



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of June 8, 2020 ~ 'A journey home to a better nation'

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 8, 2020

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The work ahead of us to repair and rebuild, rehabilitate and restore, and to find healing and hope, has never been more important.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column "From the Capitol..."

This week, **"A journey home to a better nation"**

George Floyd is making his final journey across America -- from Minneapolis, where he died, to North Carolina, where he was born, and finally to Houston this week, where he was raised and will be laid to rest.

May he rest in peace.

May Mr. Floyd's children and his entire family somehow begin finding peace in their own lives knowing that the legacy of their father's journey home could bring with it a better nation.

Since May 25, when George Floyd was killed by unconscionable police brutality in Minneapolis -- on a city street in broad daylight -- this tragedy has been seared into this nation's awareness and conscience.

The video is heartbreaking, appalling, and angering.

The Minneapolis police officers responsible for George Floyd's death have been criminally charged, as they should be, and the justice system must now follow its appropriate course.

Let us pray that we can come together to unite this nation in the condemnation of police abuse and brutality. There can be no place anywhere, in any of our institutions, for racial discrimination, injustice, abuse of authority, or violence.

Let us hope -- collectively as a society and in each of our individual lives -- that somehow out of this brutality, and sadness, and cold-hearted violence, that what will rise, above all else, will be a stronger resolve to seek, to better understand, and to then build on the common ground that we have to keep finding as New Yorkers, as Americans, as human beings.

We must unite, because divided we will eventually but surely fall.

Peaceful protests have been engaged across our region. In Elmira (where I marched with well over a thousand peaceful protesters), Corning, Ithaca, Penn Yan, Watkins Glen (watch my remarks **HERE**), and elsewhere, these nonviolent voices are asking us to listen, to hear, to learn, and to try to understand.

In America, there is a fundamental place and an important role for these protests. We are fortunate that these demonstrations in our local area have been peaceful and focused on unity.

There is not a place, however, for the intolerable anarchy, rioting, looting, destruction, and anti-police rhetoric and violence that have marred otherwise peaceful protests, as well as diminish the power of Mr. Floyd's death to give life to lasting change.

This is no time for opportunism – personal, political or otherwise.

The actions of the worst in our institutions do not represent the overwhelming good that has perpetuated these institutions and allowed them to carry on. Whether police, politicians, priests, teachers, or you name it – the bad acts of a few in any institution should not be allowed to overshadow the good works of the many and be used to enflame public mistrust.

This “march for a better future” must go on.

We find ourselves facing a perfect storm of public health, economic crisis and, now, civil unrest. We are trying to find our way through it and make sense of it as it's unfolding.

We cannot forget that we are in the middle of a pandemic. Public health has to remain paramount. We need to keep listening to our public health departments because we cannot risk getting set back in the COVID-19 response.

We want to keep our re-openings moving ahead steadily and safely with commonsense steps forward to get as many people as possible back to work, and to reenergize local economies and our communities. For example, if political leaders like Governor Andrew Cuomo are willing to recognize the fundamental Constitutional rights of peaceful protesters, many of whom in many of the places we see on the nightly news are not practicing social distancing, the same recognition should be extended to those hoping to return to their houses of worship, places where they are fully capable of adhering to safety guidelines and more likely to do so. In these trying times a greater connection to God is vitally important. Just imagine if we all followed the Golden Rule to “do unto others as you have them do unto you,” what a much better world this would be.

Throughout America and here at home, the past 90 days have been a difficult, as well as an emotionally and physically tiring start to this new decade.

The work ahead of us to repair and rebuild, rehabilitate and restore, and to find healing and hope, has never been more important.

At least I don't believe it has ever been more important, and I look forward to joining all of you to help see it through for the sake of our children, grandchildren, and the generations to come.

I stand with those seeking justice and unity in our community, and I also stand with our police who do excellent work day in and day out. May God bless us all with peace, strength, and perseverance in this time of great turmoil.

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