

OTHER VIEW | POST-DISPATCH

Mars landing is a reminder of U.S. ingenuity

The first and sure-to-be-enduring image of Mars from the Curiosity rover looks like something out of a post-apocalyptic novel. Dusty, mountainous, orange-tinged and deserted.

What the Mars landing means, however, is anything but. It's not about the end of civilization as we know it. It's about a new frontier.

In a statement released Monday, President Barack Obama said words that can be uttered only once: "Tonight, on the planet Mars, the United States of America made history."

What a proud moment for our nation.

Landing the one-ton, plutonium-fueled rover in and of itself was exceptional. Now, the scientists and engineers involved in the project, including (just to bring it a little closer to home) Raymond E. Arvidson, the James S. McDonnell Distinguished Washington University professor, get to use the rover to explore.

Mr. Arvidson, who has been poking around on Mars since 2004 with the Spirit and Opportunity rovers, will use Curiosity as an instrument to learn about Martian soils. He and hundreds of others are looking for carbon-based molecules and other evidence that life may have existed on Mars, or that it could sustain life in the future.

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden has used the landing to knock back suggestions that the space agency, created with aplomb by the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, had gotten old and creaky.

John P. Holdren, the president's science adviser, summed it up this way: "If anybody has been harboring doubts about the status of U.S. leadership in space, well, there's a one-ton automobile-size piece of American ingenuity. And it's sitting on the surface of Mars right now."

If that statement doesn't kindle a spark of can-do spirit, you've spent too much time listening to the naysayers and demagogues who would have you believe that the hope, promise and spunk of the United States is dead.

All we can say to that is, "Go get 'em, rover."

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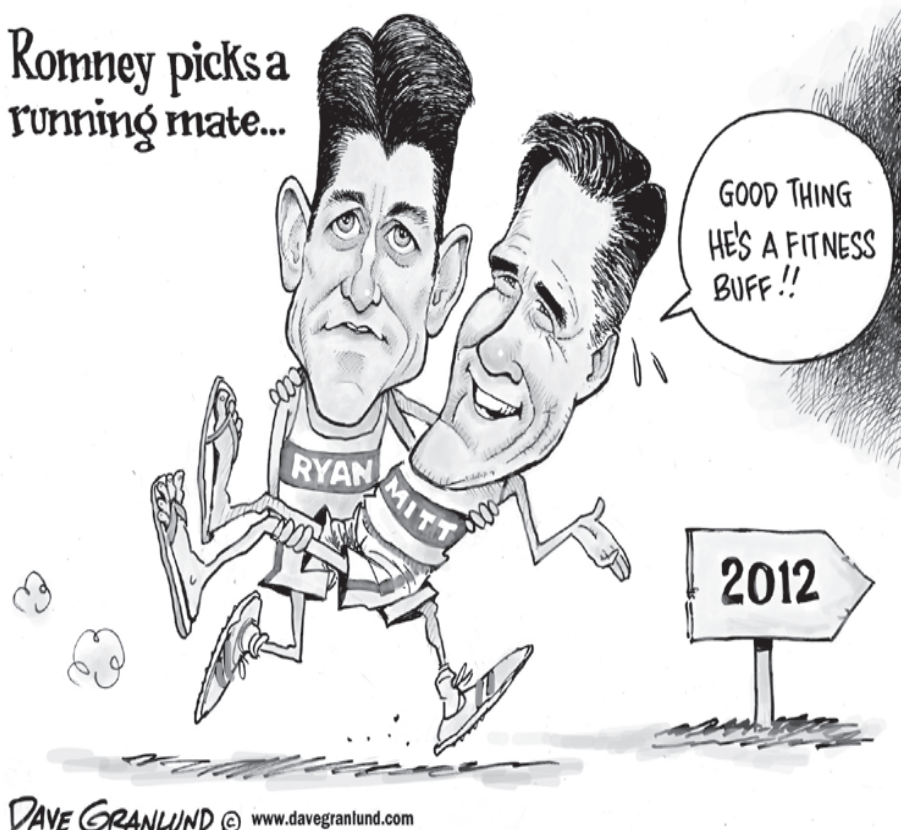
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ARTIST'S VIEW

Romney picks a running mate...



POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Combating invasive species

It's what we call "bill signing season" at the Capitol, the months following the end of the regular legislative session when a steady flow of legislation already approved by the Senate and Assembly make their way to the desk of Governor Andrew Cuomo — where the bills are either vetoed or signed into law.

The process this year, when all is said and done, will produce roughly 550 new laws, including one enacted at the end of July that I co-sponsored in the Senate to better protect the Finger Lakes and all of New York's waterways and natural habitats from the devastating environmental and economic impact of invasive species.

And there's no denying that the impact is devastating. Some estimates peg the nationwide economic impact of invasive species at \$120 billion annually in terms of environmental cleanup, eradication, destroyed crops and other agricultural losses, and diminished recreational and tourism opportunities, among other consequences. It's a staggering figure and New York State is far from immune to the threat. Invasive species like the Emerald Ash Borer and the Asian Long-Horned Beetle, for example, are devastating to New York's timber and forest products industry. Recent reports have been alarming that the invasive spiny water flea has been confirmed in Lake George. And we all recognize the threat of Hydrilla, an aggressive aquatic invader that we're currently battling in the Cayuga Inlet in Ithaca.

Invasive species threaten New York's environment and economy by out-competing native species, diminishing biological diversity and radically reshaping entire ecosystems. One of the great challenges is that many invasives are widely available in commerce for landscaping and aquaria. Many are unknowingly transported by boaters, on

fishing gear and other means and thus the overriding emphasis on public awareness and education. This year's new law seeks to address the threats associated with invasive species by providing key state agencies with the authority to regulate the sale, purchase, possession, introduction, importation and transport of invasive species and establishing penalties for those who violate such regulations.

State Environmental Conservation Commissioner Joe Martens said, "This law implements a critical recommendation of the Invasive Species Task Force and gives (the state) more authority to actively regulate invasive species and prevent their spread. Invasive species are destructive to habitat and cause millions of dollars of damage, impacting New York's economy from shipping and agriculture to outdoor recreation. Now, we will have additional tools to combat their introduction and proliferation."

In partnership with the Invasive Species Council (www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6989.html), state agencies will develop regulations dealing with the disposal and control of invasive species. As part of the new prevention process, the law calls for the consideration of grace periods for prohibited and regulated species so businesses can plan the management of existing stock. Public hearings are also required as the regulations are developed as a way to help raise enhance public awareness and education about the harmful impacts of invasive species. For more information, visit the New York State Invasive Species Clearinghouse (www.newyorkinvasivespecies.org) and the New York Invasive Species Research Institute (www.nyisri.org).

In short, the new law strengthens our first line of defense against invasive species. It represents a comprehensive and proactive strategy to enhance public aware-

ness, strengthen accountability and save taxpayer dollars. Groups supporting this move include the New York State Farm Bureau, Nature Conservancy, Environmental Advocates of New York and the New York State Association of Counties.

The recently enacted invasive species law complements initiatives in this year's state budget that are key parts of what we're looking to be a sustained, long-term strategy to combat and eradicate invasive species, including Hydrilla. This year's budget included funding to assist local efforts to stop the spread of Hydrilla, which was found last year in the Cayuga Inlet. Several of my legislative colleagues and I continue to work closely with local leaders and other state officials to urge increased support for an ongoing, aggressive eradication program, which is underway.

Stopping the spread of this destructive plant is essential to the protecting the beauty and economic potential of Cayuga Lake and other bodies of water throughout the Finger Lakes, Great Lakes and Erie Canal regions.

The undeniable fact is that the uncontrolled spread of invasive species like Hydrilla would devastate regional tourism and cost local communities hundreds of millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs. In the fight against Hydrilla, we've appreciated the hard work and leadership of local leaders and concerned citizens throughout Tompkins County and the surrounding region.

In Albany, we can only applaud and continue building on the bipartisan commitment to cooperative action between Governor Cuomo and the

Legislature for responding to the dire environmental and economic threat posed by invasive species of all kinds.

■ **Sen. Tom O'Mara is a Republican from Big Flats.**

OTHER VIEW | LOS ANGELES TIMES

Rhetoric and reality

Conservatives argue that states should take the lead on many of the challenges facing government because they are the "laboratories of democracy." But when the Obama administration proposed to give states more leeway to figure out how best to reduce their welfare rolls and get impoverished parents into jobs when opportunities are scarce, Republicans cynically accused the president of trying to gut the welfare reform law that Congress passed in 1996. They're right about one thing: President Obama doesn't have the authority to end the law's requirement that states move welfare recipients into jobs and off the dole. But the administration hasn't proposed to do that.

The bipartisan 1996 act aimed to promote the value of work, end the cycle of dependency on welfare and encourage two-parent families. To do so, it set a limit on how long families could receive federal aid - no more than five years for most families, although many states set shorter limits - and required adult beneficiaries to find jobs within two years in order to keep receiving support. States had to certify that half of the families that received aid were working, looking for work or preparing to work, but Congress gave them flexibility in how they met the law's targets.

As much as lawmakers in Washington like federalism in concept, they have trouble accepting it in practice. In 2005, Congress eliminated some of the welfare law's flexibility and imposed new paperwork burdens, prompting several states to ask Washington for relief. Last month, the Department of Health and Human Services announced that it would use the authority granted by the law to let states experiment with new, potentially more effective ways to move parents from welfare to work. Most controversially, the department said states could apply for waivers to consider "work activities" and participation measurements other than the ones specified in the law. For example, the department said, a state might propose to allow longer vocational programs to be counted as work activities.

States get no more aid when their caseloads rise, so they have a strong incentive to move welfare recipients onto private payrolls. Nevertheless, critics of the administration cried foul over the administration's plan, and GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney produced ads accusing Obama of "taking the work out of welfare."

On the contrary, the administration is trying to get the federal government off the backs of states eager to spend more of their (limited) welfare aid on programs that really do help put parents into jobs that can sustain their families. That task is hard enough, considering the cuts that California and other cash-strapped states have made to programs that help poor parents obtain child care and transportation. Yet when it comes to designing successful welfare programs, Romney and other administration critics seem to believe Congress knows best. That's principled federalism for you.

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