

OPINION

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GUEST VIEW | PAULA MOORE, PETA

Will 2013 be Year of the Vegan?

Move over, bacon-flavored chocolate. If trend trackers — who are predicting an increased interest in mock meats, vegan foods for infants and other animal-free options — are correct, 2013 just might be the year of the vegan. Even the Cooking Channel is getting in on the act. The popular cable channel recently aired the first mainstream vegan cooking show, “How to Live to 100.”

If your goals for 2013 include improving your health, reducing your carbon footprint or helping animals, then going vegan should be at the top of your resolutions list.

In a recent New York Times column, “Vegan Before 6” advocate Mark Bitman reminds us, “Nothing affects public health more than food. Gun violence kills tens of thousands of Americans a year. Heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes kill more than a million people a year — nearly half of all deaths — and diet is a root cause of many of those diseases.”

Few behaviors take such a severe toll on one's heart as consuming meat, eggs and dairy products, which are loaded with artery-clogging saturated fat and cholesterol. While eating animal products can lead to elevated cholesterol levels and heart attacks, studies have shown that a low-fat, meat-free diet can reverse the effects of heart disease in many patients. Former President Bill Clinton, who underwent coronary bypass surgery in 2004, has embraced vegan eating — and has shed more than 20 unwanted pounds on his heart-healthy, plant-based diet.

Going vegan can also help you live longer. Loma Linda University's Adventist Health Study-2, which has been following more than 96,000 participants from the U.S. and Canada for more than a decade, has found that vegetarians live, on average, 9.5 years longer than their meat-eating counterparts. Vegetarian women live 6.1 years longer.

University of Cambridge biostatistician David Spiegelhalter — who developed the concept of the “microlife,” a 30-minute unit of life expectancy, to analyze the effects of good and bad habits — puts it this way: “A lifelong habit of eating burgers for lunch is, when averaged over the lifetimes of many people, associated with a loss of



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half an hour a day in life expectancy.”

In contrast, eating five servings of fruits and vegetables will earn you an additional two hours a day.

The Adventist study also found many other benefits from going meat-free. According to the study, men who eat beef more than three times a week more than double their risk of dying of heart disease, and women who eat a lot of meat and cheese more than double their risk of developing ovarian cancer. Vegetarians and vegans tend to have lower blood pressure and a lower risk of heart disease, are less prone to developing arthritis and diabetes and weigh less. On average, the study's vegan participants have a five-point lower body mass index than do the meat-eaters. For the typical 55-year-old, that translates to about 30 pounds.

Kathy Rayner, an emergency-room nurse who is participating in the Adventist Health Study-2, explains her reasons for going vegan: “Being an emergency-room nurse has been such an eye-opener. The majority of the people I see is because of their diet. Animal products are like cement in your bowel — there's no fiber.”

Eating meat is as harmful to the Earth as it is to our health. According to a United Nations report, the meat industry contributes to land degradation, climate change, air and water pollution, water shortages and loss of biodiversity. And, of course, every vegan prevents the daily suffering and terrifying deaths of more than 100 animals every year.

It's rare for one simple lifestyle change to have such a profound effect. Now that vegan eating has gone mainstream, it's never been easier to make the switch. In 2013, why not try eating more vegan meals and seeing how you feel? You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

Paula Moore is a senior writer with the People For the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Foundation in Norfolk, Va.

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STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

Next up: A new state budget

The reaction to Governor Andrew Cuomo's recent State of the State address continues to pour in from every corner of the state, which is always the case. Remember that the State of the State has long been the opening act in the annual legislative session. It's supposed to meet certain expectations, but mostly it's one of the prime opportunities for a governor to command the stage and lay out a broad and ambitious vision.

Governor Cuomo certainly made the most of this opportunity this year.

The reaction commonly breaks into two camps.

Camp No. 1 includes all the pundits concerned with reading the political tea leaves. For centuries New York governors have always been thought of as potential presidential timber, and that's no less the case with Governor Cuomo. The substance and tone of his third State of the State was clearly intended to fuel political speculation, mend a few fences and solidify alliances through an enthusiastic bear hug of so many of today's most popular liberal touchstones — abortion, firearms and climate change, to name a few. One day-after headline in the New York Daily News summed up the intention this way, “Next stop 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue? Gov. Andrew Cuomo talks like a presidential wanna-be.”

Then there's Camp No. 2, whose adherents listen to and read the address for its detailed, specific impact on individual communities and constituencies. I'm firmly in Camp No. 2.

What this governor's political ambitions may or may not be simply doesn't



TOM O'MARA

concern me. What concerns me above all else — because it deeply concerns the communities and citizens I represent — is what this governor wants to do to help us keep our employers and the jobs they create, attract new employers and economic opportunities, and provide the tax, mandate and regulatory relief that's so desperately needed in this state.

State and local legislators like myself, as well as local leaders in business, community and economic development, education and across the spectrum, assess the governor's agenda for its impact on the communities we represent, not on the governor's political future. Ours is a nuts-and-bolts assessment of what it means in the strictest context of carrying out governmental responsibilities.

Traditionally, State of the States are chock full of gubernatorial ideas and short on specifics. The only meaningful sense of the agenda isn't clear until the presentation of the governor's proposed state budget, which Governor Cuomo is scheduled to unveil on Jan. 22.

That's where we're going to find the all-important details and truly begin to determine their effect at the grassroots level.

Until then, I'll stress a few priorities. The governor dedicated a good portion of his opening speech

to recognizing the dire straits of the upstate economy. For me, this is where it all begins and ends. From building strong families to creating thriving, vibrant communities, all that we hope to accomplish for a secure and successful future begins with and depends on a strong and sustainable 21st century economy.

It won't happen just with words, however. It demands the right policies and actions. The state of upstate New York is a weak economy that's not producing enough jobs or generating enough confidence throughout the upstate business community — and a tax burden that still makes it hard to make ends meet in New York State. In fact, the governor's speech was delivered one day after the release of a new statewide poll showing that upstate manufacturers and other business leaders are far from optimistic about the state's economic future. According to the sixth annual survey from the Siena College Research Institute and First Niagara Bank, confidence among these business leaders is at its lowest level in three years. Government regulation and taxes were cited among the top reasons for the negative outlook.

The governor pledged no new taxes in his upcoming state budget proposal. But we need tax cuts, too. And fewer regulations. And mandate relief. The governor's failure to even mention mandate relief for local governments and school districts, and local taxpayers, was striking. Yes, one landmark mandate relief action gets underway in 2013 — the state takeover of

local Medicaid cost growth, which we approved as part of the current state budget — but much more needs to be done. We may hear more in the budget. It's a crushing burden, it's unfair and we haven't done nearly enough to once and for all shake off the state's habit of shifting the burden of unfunded mandates and other costs onto the backs of local property taxpayers. The goal in 2011 wasn't to cap property taxes and walk away. The goal was a future defined by property tax cuts. For that to take place requires a true turnaround in private-sector economic growth and no more unfunded state mandates.

So the final opinion, for me, is this: we'll see. Governor Cuomo took every political opportunity the State of the State offers. Fair enough.

But my overriding concern is what are we going to do to:

■ Help upstate manufacturers and small businesses.

■ Offer job training and economic security for our workers and their families.

■ Provide relief from the crushing burdens of taxes, mandates and regulations.

■ Ensure greater fiscal responsibility.

For these answers we can only look ahead to the third Cuomo budget proposal next week. With that proposal in hand, we'll roll up our sleeves and once again get down to the critical work of governing.

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

ANOTHER VIEW



GUEST VIEW | PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Better late than never on food safety rules

The Food and Drug Administration has proposed the most sweeping changes in food-safety rules in decades. The changes being made under the Food Safety Modernization Act, which became law in 2011, are long overdue and should be implemented as soon as possible.

If adopted, the new rules would require farmers to take common-sense precautions against food contamination by making sure workers wash their hands, irrigation water is clean, and animals are kept out of fruit and vegetable fields.

Also, a food-safety plan would be required for food manufacturers as evidence that efforts are being made to keep their operations clean.

Abiding by the new rules

could cost large farms about \$30,000 a year and manufacturers up to \$475 million annually, the FDA said.

The changes also should help the FDA operate much better, taking it from an agency that reacts to food crises to a proactive operation that can prevent contamination from occurring.

Toward that end, Congress must adequately fund the agency so it can provide better oversight under the new regulations and better protect consumers from foods that make them sick. The proposed regulations come in the aftermath of a rash of recent deadly outbreaks linked to peanuts, cantaloupes, and leafy greens.

Ever year, there are an

estimated 3,000 deaths from food-borne illnesses. One in six Americans becomes ill from eating contaminated food each year, and nearly 130,000 require hospitalization, according to government estimates.

The new rules could prevent nearly two million illnesses annually, according to the FDA. But, unfortunately, that might take several years. It could take the FDA a year just to craft the new regulations. Larger farms would then have two years to comply, with small farms being given even more time. That seems too long when people's health is at stake.

The proposed regulations might be closer to implementation had not the FDA dragged its feet after

President Obama signed the food-safety act on Jan. 4, 2011. The legislation passed by Congress required the FDA to propose initial rules a year ago. But food-safety advocates were forced to sue the administration to get the proposals released.

Many food companies and farmers already practice the food-safety steps that would become mandatory. The farm rules would apply only to those fruits and vegetables that pose the greatest risk, which should appease farmers.

The FDA also needs to swiftly draft rules regulating food grown or made overseas. People should have confidence that what they eat won't make them sick.