

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

Water infrastructure rises as urgent challenge

According to a state comptroller's report released early last week, at least \$40 billion will be needed for water quality and sewer infrastructure repairs across New York over the next 20 years.



TOM O'MARA

The comptroller said, "Many drinking water systems in New York are over 100 years old and operating far beyond their useful life. Too many places are dealing with water main breaks, leaks, contaminated drinking water and other problems that can result in public health threats, property damage or inconvenience for residents and businesses. New York needs to invest significantly in this area, or we're going to suffer the consequences. Unfortunately, paying for these solutions presents a considerable challenge."

The comptroller's full report, "Drinking Water Systems in New York: The Challenges of Aging Infrastructure," can be found at: <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/drinkingwatersystems.pdf>.

The report was released on the same day that the Legislature's fiscal committees held a public hearing to examine Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2017-2018 state budget proposal for environmental conservation. At that hearing, under questioning, state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos pegged the same cost at twice that much — \$80 billion over the next two decades.

Two of the key, and lasting, achievements of the past few years have been the following:

■ At the Senate's insistence, the state established the "Water Infrastructure Improvement Act" grant program in 2015 to help localities across the Southern Tier

and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide, undertake critical water infrastructure projects.

This ongoing state assistance is proving successful in helping municipalities complete vital projects, including sewer and pipeline repairs. We're hopeful that it can represent a long-term model for how the state-local partnership can be strengthened for the good of local environments, local economies and local property taxpayers by helping municipalities meet critical infrastructure needs while remaining within the property tax cap; and

■ Legislation signed into law last September requiring school districts to test for lead in their drinking water systems.

Together with Southern Tier Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, early last year we authored this legislation, the first of its kind in the nation, after concerns over elevated levels of lead in drinking sources at schools in our respective legislative districts and across the state. It was a landmark achievement which we accomplished working with a strong, bipartisan coalition of legislators, as well as public health and environmental advocates including the New York League of Conservation Voters and the Healthy Schools Network. The increasing incidents of lead contamination in school drinking water systems demanded that we take short- and long-term actions to strengthen testing,

reporting, and remediation requirements. In other words, this is going to be an evolving, ongoing and long-standing commitment. We believe it represented the most critical foundation on which to build future actions.

These future actions are clearly among the top priorities in 2017. The governor is proposing \$2 billion be allocated in the new state budget for clean water infrastructure.

The Senate first unveiled these recommendations as part of a Senate report released at the beginning of the year, "Water Quality and Contamination." According to our report, "In response to a burgeoning water quality crisis across New York State, the Senate and Assembly Health and Environmental Conservation Committees convened public hearings during the fall of 2016.

The goal of these hearings was to provide an opportunity for legislators and the public to hear from state officials, experts, residents and others to gain an understanding of the problems as well as oversight responsibilities at the local, state and federal level with respect to water quality and contamination.

These hearings provided a foundation upon which to begin building a framework for legislation and policies to ensure more appropriate responses to current and future water contamination occurrences."

You can view the report in its entirety on my Senate website (<http://www.omara.nysenate.gov>). The bottom line is that the development and enhancement of New York State's water quality infrastructure has quickly emerged as one of our most urgent challenges.

ANOTHER VIEW



DICK MEYER | SCRIPPS

Some scary Trump tricks you don't need to worry about - yet

I take a backseat to no windbag when it comes to squawking like Chicken Little about the coming Trump Apocalypse. Sure, the sky might not be falling yet, but the sky is the limit on the havoc this so-called president might wreak.

However, some doomsday Trump scenarios, though they should remain under vigilant watch, can be put on the back shelf for the moment. There are clear and present dangers that are doing real, not hypothetical, harm to real people.

Consequently, these four lesser items can go on a watch list for now.

■ America is at risk of becoming an authoritarian state.

"We are living through the most dangerous challenge to the free government of the United States that anyone alive has encountered," Republican David Frum wrote in a rightfully influential article in *The Atlantic*. Agreed. But — and it is a big but — that "dangerous challenge" remains hypothetical, distant and 1,000 percent preventable. As Frum writes, "If the story ends without too much harm to the republic, it

won't be because the dangers were imagined, but because citizens resisted." Agreed.

Given Trump's instability, the incompetence his regime has displayed and the level of resistance from all sorts of citizen groups, Trump Reich is not imminent. I fully agree that successful resistance — if it comes — will come from civilians, not the parties.

The immoral collaboration of the GOP is at Weimar levels. The Democrats finally seem to be getting tough but have no leadership or public trust. The call now is to combat immediate abuses relentlessly and leave prognostication alone.

■ Anti-Semitism. There is no doubt that Trump's campaign used anti-Semitic codes and memes to stir up resentful, nativist and prejudiced emotions. Are Trump, Steve Bannon and company genuine anti-Semites? Who knows. We don't need to know. Judge them by their deeds; don't waste time speculating about their gristly hearts.

American Jews are far from being the most vulnerable group in America. Voter for voter, Jews have outsized clout. Trump will have to

go pretty whacko before American Jews truly need to fret, a skill our culture has mastered.

■ The sanctity of the free press. O, we scribes are so special! The president attacks us daily and his henchman says we're the opposition. Trump must be a despot disguised as a scam artist.

Here's the thing: Donald Trump has tried to discredit virtually every institution and authority in America with one huge exception — Donald Trump. He has repeatedly insulted federal judges, a despicable act for a person elected to protect the rule of law and the Constitution. He has trash-talked the Republican Party, his primary opponents, "all the generals," the CIA, diplomacy, NATO, the "hedge fund guys," every prior president and, of course, Congress.

This is the essential Trump brainwashing ploy: Everyone is a loser except the one winner, The Donald.

— Dick Meyer is Chief Washington Correspondent for the Scripps Washington Bureau and DecodeDC

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Correcting Oak Duke's tick column

To the Editor,
 I write to correct some statements that appeared in Oak Duke's Outdoor column of Feb. 5, 2017, in *The Leader*.

While I applaud Mr. Duke's drawing attention

to the real threat of tick bites, and agree with most of what he wrote, there were two technical errors.

First, the six-legged stage of a Black-legged Tick is the larval, not nymphal stage. Nymphal and adult ticks, that may feed on humans, have eight legs.

Secondly, these ticks

must feed three times, not four. Eggs hatch to larvae (the size of a period in newsprint), which feed first, almost exclusively on rodents and birds, not on all the animals listed by Mr. Duke.

Larvae then drop off, change to nymphs (the size of sesame seeds), and over-winter. In spring, nymphs feed again on that wider variety of animals, and drop off.

They feed a third time as adults, again on the wide variety of animals, usually in summer or fall, before mating and laying more eggs. So humans are at risk for disease in spring from nymphs and in summer/fall from adult ticks.

It is also important to note that Lyme Disease, while significant, is only one of several illnesses transmitted by ticks, some of which are even more serious for humans. Anyone who finds an attached, not crawling, tick on themselves is advised to contact a physician.

Donald R. Weidner, MD FFAFP
 Bath

Thanks for making Blue Moon Ball a success

To the Editor,
 The Blue Moon Ball gala and auction was

recently held at the Corning Museum of Glass. Now in its 14th year, this event is the area's premier social occasion for over 370 guests from the greater Elmira-Corning area. The Blue Moon Ball is the Corning Children's Center's largest fund-raising endeavor and we are pleased to announce that we met our goal once again.

Corning Children's Center is grateful for the incredible community support we receive from area restaurants, businesses, volunteers and guests who continue to make this fundraiser such a success. All of the funds raised go right back to Corning Children's Center towards expenses like enrichment programming, staff training and financial assistance to families who otherwise would not be able to afford the cost of care — impacting children and families in our community in very positive ways. Corning Children's Center is open to the public and is proud to have been serving children and families in our community since 1980.

It truly does, 'take a village' to make Blue Moon Ball a reality every year. We are fortunate that so many of you understand and value the importance of high quality early childhood education. On behalf of the Corning's

Children's Center, thank you for helping us continue to set the standard in early care and education for nearly 150 families each year in our community. Your contributions make a very real difference.

Meghan Parson
 Development Director
 Corning Children's Center

Proud to be an American

To the Editor,
 To Ms. Elizabeth Whitehouse, who has stated in the Letters in *The Leader* (Feb. 12, 2017) that she will be running for Mayor of Corning; I suggest that she run back to England.

Over the years, I save unusual news articles. In reviewing one of my old Letters to the Editor in *The Leader* - dated July 6, 2012, Ms. Whitehouse penned the letter "Proud not to be an American." Therefore, now some five years later, in place of running for mayor of Corning, NY, USA; I strongly suggest that she give up her dual citizenship and return to where she would be proud.

Actually, although I am not wealthy and am 85 years old, I would be willing to bear to the \$2,000 plane fare back to England.

I'm sure the present

mayor and many of the council would help pay.

My parents came here to America over 100 years ago in 1900; each alone, to seek out the freedom of America. They met here and lived here, and died here.

They never went back, even to visit!

They went to church, they always voted, they always went to their children's school activities. They used to say, "America the Beautiful", which you can read on my little yellow, "tour bus."


They raised five sons, of which three served their beautiful country in WWII; one unable to pass the physical requirements, later in life he sent his son to West Point Academy to serve his country; and I being the last and youngest, served my country in the Far East in 1954-56.

And lastly, one of my sons served his country in the US Army from high school in 1980-2011.

So, Ms. Whitehouse, not only do I suggest; I recommend that you give up all ties to America the Beautiful. Go back to that mess in England, as my man, President Trump would state; but stay away from the White House.

Proud to be an American.

Anthony J. Savino
 Painted Post



The Leader Staff

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