

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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COMMENTARY | MICHAEL KRIKORIAN

‘LOL’: Laziness or social change?

Last week I sent a text message to a friend. A Hollywood business meeting I had high hopes for had been suddenly “postponed.” “Everybody canceled except me,” I texted.

She texted back, “Haha.” What’s so funny about it, I wondered? Where’s the haha in my disappointment? My text was more sad than funny; her text steamed me. Dismissed twice.

“Haha” and its partner, “LOL,” are texting’s go-to replies, a vaguely complimentary, vaguely condescending way to acknowledge a text has been received.

I once wrote about the overuse of the superlative “amazing,” and, predictably, almost everyone I knew who read the piece told me it was an “amazing” article. Haha. Good one. LOL.

But the use of amazing is paltry compared with haha and LOL. OMG, I bet there are serious stats somewhere. Maybe the NSA could confirm it: I’d guess haha and LOL are approaching 1 billion “sends” a day, about three hahas and three LOLs for every American.

My 20-year-old friend Ida is the Barry Bonds of haha. I could break my femur and that’s what I’d get back from her. And fast. In the Texting Hall of Fame, Ida will be first ballot.

I can pretty much predict when I’ll get the response.

The single ha is employed for something that approaches humor, but more likely is a statement bordering on the ludicrous. For example, I text you, “Lets go 2 Aleppo, Syria”; you reply, “Ha.”

Less ludicrous, more humor and haha comes back. LOLs require being a bit funnier, but not much.

One time a text I sent got a hahahahaha. Two hahas, one ha. Not too shabby for a gang reporter. Someone told me a cousin of a friend of theirs once got a hahahahahahaha-haha (nine), but this guy exaggerates, so maybe he only got a hahahahaha-haha (seven) - which is

nothing to laugh at.

It might have taken Richard Pryor in his prime to get hahahahahahahaha (nine) or even a hahahahahahahaha (eight).

Still, even if Pryor got a string of hahas, it wouldn’t be as good as LOLLOL-LOLLOLLOL (five). Now, that’s very funny. That’s someone approaching hysteria. That’s someone bent over, hands on their thighs, panting heavily just to recuperate from the laughter that may have even brought them to tears.

And though technically five LOLs have about the same number of characters as “that’s very funny,” they can be typed 2.4 seconds quicker. I’m pretty sure.

And therein lounges the lure of these two text messages: Speed. Ease of thumb typing.

And then, simple laziness or maybe social desperation: The way you politely laugh at a story someone tells at a party, even though it isn’t funny, you can now haha by mobile device.

Even if a text is funny, no one is really laughing. Walk down any street and people have their heads down, staring at their phones, texting or looking at texts. None of them is laughing out loud. They aren’t even smiling. They might be typing haha or LOL, but they are not living the text, not texting the truth.

If they were, you would be able to stick your head out of any office building in America and hear uncontrolled laughter. (I don’t know about other countries. I mean, do Russians haha? I bet Russian teenagers do. “Crimea back in da house!” “Haha.”)

I’m not saying you shouldn’t haha or LOL, but maybe change it up every now and then. Maybe frame a real response.

And yeah, I’ll get a lot of texts about this. You know what they’ll say.

Michael Krikorian, a former Los Angeles Times staff writer and the author of a crime novel “Southside.”

WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O’MARA

A few jabs in a big fight for jobs



SEN. TOM O’MARA

The governors of New York and Texas — two of the largest and most competitive states in America — engaged in a little give-and-take last week that made headlines. It’s worth a closer look.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry started the dustup with a three-day visit to New York City aimed at luring (poaching?) city-based businesses to relocate to Texas.

Keep in mind that the Cuomo administration has been running television ads in Texas touting the new StartUp NY tax-free zones to try to get Texas-based businesses to set up shop in New York.

So there’s a genuine undercurrent of economic competition going on.

It’s a sincere New York versus Texas fight within a national and global economic arena where good jobs are the prize. There’s a lot of serious business at stake. But there’s politics at play too — both governors are mentioned as future presidential candidates — and whenever that’s the case, some of the lines between fact and fiction get blurred.

During an Albany radio interview, Gov. Perry offered to publicly debate Gov. Cuomo on each state’s economic strengths. He called New York’s job creation efforts “small ball.” A day later, Gov. Cuomo straightforwardly declined to debate but threw a jab of his own, “I understand if other states are jealous about what we’re doing.”

I’m more than ready to stand behind anyone fighting for New York’s economy. My personal priority will always be to win jobs for the workers of the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes. But what’s even more important is that we make sure New York is stepping into the ring in shape to win the fight. That’s the key question that comes out of last week’s Cuomo-Perry bout.

Do other states, like Texas, have anything to fear about New York State as an economic contender?

I’ll mention just a few indicators to make a larger point:

1.) There have been upticks in New York’s latest unemployment figures,

but they’re slight. In many places in fact, especially upstate, for those still struggling to find a good job or for communities and small businesses fighting to turn around their economic fortunes, the change probably goes unnoticed. As far as the manufacturing sector goes, there remain some especially troubling weaknesses.

2.) A recent survey of upstate manufacturing executives offered revealing insights. While nearly 70 percent of upstate manufacturers remain optimistic about staying in business in New York, 60 percent also believe that NY’s business climate is headed in the wrong direction, with high taxes more often than not cited as the most significant competitive obstacle (remembering that this survey was conducted shortly before the adoption of this year’s budget, which included significant reductions to corporate tax rates for NYS manufacturers).

3.) The Washington, D.C.-based Tax Foundation has been notoriously tough on New York’s business climate, ranking us dead last

for a few years running. In its most recent assessment however, following the adoption of a state budget that included critical tax cuts, the foundation was somewhat more positive. It moved NY from 25th to fourth in the nation in its corporate tax system rankings. It also took us off the bottom of the barrel for overall business tax climate and ahead of New Jersey and California — still 48th, but no longer the worst of the worst.

This last point makes the larger case. It’s an election year, so we need to be on guard in the months ahead about falling too far into the campaign-season trap of slogan over substance. So I’d say that overall in New York State there have absolutely been moves in the right direction, moves that will make a long-term difference if we keep building on them.

But we shouldn’t climb into the ring full of bravado.

Locally, since 2011, the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes economic development councils have won decisive rounds and shown working partnerships, leadership, vision and commitment that, with strong state investment, have set in motion programs, policies and projects that will produce more economic victories in the long run. There’s good news there.

But weaknesses remain. For example, again for

our region specifically, the Cuomo administration can’t keep turning its collective back on the potential economic benefits of developing the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry. The administration can’t think we’ve done enough to cut taxes or eliminate regulations. We’ve still got a long way to go on mandate relief.

When the Legislature heads back to the Capitol this week to begin the final weeks of this year’s session, there’s going to be plenty of talk about which pieces of unfinished business are most critical to the state’s future. Some legislators will advocate having taxpayers finance political campaigns. Others will renew their call to provide illegal aliens with a state-financed college education. There’ll be a big push for legalizing medical marijuana.

I hope — and I’ll be working to try to make sure — that we don’t lose sight of job No. 1, which is the need for jobs. That’s the real importance of last week’s Cuomo-Perry exchange. It should remind us that New York still has a lot to do to win that fight.

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



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Come meet with Memorial Society

With winter’s worst behind us and a welcome show of colors from spring bulbs and renewed grasses, it’s hard to dwell upon death.

However, if you are reading this, you’ve been born — without so much as a word of permission from you.

But keep in mind: if you were born, you’re surely going to die. The good news is that at the other end of life’s trail, you can play a role.

In the mid-1960s, a group grew in our midst, moved by a desire for simple, economical,

dignified and more personally determined funerals: the Memorial Society of the Greater Corning Area.

It attracted folks from all over the Southern Finger Lakes area.

We have only one annual meeting, for information exchange and encouragement for choosing options available through our fine local funeral directors.

Why not give your loved ones a break by letting them know what your wishes are?

Join us for a lively discussion of death with the Rev. Gary McCaslin on Sunday, May 4 at 2 p.m.

Note that we will

gather at the First Congregational Church at 171 Pulteney St., and don’t be surprised if there is humor involved.

Jean A. Wosinski
Corning

Thanks for supporting Eagle Scout project

My name is Nick Ben-nitt and I just completed my Eagle Scout project. I have many people that I would like to thank that helped me out. We built a wooden book shelf and installed a storage shelving unit for the Corning Public Library.

First I would like to thank Storflex for

donating the shelving unit. The librarian will be able to go through her bags of stories/props so much easier now. I would also like to thank Lowe’s for discounting the price of the materials for the bookshelf.

I would also like to thank my neighbor Greg Galligan for helping us weld the bars to the brackets.

Without the help of these organizations/people I wouldn’t have been able to complete my project.

Thank you for supporting me and the Boy Scouts of America.

Nicholas Bennitt
East Corning