

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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Mail: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, THE LEADER PO BOX 1017 CORNING, NY 14830
Fax: 607-936-9939
Email: sdupree@the-leader.com

Online at www.the-leader.com/opinions

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34 W. Pulteney St., Corning, NY 14830
www.the-leader.com

Stella DuPree..... Editor
Derrick Ek..... Assistant Editor

READER VIEW | RUTH S. YOUNG

My disgust runneth over

The arrogance of the letter published on 4/14 and 4/18 in two different local papers by Michael Morronegiello is exceeded only by its ignorance.

The economic and political leadership in the Southern Tier has basically undergone no change in more than a decade, but the slow rot of our economy has increased in speed. Same party, same mantra, same lack of creativity. A basic definition of insanity is to continue doing the same thing over and over expecting different results.

The economy of the region clings to the end of the fossil fuel era like the captain of the Titanic clinging to the stern of the ship instead of avoiding the iceberg. The "economic stimulus" brought to PA by fracking is already diminishing. Yet Mr. Morronegiello wants to continue selling aquifer water from N.Y. state to them at 1.3 cents per gallon. (His figures). Painted Post was trying to do business with Shell Oil and one of its subsidiaries. That is like a krill cutting a deal with a baleen whale.

Unconventional drilling is described by "Energy In Depth" EID as essential to our national security while the small corporate frackers (members of EID) are subsidiaries of the multinational conglomerates who continue to sell the remaining gas and oil from our country into the international market at inflated prices.

Shell is the second largest company in the world in terms of revenue with income of almost a half trillion dollars in 2011. Shell bought East Resources with gas holdings in PA and N.Y. for \$4.7 billion.

Shell's environmental record includes the largest fresh water spill of oil in the world (1999 in Argentina), a major spill near Alaska in 1988, and numerous spills in the Niger delta in Africa. This record did not stop Tom Corbett from taking \$300,000 for his campaign for governor of PA from them.

Retrofitting of buildings for energy efficiency creates 17 jobs for every \$million invested whereas gas drilling produces only 5 jobs for the same

investments at best. This happens while the fossil fuel industry collects depletion allowances from our tax money.

Renewable energy is becoming cheaper as fossil fuels become more difficult to retrieve and thus more expensive. The more energy efficiency built into transportation and building design, the less the number of wind and solar units needed to produce the hydrogen for the fuel cells in a non-carbon economy. We have an excellent workforce here. They need to learn about forming cooperatives and become their own leadership instead of waiting for STEG, SCOPE, and all the other acronyms to come to their rescue. How much have they helped all you workers in the past decade?

There are three major public buildings going up in the Corning area. Not one of them is in the Lead Platinum categories. These buildings are needing 100 years of sustainability far into the non-carbon era without maximum design for energy efficiency.

This shows the vision of a blind cave fish in the leadership of Corning. A number of countries that ran on the same fuel mix as the U.S. 2 decades ago have successfully decreased their fossil fuel habits. Thirteen countries are getting more than 30% of their electricity from renewables in 2011 whereas the U.S. staggers along at 13%.

Germany generates 37% from wind, 19% from hydroelectric, and 15% from solar. They are at the same latitude as Syracuse. Ask Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany how "Stalinist" she thinks this policy is. No mention of course of the costs of global warming in his rant. Check out the negative externalities associated with Superstorm Sandy or Katrina, or the midwest droughts, the wildfires, and the floods being experienced at the global level now. Cleaning up after these disasters produces jobs. Preventing them by cutting greenhouse gases would produce far more jobs with a lot less pain. Let's try it for a change.

Ruth S. Young is a Horseheads resident.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Gill 'diatribe' hypocritical

TO THE LEADER | I've read the same liberal drivel for years in the Corning (whatever you'd like to call it), but your self-ordained motor racing expert, Chris Gill, averred that the NRA was synonymous with pornography and the tragic event in Newtown, Conn.

Once again we are subjected to the boundless diatribe of gutless hypocrisy manifested in the despicable exploitation of dead

children. What an exemplary pillar of the fourth estate.

Gill's errant contempt for the NRA exemplifies his complete lack of cogent thought.

I anxiously await Gill's rebuttal; at which time I will dutifully subject him to another journalistic colostomy.

Having said that, it's obvious from whence he gleans his information.

Tim Forester
Campbell

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

What would we do without them?

It's a thought that comes to mind every time there's another natural disaster, another emergency, another act of terror like what we saw last week in Boston and in Texas: What would we do without our first responders?

Always among the most powerful images from these terrible events are the photos of firefighters carrying the wounded to safety, first responders rushing toward – not away from – danger, police officers instinctively shielding everyone else from harm.

We saw these images yet again last week in the aftermaths of the Boston Marathon bombings and the fertilizer plant explosion in central Texas. They are images of heroism and they leave us wondering: Where would we turn without these heroes in these times of need?

And so terrible events like these are times, also, to reassess our response strategies, re-evaluate our emergency services, and reflect on how we can and must do better.

So this week, at a time when Americans everywhere will observe National Volunteer Week, I'd like to take a moment to do just that – and to do it in a way that focuses on the place that our emergency



TOM O'MARA

first responders hold in our communities and throughout our society.

Because in so many quiet ways, each and every day, a police officer, an EMT, a paramedic, or a firefighter is the strongest thread holding together the fabric of our cities, towns and villages. Maybe nowhere is this more true than in rural, small town regions like ours where the volunteer fire department and the volunteer ambulance service has been the bedrock and the anchor of the community for generations. We read it virtually every week in our newspapers, another volunteer firefighter being honored for decades of service, another first responder for an act of bravery, another police officer standing tall on the community's behalf.

They are amazing stories -- big stories of courage and smaller acts of kindness -- that have earned our admiration and respect.

Which makes the fact that so many volunteer services are struggling to keep

up their ranks one of the most troubling challenges we face. In my view, our focus in government must include the long-term ability of local volunteer fire companies and ambulance services to recruit and retain volunteers.

Today, according to statistics, volunteer fire departments account for 73% of all of America's fire departments. Very simply, each one stands as a source of civic pride and community involvement. The men and women who keep these organizations going year after year are literally lifelines of community action and support.

And always in the background, anytime we consider the future of volunteer emergency services, is this: prominent organizations like the New York State Association of Towns and the Firemen's Association of New York (FASNY) point out time and again their value. For instance the Association of Towns (www.nytowns.org) issued a report several years ago that pegged the cost to local taxpayers statewide at more than \$7 billion annually to replace volunteers with paid fire and ambulance services. According to FASNY (www.fasny.com), the number of volunteer firefighters statewide has dropped from 140,000

in the early 1990s to fewer than 90,000 today. Volunteer emergency medical technicians (EMTs) declined from more than 50,000 to 35,000 during the same period, with some rural counties experiencing as much as a 50-percent depletion of their EMT ranks.

So with all of these ongoing challenges in mind, I'm proud to continue sponsoring, along with area Assemblymen Phil Palmesano and Chris Friend, what's known as the "Emergency Services Volunteer Incentive Act."

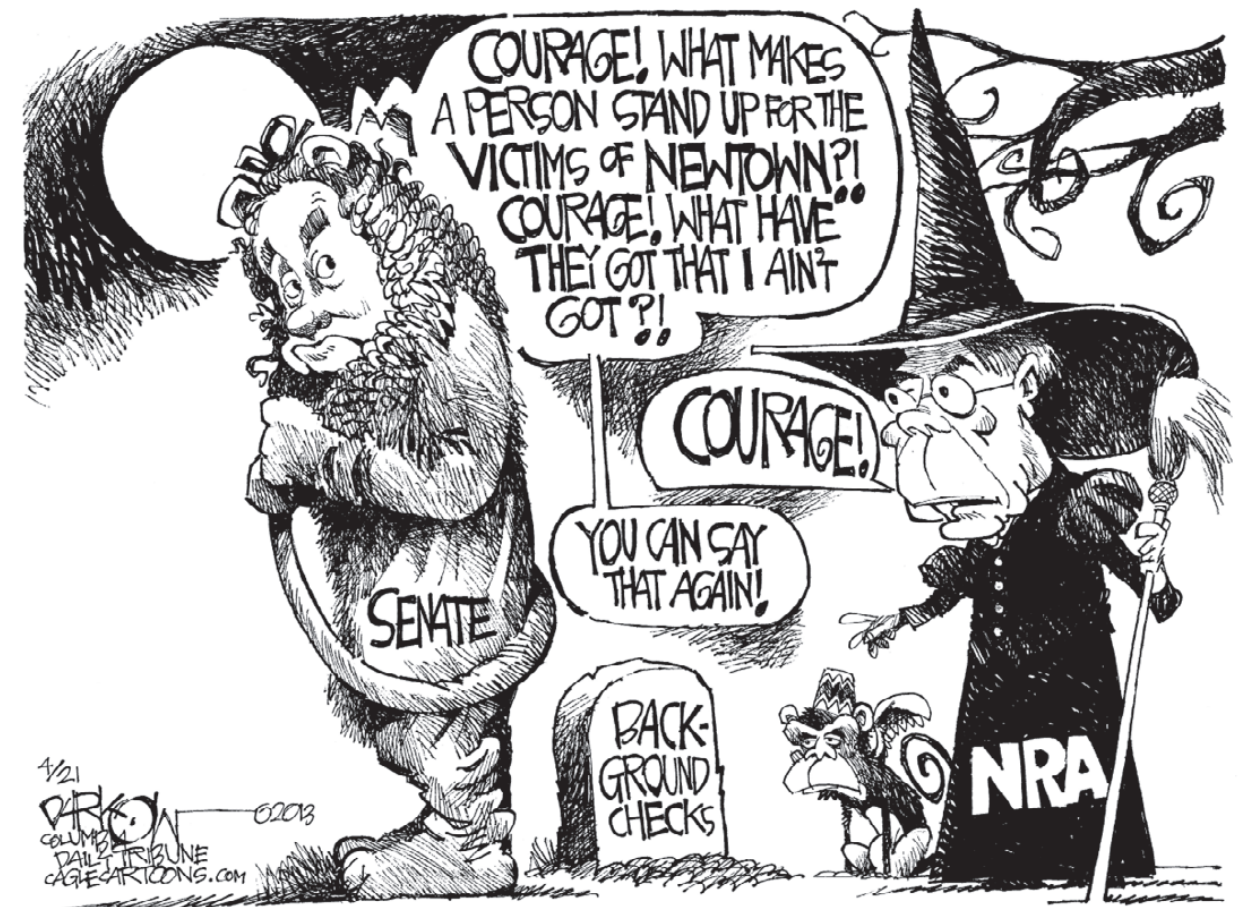
Our legislation would put in place a mix of tax relief and other incentives aimed at attracting and retaining volunteers.

Its overriding purpose is twofold. First, it serves as a starting point for an overdue discussion on how to respond.

But equally important – and especially timely given last week's tragedies in Boston and in Texas -- it keeps attention focused on the true heart of the matter: what would we do without our first responders?

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



OTHER VIEW | LA TIMES

Wrong way on human rights

Human rights groups are appropriately appalled by the breadth of a U.S. Supreme Court decision last week that would make it exceedingly difficult for some victims of human rights abuses committed in other countries to win redress in U.S. courts.

Led by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., a self-proclaimed foe of judicial activism, the court reined in the use of a 1789 law known as the Alien Tort Statute, which gives federal courts jurisdiction over "any civil action by an alien for a tort committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States." Although the statute was inspired by concerns about attacks on ambassadors and piracy on the high seas in the 18th century, its expansive

language has been used in recent years to justify lawsuits in U.S. courts by victims of torture abroad.

Among those who sought to benefit from the law were a group of Nigerian plaintiffs who argued that, in the 1990s, Royal Dutch Petroleum Co. "aided and abetted" a brutal government crackdown on opponents of oil drilling that included beatings, rapes and murders. According to the plaintiffs, who now live in the U.S., company officials provided food, money and transportation to Nigerian armed forces and let company property be used as a staging ground for attacks.

The court ruled 9 to 0 that the suit couldn't go forward, with even the more liberal justices concluding that there wasn't a sufficient connection between the United States

and either the company or the alleged abuses. That alone would have been a disappointment for human rights advocates, who want to continue to use the law to bring to justice torturers and abusers abroad. But Roberts' majority opinion went beyond that, establishing a strong "presumption against extraterritorial application" of the statute, even in cases in which the defendants have a significant connection to this country.

Quoting an earlier decision, Roberts argued that refusing to extend the law to cover conduct overseas "serves to protect against unintended clashes between our laws and those of other nations which could result in international discord." But, as Justice Stephen G. Breyer pointed out in a concurring

opinion, there are ways to minimize diplomatic friction without barring such lawsuits from U.S. courts altogether.

Joined by three other justices, Breyer offered a more flexible approach for application of the Alien Tort Statute. He suggested it should be used in cases where the violation of rights took place on U.S. soil, the defendant was a U.S. national or when "the defendant's conduct substantially and adversely affects an important American national interest, and that includes a distinct interest in preventing the United States from becoming a safe harbor for a torturer or other common enemy of mankind."

That approach would be more faithful to American values than the cramped one the majority adopted.