

GUEST VIEW | HARVEY GREENBERG

Economics 101

In his April 15 opinion piece ("Fawly theories"), Mike Morrongiello made an important contribution to the debate about economic policy by not only rehashing standard conservative talking points, but taking the extra effort to conflate FDR's and Obama's economic stimulus programs with "central economic planning," a.k.a. Communism. John Maynard Keynes would certainly be amused to hear this.

Regarding the more recent case, reality does not allow one to take a data point before the stimulus, compare it to a data point after the stimulus, and conclude that the stimulus failed, succeeded, or had no effect. The only valid reference point is a hypothetical one, i.e. what would have happened in the absence of the stimulus, all other things being equal?

Quantifying this is not hard. It simply requires specialized knowledge that economists have, along with integrity that ideologues seem to lack. By that standard, the number of independent economists who believe that the stimulus failed to create jobs is equal to the number of jobs ideologues claim were created: zero.

Moreover, while conservatives preach that tax cuts create jobs without deficits and government spending creates deficits without jobs, tax cuts and spending are simply different faces of the same coin, which in macroeconomics is called fiscal policy.

This is not arcania. It's a freshman college course.

■ Harvey R. Greenberg is a Dundee resident.

ARTIST'S VIEW



POLITICS | DEAN G. SKELOS

'One-sided rhetoric'

As Senate majority leader, I am compelled to respond to a recent Op-ed from Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (GOP costs taxpayers, April 13). The Speaker's misleading and disingenuous Op-ed instantly brought to mind the words of New York's former U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who once famously remarked "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts."

Speaker Silver says that the Senate GOP cost taxpayers through our insistence on a Sept. 11 state legislative primary date. That's simply not true.

In fact, the Senate Republicans attempted to foster a bipartisan compromise that would have moved all of the state's primaries to a single day in August this year, avoiding the busy last few months of the state legislative session and saving taxpayers even more of their hard-earned money. The Speaker, and his

Democrat colleagues from New York City, refused to discuss the issue.

The Speaker's take-it-or-leave-it negotiating position is even more surprising given that the New York City Board of Elections said they would be forced to shell out untold taxpayer dollars to cover the overtime costs necessary to comply with holding just the congressional primaries in June. Further, due to the ongoing Department of Justice review of the state legislative lines, a requirement in a reapportionment year, a June legislative primary is impractical.

Last year, Senate Republicans dragged the Assembly Democrats kicking and screaming into joining us in approving \$127 million in mandate relief for local governments. However, we could have achieved much more – perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars more – if the Assembly Democrats had only been as willing to stand up for New York's

taxpayers then as they claim to be now.

And what about the \$14 billion in tax and fee increases the Speaker rammed through in 2009 and 2010, with the help of the Senate Democrats and former Gov. David Paterson, including higher motor vehicle fees, elimination of the STAR rebate checks and a 500 percent energy tax increase?

The Senate Republicans voted against every single one of those tax increases, and thanks to our leadership the last two budgets have been completed early, without any tax hikes. Shows you who is really fighting for taxpayers.

The next time a New York City Democrat like Sheldon Silver says that Republicans are costing taxpayers, it's best to get the facts and the truth, rather than accepting one-sided rhetoric.

■ Dean G. Skelos is the NYS Senate majority leader.

OTHER VIEW | L.A. TIMES

Antibiotics, animals and us

Voluntary guidelines for pharmaceutical companies will not wean the livestock industry off its addiction to antibiotics.

Yet that's what the U.S. Food and Drug Administration – which has previously taken tentative steps to curb the agricultural use of antibiotics and is under a judge's order to carry out existing laws that call for limiting the overuse of two classes of antibiotics – is proposing. Obviously, the agency wants to avoid a protracted legal battle with producers, and its authority is limited by Congress' repeated refusal to act. But this latest plan falls far short of the decisive action needed to make a difference.

Most of the antibiotics given to livestock aren't used to treat illness but to quicken the animals' growth or as a preventive measure to keep disease from sweeping through the crowded pens and cages that are common to industrial agriculture. Doctors have been growing more cautious about prescribing antibiotics for humans because overuse fosters the development of drug-resistant bacteria; last month, for example, the Infectious Diseases Society of America called for a drastic reduction in antibiotic use for sinus infections for that reason. That's good, but it is of limited use when three-fourths of the antibiotics in this country are used on livestock whose cost-conscious owners haven't shown equal concern about "superbugs."

This week, the FDA proposed guidelines not for the livestock industry but for the pharmaceutical companies that provide farms and ranches with massive amounts of common antibiotics without prescriptions. The guidelines call on drug companies not to sell the drugs without a veterinarian's prescription or for "non-medical uses." Even if pharmaceutical companies were to comply, despite the considerable loss of sales, this would address only antibiotic use for growth and would not stem the use of the drugs to prevent illness. Because the same drugs are commonly used for both, it's hard to see how this would make a sizable dent in the problem.

If the industry did cut back on antibiotic use, food prices would almost certainly rise, at least somewhat. But as long as the drugs are overused, the public is paying in other ways: More exotic antibiotics – and hospitalizations – are necessary to treat infections that once were readily cured with a bottle of pills. And over time, patients will face serious and possibly fatal illness from bacteria that have outwitted doctors' arsenals.

The FDA contends, with justification, that guidelines would work faster than a ban, which would almost certainly be greeted with multiple lawsuits – potentially one for every drug affected. But moving faster isn't necessarily moving better.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A breath of fresh air

TO THE EDITOR | It is with sincere gratitude that I recognize the tireless efforts of Fresh Air Fund volunteers in the Finger Lakes region as the country celebrates National Volunteer Week. Their commitment to helping New York City children is exemplary for all community members and truly embodies the spirit of the 2012 National Volunteer Week theme, "Celebrating People in Action."

Fresh Air volunteers work in several capacities throughout the year in 13 states from Virginia to Maine and Canada to help make The Fresh Air Fund's programs possible. Dedicated Fresh Air host families open their homes and share the everyday joys of summertime with their Fresh Air guests. Our local volunteer leaders – many of whom are also hosts – serve on our local committees, plan summer activities, publicize the program and interview prospective host families. Additionally, individuals and businesses give generously of their time and resources to make the Volunteer Host Family

Program throughout this area a great success each and every summer.

The Fresh Air Fund, an independent, not-for-profit agency, has provided free summer experiences to more than 1.7 million New York City children since 1877. For more information on how you can help to continue this wonderful tradition of volunteering, please call The Fresh Air Fund at (800) 367-0003 or visit www.freshair.org.

Jenny Morgenthau
Executive director

Want to help? Call 211

TO THE EDITOR | National Volunteer Week is upon us (week of April 15)!

While the official numbers for New Yorkers volunteering say we're 51st in the country, my work with the 2-1-1 HELPLINE Give Help initiative tells a dramatically different story.

College students working in the Susquehanna River Valley, knitters making caps for premature babies or helmet liners for our military, Little League coaches and

scouting troop leaders helping young people develop important skills, literacy volunteers contributing their time to helping those who can't read, or someone helping a neighbor get to the grocery store or a doctor's appointment – each is an example of volunteering that may not have gotten counted.

This week is not only a great time for us to recognize volunteers in our community (don't forget to pat yourselves on the back!), but it's also an opportunity to make a greater commitment to helping others. "Oh, I don't have time for that," you say. The benefits of giving help include learning new skills, exploring career possibilities, meeting people with similar interests, and, yes, feeling better about yourself.

There are lots of ways to make a difference; we've collected a lot of them at 211helpline.org, but if there's a cause you believe in or an organization you'd like to support, this is a good time to make a connection, and get involved.

Carol Wood
Director, 2-1-1 HELPLINE

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The LEADER

The Leader (ISSN #10501983)
The Leader is published daily at
34 West Pulteney Street,
Corning, New York 14830
by Liberty Group Corning Holdings, Inc.
Periodical postage paid
at Corning, New York 14830-0817.
USPS code | 0586-160
Postmaster:
Send address changes to
The Leader, West Pulteney Street,
Corning, New York 14830

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