Everyone can help. For example, the annual "Fill the Bus" campaign remains underway through September 23 at Wegman's stores across the region. The food bank needs 500 volunteers every week to help sort and repack donations and prepare them for distribution to area food pantries, churches, youth programs, and meal kitchens. Food and fund drives, awareness and education events take place year round. To find out more, visit the website or call 607-796-6061.

Earlier this year, in acknowledging Feeding America's Food Bank of the Year designation, Food Bank of the Southern Tier President Natasha Thompson captured it perfectly when she said, "Winning this award was only possible because the Food Bank is supported by our incredible community. I'm humbled every day by the volunteers, agencies, donors and community partners who help us fulfill our mission. Being honored at the national level only reinforces our belief that the Southern Tier is very special."

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OTHER VIEW | FROM THE (MIDDLETON) TIMES-HERALD RECORD

Poor school districts face daunting odds

The state Board of Regents was busy this week adopting a new set of standards to replace the beleaguered Common Core and adopting a new plan to evaluate schools with measures that go well beyond test scores.

Nothing is simple when it comes to the state of the schools in New York and while these two actions seem to indicate stability in the future, they are more likely to be just two more moving parts in an unstable universe.

It is hard to imagine the opt-out movement being satisfied with any widespread testing and it is hard to imagine the teachers unions accepting any meaningful measure of accountability.

Just look at the situation in New York City where hundreds of teachers remain on salary with little to do because they

are either in trouble or not wanted by schools, a situation that most likely is in the best interests of the students although not in the best interests of the taxpayers.

All of this comes as the Citizens Budget Commission has come out with the kind of analysis that state legislators should read before they vote on the next round of increases for state aid to education.

The CBC analysis starts with something that should be shocking, the news that New York spends more per pupil than any state in the nation. The figure for the 2014-2015 school year, the last one with complete records, was \$21,206 per pupil compared to the national average of \$11,392.

In return, New York gets mediocre results by any measure, and there

are many which put the state well below the average. Some states get much better results with much less spending. Some, including nearby New Jersey, get much better results with just a bit less spending.

But even that is not the most important educational funding topic in the news today. The one that should be on top of many legislative minds is the wide variations documented by the CBC in both the amount each district spends per pupil and the source of the revenue.

The wealthier a district is, the more it spends on each pupil because it has the ability to raise and spend more money through local taxes. Even with more state aid going to the poorer districts, the difference is considerable and despite the ups and downs of total state aid in the annual budget, the

impact is the same.

Nobody knows that better than the schools in Newburgh, Kingston, Port Jervis and five others that are fighting in court to get what they say the state owes them, a combined shortfall of \$150 million each year.

The schools are fighting an uphill battle because their case is on appeal, having been rebuffed already. Although they appear to have the kinds of facts that would support their side, including the amounts they received and the number of positions they had to cut when state aid did not keep up with needs, it's hard to win when you're going up against the state educational bureaucracy, the attorney general and especially the legislative leadership which is dominated by people who represent those wealthy districts.

ANOTHER VIEW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vote no on Constitutional convention

To the Editor,
 As if climate-change-deniers were not enough "barn-dirt-for-brains", now we have folks advocating a positive vote on a NY State Constitutional Convention. On November 7th, the backside of your ballot will ask you (Yes or No) to agree to a state convention for re-writing our state constitution. Please vote NO.

A recent Sienna poll showed that 89% of N.Y. Citizens have not yet heard about this proposition. Why hasn't the public media informed us about this?

Voting on a possible convention happens every 20 years. It has been voted down before. We need to vote NO again.

Wealthy special interests have already dumped a lot of money into cable TV in the N.Y. City media

market calling this "the peoples' convention". Such a convention can cost the taxpayers well over \$300 million and it will enable politicians, their families, and lobbyists to make up to \$80,000 per person on top of their tax payer funded salaries already received per year.

There is no time line for this convention work. It can go on for months or years at our expense.

The Constitution can be amended regularly without a Convention. The NY Assembly and Senate need to agree on a given amendment and stand accountable for their individual votes.

In 2014, three amendments were approved by the state government and in 2013, five amendments were ratified!

We do not need to waste tax payers' money on a convention. We need renewable energy now to save our planet.

We do not need more hot air from the gluttonous

1% for a constitutional convention.

Ruth Young
 Horseheads

Bullying hypocrisy

To the Editor,
 The forum addressing bullying held in Elmira 09/07/17 merely token lip service to gain accolades. Addressing bullying (long ignored) at the children's level is like healing the surface wound on a gangrenous leg.

Bullying is a predominant tool at the highest levels of national leadership, inundating the children. Democrats prove this with hateful rhetoric deluged on President Trump and people of the nation who support him.

Al Gore bullies to cement support for his "Global Warming" hoax making him rich.

Closer to the children are education unions

employing bullying to entrench and expand their power. College professors punish students, with opposing political views, in classrooms!

Dr. Stephen Coleman hailed Corning Superintendent Michael Ginalski for his bullying study. I remember when Ginalski and his board minions bullied Sylvia Huber. Sending towering male board members to get in that pettit ladies face, to intimidate!

School boards often bully people presenting contrary, dissenting views.

Bullying is not only a major problem in schools but society in general. It is perpetuated by much of our leadership nationally affecting locally. Indirecting it at the bottom and not acknowledging where it originates is pure hypocrisy.

Example is the best teacher! What are we teaching?

Gerald J. Furnkranz
 Millport