

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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OUR VIEW

Tough choices ahead in PP

Now that the dust has settled — somewhat — on the failed vote to dissolve and merge the Village of Painted Post with the Town of Erwin, village officials are getting back to work.

Some of the projects halted or not started because of the vote are now under way or soon will be. For example, a code of ethics and village emergency plan are nearly complete. Work on the budget will begin in March.

We think that's great for residents and will help unite a community divided by controversy.

However, a major project may hinge on water sales to a gas company for Pennsylvania hydrofracking, and that's not good news.

Officials are crafting a plan on how to pay for needed upgrades to its water and sewer systems and would like to include money received from its water sales to a subsidiary of Shell Oil.

Unfortunately, a slowdown in drilling has brought the village's water sales to a halt. In fact, the village has not sent water from its loading facility in several months.

Officials are hopeful water sales will resume soon, but there is no guarantee.

That means a water and sewer project is most likely on hold unless another way is found to pay for it. With 12,000 square feet of lines to upgrade, it will be a costly undertaking.

We're willing to bet residents will not be open to paying higher taxes to get the job done. Not when you consider the fact officials touted the money from water sales as

a reason to vote against dissolution.

The money from water sales, they reminded their constituents, could bring in as much as \$4 million annually under the contract signed last August. However, the tankers are going nowhere, and there's no money coming in.

It will be interesting to see how much money from water sales will be included in the budget.

Also bad news for residents is the announcement the Town of Erwin will not help pay for the cost to run the Craig Park pool. The pool is located in the village, near West High, but the town has helped with its upkeep. But not any longer: Town officials decided to not include money the pool in their 2013 budget.

The town paid \$31,950 in 2012, a significant amount the Village of Painted Post will have to make up for the pool to open this summer.

That's very unfortunate. The pool is a popular — and affordable — summer hot spot. Families can spend the day there without breaking the bank.

It's clear village officials have their work cut out for them in crafting a budget that meets the needs of their constituents. From the sewer/water lines to the community pool, projects big and small are key to the quality of life in the Village of Painted Post.

We urge the residents who were so vocal about saving their village — and those who were in favor of dissolution — to let their trustees know what they are willing to pay for, and how much.

Your officials will need all the help they can get.

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

A magnet for jobs, manufacturing

President's Week commonly produces reflections on Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. But this time around I'd like to stay focused on the here and now — because America faces crossroads, from where I stand, that have never been more serious, or tough.

Out of everything President Obama touched on in his recent State of the Union address, what was most striking for me was one sentence alone: "Our first priority is making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing."

No need to say anymore. It's the beginning, the middle and the end of the game for the American future: Our first priority is making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing. We want our political leaders to mean what they say (and back up the words with actions), so I'm going to take this President at his word from this day forward when it comes to reviving an American commitment to manufacturing.

Here at home, people of a certain generation can readily recall the Southern Tier's manufacturing heyday, when communities all along the road from Binghamton to Hornell were paved by manufacturers. We can recall the factories and the shops where fathers and grandfathers, and mothers and grandmothers produced the goods that drove the economy and first established the diverse, strong, vital middle class communities that prospered and succeeded.

Proud communities that put us on the map.

So, for many of us, it's nothing short of heartening to consider the



TOM O'MARA

powerful possibility that maybe, just maybe we can recapture some of that successful past. Of course it's equally important to stay grounded and ask the stark, tougher question: Is it remotely possible?

I believe it is. The economic highs and lows we've endured across our region for a generation — peaks and valleys that dotted the economic landscape across America — have been especially tough over the past several years. Corning Inc. stays strong. But we face devastating losses in the closings of Sikorsky and Philips Lighting. Economic leaders at last week's 20th Annual Chemung County Economic Forum point to the promise of the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry. But it took less time for Columbus to discover the New World than it's taking the Cuomo administration to finalize any regulatory process that will determine this future.

What can be done? So much locally depends on the rebound of the national economy, of course, so we've no choice but to hope that Washington takes the right steps. The president's commitment to American manufacturing is exciting. Coupled with Congressman Tom Reed co-chairing the House Manufacturing Caucus, manufacturing has every chance of staying front and center on the national stage.

What about right here in New York state? The past two years have been positive on at least turning around the state's approach to economic development.

Unfortunately, a January 2013 report from the Tax Foundation still gives New York the dubious distinction of having the worst business tax climate in the nation.

Cuomo has repeatedly professed no truer words than these, "The state of New York has no future as the tax capital of the nation." With these words in mind, I've recently joined colleagues to urge the governor to immediately pull the plug on one proposal in his state budget: a five-year extension of an outrageous utility tax first imposed on New Yorkers in 2009. This higher utility tax was a bad move four years ago when I voted against it. It's worse today. Higher taxes like this one are tough on consumers, families and seniors, and make it increasingly difficult for New York's businesses, farmers and manufacturers to stay competitive.

It's my further contention that we need to act bolder for the upstate economy and manufacturing.

Yes, New York state manufacturing has suffered severe losses over the past decade, with upstate being hit especially hard. And yes, New York's manufacturers face taxes that are among the highest in the industrialized world. But the manufacturing sector remains strong. Economic analysts also stress that manufacturing's positioned for vital growth within the overall development of a 21st-century, high-tech economy.

How can government help? For starters I've

recently introduced legislation, which has bipartisan support in the Legislature, proposing a two-year phase-out of the state's corporate franchise tax on manufacturers. Very simply and straightforwardly: we can start with this pro-job, pro-private-sector, pro-manufacturing tax cut to make New York State a magnet for manufacturing.

In support of this action, the head of the Manufacturers Association of Central New York said, "A reduction and elimination in the corporate franchise tax for manufacturers is just the right bold, effective and necessary step needed."

Manufacturing has long been the economic engine of many upstate communities. I believe it remains our best hope for revitalization.

Unshackle Upstate's Brian Sampson says of our proposed tax cut, "If you look in nearly every town in upstate New York there is a manufacturing company that is the heart and soul of the of the community."

Yet sadly, there is likely a shuttered manufacturer in that same town. New York needs to do more to help retain our manufacturing jobs and welcome new ones. This bill will help by cutting taxes on manufacturing companies and allowing them to compete in a global economy. This is a bill that should be fast tracked and passed this session."

Well said, and we're going to try.

State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County.

COLUMN | GEORGE WILL

State of the Union: A night of nonsense

In the 12 months we have to steel ourselves for the next State of the Union spectacle, let us count the ways that this spawn of democratic Caesarism — presidency-worship — has become grotesque. It would be the most embarrassing ceremony in the nation's civic liturgy were the nation still capable of being embarrassed by its puerile faith in presidential magic.

The Constitution laconically requires only that the president "shall from time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." Nothing requires "from time to time" to be construed as "every damn year." Informing and recommending need not involve today's tawdry ritual of wishful thinking by presidents unhinged from political reality, and histrionics by their audiences. And must we be annually reminded that all presidents think that everything they want is "necessary and expedient"?

Some of the blame for this yearly night of nonsense goes to Ronald Reagan. Most, however, goes to Woodrow Wilson. Reagan, who loved entertainment, pioneered the regrettable practice of stocking the House gallery with (usually) admirable people.

Wilson, who loved himself, had, as professors often do, a theory, which caused him to reverse Thomas Jefferson's wholesome reticence.

When the Founding generation was developing customs and manners appropriate to a republic, George Washington and John Adams made the mistake of going to Congress to do their constitutional duty of informing and recommending. Jefferson, however, disliked the sound of his voice — such an aversion is a vanishingly rare presidential virtue — and considered it monarchical for the executive to lecture the legislature, the lofty instructing underlings. So he sent written thoughts to Capitol Hill, a practice good enough for subsequent presidents until Wilson in 1913 delivered his message orally, pursuant to the progressives' belief in inspirational and tutelary presidents.

It is beyond unseemly, it is anti-constitutional for senior military officers and, even worse, Supreme Court justices, to attend these political rallies where, with metronomic regularity, legislators of the president's party leap to their feet to whinny approval of every bromide and vow. Members of the other party remain theatrically stolid, thereby provoking brow-furrowing punditry about why John Boehner did not rise (to genuflect? salute?

swoon?) when Barack Obama mentioned this or that. Tuesday night, the justices, generals and admirals, looking as awkward as wallflowers at a prom, at least stayed seated.

Except for Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas and Sam Alito, who stayed away. They missed a clunker of a speech, although the tedium was not much worse than usual, and was redeemed by clarifying three things.

First, Obama's declaration that nothing in his long list of proposed spending "should" — should? — "increase our deficit by a single dime" means there should be commensurate tax increases. Second, now that he has proclaimed that government "must keep the promises we've already made," only the uneducable can still believe he will consider entitlement reforms. Third, by saying spending cuts under the sequester would be "harsh" and would "devastate" domestic programs, he made applesauce of those two words: The cuts would remove only \$85 billion from this year's almost \$3.6 trillion budget, and over a decade they would cut just \$1.2 trillion from projected spending of \$46 trillion. And spending this year would still be well above the post-1945 norm as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Although Obama is a

self-proclaimed respecter of science, he does not stoop to empiricism. Understandably. Data are unkind to his assertion that climate change is causing storms to become more severe and drought to become more prevalent. Measured by "accumulated cyclone energy," hurricane and other tropical cyclone activity is at a three-decade low, and Nature journal reports that globally "there has been little change in drought over the past 60 years."

Wilson's stroke prevented him from delivering the State of the Union orally in 1919 and 1920, but Warren Harding, not known for a strong sense of propriety, continued the deplorable practice in 1921 and 1922. Calvin Coolidge did so in 1923, four months after becoming president, but not a second time. Wilson's practice was, however, made the norm by the man who had first come to Washington as Wilson's assistant secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt.

State of the Union addresses are now integral to the apotheosis of the presidency. If government is going to be omniprovident, modern presidents are going to be omnipresent, and politics is going to be infantile.

George Will's email address is georgewill@washpost.com.

ONLY ONLINE | YOU WEIGH IN

Recent question:

Do you support a N.Y. assemblyman's proposal to prohibit kids under age 11 from playing tackle football?

- Yes, the sport is dangerous and the full effects of concussions unknown. 42%
- No, the kids don't hit hard enough to be seriously injured. 47%
- I don't know. 9%

Total votes: **217**

New question:

Is former GOP Sen. Chuck Hagel qualified to be defense secretary?

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First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.