

Grins and groans

THE ISSUE | Grins and groans from news of the week.

OUR OPINION | Groan to inconsistent partisanship. Grin to loyal opposition.

Groan

One of the reasons the public is so down on politicians is because of the inconsistency partisanship breeds.

The situation in Wisconsin is providing an excellent example.

Some conservatives are criticizing the Democratic state lawmakers who left the state rather than provide the quorum necessary for Wisconsin Republicans to strip the state's teachers union from their right to collective bargaining.

They are saying they should return and do the job they were elected to do instead obstructing the will of the people by taking advantage of a loophole in the rules.

So Democratic lawmakers are cowards for using the rules to their advantage to avoid a vote they know they would lose? That sounds an awful lot like what Republicans did for the first two years of President Barack Obama's presidency, when the Republican minority used the filibuster to prevent the president from enacting most of his agenda.

All most people want is consistency. If something is okay when your team does it, it should be okay when the other side uses the same tactic.

Grin

With a few exceptions, when it comes to Libya, most Republicans seem to be living by the adage that politics should stop at the water's edge.

Most have been supportive of President Obama's handling of that deteriorating situation.

It's not easy to sit by while a dictator and a madman kills his own people simply because they want something that we often take for granted – the right of self-determination.

Unfortunately, short of injecting ourselves into another fight in the Middle East, we have to be satisfied that sanctions are our best, and only, recourse for the time being.

For the wave of reform that is sweeping the region to be viewed as legitimate it can't have the fingerprints of the United States on it at all.

Unless things get totally out of hand, the United States has to watch events unfold from the sidelines.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Attn: Joe Dunning
THE LEADER (607) 936-4651, Ext. 362
PO BOX 1017 jdunning@the-leader.com
CORNING, NY 14830

E-mail your letter to:
jdunning@the-leader.com

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
Publisher: Dennis Bruen
ON THE FRONT PAGE
Coming clocktower by artist
Larry Barone

CIRCULATION
Elmer Kuehner | Circulation director
936-4651, Ext. 320

EDITORIAL
Joe Dunning | Managing editor
936-4651, Ext. 362
jdunning@the-leader.com

ADVERTISING
Classifieds (607) 936-4651, Ext. 651
Retail (607) 936-4651, Ext. 653
Adv fax (607) 962-0782

Kurt Bartenstein | Ad director,
936-4651, Ext. 388
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ARTIST'S VIEW



GUEST EDITORIAL | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

Broadband plan is big news

The calendar's turning to March, which at the state Capitol means the governor and the Legislature are about to get down to brass tacks on this year's budget negotiations. But before our full attention turns to Albany, I'd like to stay focused for a while longer on some recent, fabulous news right out of our own back yard.

I simply can't say enough about the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board's (STC) recent announcement of a \$12.2-million project to construct an optical fiber broadband network across Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties. It promises to dramatically expand regional access to high-speed Internet service.

Not only is it an exciting collaboration among numerous local leaders and organizations. Not only is it moving forward thanks to a \$10-million investment from Corning Inc. And not only will this new network be patterned after one in Ontario County that's recognized nationally as a model for rural broadband expansion. But maybe most significant of all, at a time when America's focus on closing the "digital divide" has never been sharper, this new project puts our region squarely on the map of noteworthy broadband development projects taking place anywhere across

the nation – which means that it will likely help put us more often on the radar of great places to do business. That's important.

It's been estimated that at least 750,000 rural New Yorkers do not have high-speed Internet access. As the issue of broadband has gained increasing attention over the past four years, The Communications Workers of America (CWA) has published an annual report, "Speed Matters" (www.speed-matters.org), examining Internet upload and download speeds in all 50 states. In 2008, New York had the fourth-fastest download speed ranking. Last year, we fell to the fifth-fastest.

The CWA has noted, however, that Internet speeds in New York "vary tremendously by region, with Upstate and Western New York considerably slower than Downstate." Overall, according to the association's latest report, 39 percent of New Yorkers have Internet speeds that are below minimum national standards.

To put it as succinctly as possible, then, this new local broadband network is a big deal. For a lot of reasons. I'm currently conducting an online survey on my website, omara.nysenate.gov, that includes a question asking whether respondents are optimistic or pessimistic about this region's future. So far, the response is a mixed bag

of optimism and uncertainty. Projects like this one can only serve to make us more optimistic.

As a state (as well as a nation), we're facing unprecedented short- and long-term challenges. But if there's one widespread agreement emerging on what the response needs to be, it's that government leaders can't dismantle the foundations of economic strength. There's an undeniable case being made – and it's echoed across every level of government – that the No. 1 key to the future is an economy that's producing good, private-sector jobs and providing long-term economic security and stability.

In the 21st century economy, this means closing the "digital divide." Providing New Yorkers with equal access to high-speed Internet is critical. High-speed Internet has become fundamental to economic and educational success. That's what makes the recent news especially exciting and promising for our region. We're demonstrating the kind of public-private creativity, innovation and commitment that can help us stand apart in a fierce, global competition for jobs and economic opportunities – especially the high-tech opportunities of this new economy.

■ **State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents the 53rd Senate District.**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Reps' attention should be here

TO THE EDITOR | Many Americans have followed with interest the public demonstrations that have taken place in Muslim countries in North Africa and in the Middle East. Many, including the U.S. president and government officials have expressed their support to those "popular" movements hoping it will bring democracy to those countries (radical Islam is a possibility; time will tell).

Americans were not as excited when in Sept. 11, 1973, the Chilean democratically elected Dr. Salvador Allende was deposed and murdered by the Chilean army bought by millions of American dollars. On that date, the terrorists were President Nixon and his gorilla Kissinger. The terrorists were acting on behalf of American companies with capital and property in Chile.

Americans ought to be concerned with absence of democracy in this

country. Many of our elected officials (congressmen and senators) are bribed by corporations before they are elected and when they seek reelection. Therefore they are corrupt and dishonest. They claim that accepting corporation money they do so legally that is according to the existing laws. However, those electoral existing laws were enacted by dishonest bribed congressmen and senators. How can a dishonest organization (the Legislative branch of the U.S. government) enact honest laws? Until the electoral process is corrected (donations by voting citizens) do not call the United States of America a democracy.

In the Foreign Affairs periodical (January/February 2011 issue), there is a review article on a book by J. Hacker and P. Pierson; the reviewer states "unemployment remains at nearly 10 percent, the highest level in almost 30 years; foreclosures have forced millions of Americans out of their home; real incomes have fallen fast ... The wealthiest Americans, among

them presumably the very titans of global finance whose misadventures brought about the financial meltdown got rich ... income of the top 5 percent of earners went up while on average everyone else's went down ... the financial rewards are increasingly concentrated among a tiny elite and whose risks are born by an increasingly exposed and unprotected middle class." Similar opinions are expressed in a recent issue of the *New York Times* by Bob Herbert. It is nauseating to read in the press the reports from our representatives (congressmen and senators). They should concentrate on decreasing unemployment numbers by returning factories to the U.S. That would decrease our national debt by billions of dollars per month. Our congressman Mr. Reed should strive to that goal as well as his boss Mr. Chicken C. Boehner. Most of America's states are bankrupt and education is catastrophically suffering.

Mario L. Lecuona
Painted Post

Some people just don't seem to get it

There's a Bath Village trustee named Bill Austin who must have lost touch with reality. He seems to think that the continuing furor in the village over a super-damaging state audit is the result of what was reported as "a malicious desire by some residents for entertainment."

Austin has a good point when he says Bath Utilities director Matt Benesh and

his assistant, Susan Daniels, did no wrong. Both have repaid any overage that came in their paychecks

and have a good explanation of why they didn't notice a clerical error.

But the audit raised many more points than just the pay of two officials of the Bath Electric, Gas, Water and Sewer System.

Residents have a right to know the answer to multiple questions involving thousands of tax dollars.

Their desire is not only not malicious but it is entirely justified by what we know.

Also on the delusional list seems to be Congressman Tom Reed.

He claims to believe that some compromise between the House and Senate will avert a governmental shutdown. He even suggests Democrats and Republicans could agree on a continuing resolution to keep the government running while the two sides argue their respective cases.

The parties are way too far apart to come to an agreement between now and March 4 and the biggest roadblock to any deal is the \$80 billion list of cuts recently ramrodded through by the House Republicans.

Democrats will never accept the meat-axe wielded by the GOP. Simply too many programs would be eliminated.

To get a deal, somebody's got to back off. Tom, would you like to start the ball rolling?

Libya's strongman Moammar Gadhafi told supporters in national TV address this week he will "fight to the last drop of blood" to save his embattled dictatorship.

Hey, Colonel, there's a lot of us in the West who hope you get your wish.

The unrest sweeping the Middle East has claimed a major sporting event. The crown prince of Bahrain last week cancelled the Bahrain Grand Prix which was to have opened the Formula One racing season.

This may be a life-saving move for the teams given the bloodshed in that tiny kingdom. But it's the first cancellation of an F-1 race in the world championship series' 60-year history.

Too bad because that was always an excellent event.

Israel is unhappy because two Iranian warships used the Suez Canal last week.

Too bad they feel threatened but when the French dug the canal a century and a half ago it was supposed to be opened to vessels of all nations.

■ **Bob Rolfe, a retired Leader reporter/editor, can be reached by writing The Leader, PO Box 1017, Corning, NY 14830 or theinsider1@aol.com. He is also periodic co-host of the "Coleman & Co." public affairs TV program which airs at 10:30 a.m. Sundays on WETM-TV and is repeated at 10 p.m. on WETM-2.**