

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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OTHER VIEW | LOS ANGELES TIMES

Postal money woes remain

When the U.S. Postal Service announced in February that it would end Saturday mail delivery this summer, most Americans reacted with a mixture of wistfulness and resignation. Yes, it was sad that the mail carrier wouldn't be dropping off letters on Saturday anymore, but scaling back to five days was a necessary concession to the agency's financial problems and a reflection of changes in communication wrought by the Internet.

But not everyone saw it that way: The unions representing postal employees and their champions on Capitol Hill were especially determined to block the change, and a continuing resolution passed by Congress last month prohibited the USPS from curtailing service. On Wednesday, the Board of Governors of the Postal Service bowed to Congress' will, while warning that it will be impossible for the agency to meet its cost-reduction goals without changes in the delivery schedule.

Unless Congress is willing to approve an infusion of government funds for the service - which receives no taxpayer support for its day-to-day operations - it should back off and allow the Postal Service to introduce sensible efficiencies. By moving to five-day delivery of mail (while continuing parcel delivery six days a week), the Postal Service hoped to save \$2 billion a year. That would be a significant contribution to the service's solvency.

Before the advent of

email, eliminating one day's mail delivery would have imposed a significant hardship on American households. That wouldn't be the case today, when Americans can communicate on their telephones as well as their computers.

The advent of email and the emergence of private delivery companies have deprived the Postal Service of revenue. That fact, combined with the Postal Service's responsibilities for retiree health benefits, has already required it to make significant cutbacks. Even so, the agency lost nearly \$16 billion last year and the Board of Governors has directed management to try to reopen contract negotiations with unions.

Although critics of the elimination of Saturday mail couched their objections in terms of customer service, much of the opposition actually reflects the desire on the part of workers and their union to preserve hundreds of thousands of relatively well-paying government jobs. But the Postal Service's primary purpose isn't to serve as an employment agency; it's to provide an appropriate level of service to its millions of customers. As we have observed before, the scope and nature of that service needs to be reconsidered, perhaps radically. Rightly or wrongly, Congress has entrusted the responsibility for that reappraisal to a quasi-independent agency that is responsible for managing its own financial affairs. Unless Congress wants to start paying the bills again, it shouldn't prevent the Postal Service from trying to make ends meet.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

More liberal rhetoric on guns

To The Editor | The commentary directed toward the NRA by Chris Gill in Saturday's Leader is typical of the mainstream media's attack on those who value our second amendment rights. His attempt to vilify the NRA by comparing their sponsorship of NASCAR to the pornography industry is inane at best.

It's akin to the rhetoric of Jokin Joe Biden and the liberal left who equate violence in America to the firearm and not to the underlying causes that plague our society.

I am not a fan of NASCAR but I am a proponent and strong defender of our right to keep and bear

arms. I would also hazard a guess and bet that the majority of NASCAR fans also share those same views.

Deaths caused by drunk drivers far exceed the numbers cause by gun violence. Where is the outcry against the automobile industry? To do so is as ignorant as the views expounded by Mr. Gill. The NRA represents hundreds of thousands of Americans, sportsmen, hunters and Americans who own firearms and do so in a safe and responsible manner.

In the wake of Newtown, it's Barack Obama who hides behind the victims and their families to push a political agenda, not the NRA.

Thomas P. Greven
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POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Trail of meth keeps growing

Ashland. Elmira. Bath. Savona. Erwin. Corning. Lindley. Bradford. Southport. Tuscarora. Caton.

What's one thing these regional communities have in common?

Unfortunately, they've all been the site of a methamphetamine-related arrest or other incident over the past year. Go back a few years — or move your finger along the map into the counties west of Steuben or east of Chemung — and the trail of communities touched by meth keeps spreading.

And this just represents the meth-related activity we know about. As Yates County Sheriff Ron Spike said last June shortly after the discovery of a meth lab south of Dundee, "If we found one in Yates County, I can guarantee you there are others."

It's been said before, but it bears repeating: lately it seems like we could start a meth-bust-of-the-month club around the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. It's cause for alarm. We can't say that we weren't warned. Eight years ago the State Commission on Investigation (SIC) released a report that identified the Southern Tier as a hotbed of criminal meth activity. The 2005 report warned that meth would become an increasingly dire public health and safety threat throughout the state unless New York adopted new and tougher laws to combat the drug's proliferation. Most importantly, the report moved the Legislature and then-Governor George Pataki to act quickly to put in place New York's first



TOM O'MARA

comprehensive anti-meth law.

But less than a decade later, it seems we're wise to heed the warnings once again. Awareness remains one key. The 2006 law established a "Methamphetamine Electronic Clearinghouse" website through the state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to "serve as the primary source of public information and available education on methamphetamine" for New Yorkers. But a quick stop by that online site shows that while it may generally contain some still useful information, it hasn't been kept up to date. As far as I can tell, this state-level site has never been well promoted or attended to, and it's fallen by the wayside. That should change.

In the meantime local events like the one being held in Elmira on April 24th by the Bath-based Institute for Human Services are critical.

The Institute's upcoming Meth Lab Recognition seminar will reach out to health and human service professionals, especially those who provide home visits or work in neighborhoods in other ways, to provide information on the warning signs of a meth lab and how best to report it. Find out more at www.ih-snet.org.

Of course local law enforcement remains the front line of defense, and education. Regional law enforcement agencies, from local police departments to sheriff's offices to the State Police, continue to do outstanding work protecting our communities. Same goes for our first responders confronted with the dangerous aftermath of a meth lab discovery.

But that means we have a responsibility to make sure our laws keep pace with the goal of putting meth manufacturers and sellers out of business in New York. We shouldn't risk anything when it comes to illegal drugs and drug trafficking. Tougher laws can always be helpful in the prosecution and punishment of meth criminals while, at the same, sparking the broader public discussion that needs to be ongoing. So I continue to sponsor legislation in the Senate to significantly increase the criminal penalties for possessing, selling or manufacturing the dangerous and highly addictive drug. These actions would make it easier to prosecute meth crimes, combat clandestine meth labs and impose tougher criminal penalties on meth convicts.

Maybe most importantly, we also hope tougher anti-meth laws will act as a stronger deterrent among our young people at risk of falling prey to this cycle of addiction and tragedy. You can find out more on my Senate website, omara.nysenate.gov. Methamphetamine, according to the United States Department of Justice, is one of the

nation's greatest drug threats. A recent department report noted that the drug is at its highest levels of availability and purity — and lowest cost — since 2005. That's attributed to rising Mexican imports, but also because of increased small-scale domestic production. While most prevalent in the western and southern regions of the nation, meth can't be taken lightly anywhere.

The toll the drug takes is remarkable. The RAND Corporation estimates meth costs America between \$16 and \$48 billion per year in treatment, healthcare, and foster care services, as well as the costs of crime and lost productivity. For more information visit The Meth Project (<http://foundation.meth-project.org/>), which last month announced a collaborative effort with The Partnership at Drugfree.org on a revitalized public awareness campaign to reduce substance abuse among teens.

The addiction, violence and tragedy that are the byproducts of the rampant production and use of methamphetamine pose unacceptable risks to our neighborhoods, threaten the safety of police officers and first responders, and burden local systems of health care, criminal justice and social services.

We can't rest easy on this one.

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.

ANOTHER VIEW

Boston Marathon



The OTHER marathon



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Unfair to cut pool funding

TO THE EDITOR | I am writing regarding the swimming pool at Craig Park in Painted Post. I have lived in this village most of my life. When I was growing up, our families tried and tried every year to get a swimming pool in Hodgman Park, but the people that lived at that time on West Water Street vetoed it, because it would infringe on their privacy and would be too noisy.

Therefore, we never had a pool. The only pool in

the area at that time was Denison Park. Denison Park is quite a distance for kids to have to go that live in Painted Post or the surrounding area and most of us didn't have the means to get there.

Now we have a beautiful pool at Craig Park without walking distance if necessary, and it has to remain closed this summer because the Erwin Town Board decided not to chip in and give half the cost to run the pool for the summer season. And then, to not even discuss the financial withdrawal with the Painted Post Village Board

was wrong.

They don't seem to realize that just as many and maybe more of the kids in Erwin go to that pool every summer, so it seems to me that they should be glad to help with the cost of keeping the pool open.

The people on the Erwin Town Board should be ashamed of themselves. It would be a different story if they didn't have the money, but we all know that is not true. It sounds like sour grapes to me since they have been helping the village every year.

It seems like this all happened after the residents

voted in favor of keeping the village and not merging with the town.

Craig Park pool is in a very safe area and available to kids whether they live in Painted Post or elsewhere. I hope the Erwin Town Board rethinks what they have done, because it certainly doesn't make them look very impressive. No matter what their reasoning is, they should have gladly given help with the pool expenses without question since it is for all the kids.

Martha Tober
 Painted Post