

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

O'Mara video costs Gas Free Seneca credibility, respect

TO THE EDITOR | The only "thing" Tom O'Mara might have done wrong is some of the language. I certainly would not have given this underhanded sneaky person four minutes of my time in a darkened parking lot, with my wife in the car, and not knowing who this nut-case was.

I compliment Tom for first saying who he is, (Like the person didn't know? He just wanted to get Tom's name on the recording.) Then Tom starting to let the person talk at all, under those circumstances. Notice the set-up person didn't identify himself.

Knowing that this was secretly recorded and is now being so published by the anti-LPG community, makes me very upset with their tactics. While I, too, am concerned about the safety and possible effects the proposed facility could have on our area, I am disgusted that this group feels this is the way to accomplished their goals. If they didn't have something to do with it, then why are they making sure we all know about it?

You have lost my respect, Gas Free Seneca, as a group that possibly cares about our community and have become self-absorbed in your own personal agenda. You have totally lost track of realizing as Martin Luther King says, working together we can do it. I sure hope we can now.

Ted Marks,
Atwater Vineyards,
Hector

Poll finds S. Tier agrees on wind, solar benefits

TO THE EDITOR | News of the state's plans to ban fracking has elicited both cheers and jeers by the staunchest advocates on both sides of the issue. With such divided views on energy and jobs in our backyard, it's hard to believe area voters might find common ground on anything. Surprisingly, we do have consensus - and it's for renewable energy.

A recent poll released by A Renewable America found 87 percent of voters in the Southern Tier and nearby counties have a favorable view of renewable energy like wind and solar power. Across the political spectrum, including Republicans and Independents, our voters overwhelmingly agree increasing the use of renewables will create new jobs.

I believe renewables are key for energy independence and growing our local economy. Perhaps the choice between jobs and health isn't that hard - with renewable energy we can have both. There are initiatives underway, such as Solar Schuyler and Solar Tompkins, which create jobs and give us local resilient and renewable energy.

Sam Maggio,
Millport

Freedom of press in France, U.S.

TO THE EDITOR | We join the rest of the world in mourning the brave staff of the magazine Charlie Hebdo, gunned down by religious fanatics for defending freedom of the press.

Meat industry fanatics in the U.S. have devised a more subtle means of stifling freedom of the press. The states of Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, and Utah have enacted "ag-gag" laws that impose criminal penalties on investigators seeking to expose animal abuses and safety violations in factory farms.

According to an Associated Press report in recent papers, four members of an animal protection organization were charged with violating Utah's ag-gag law. They sought to document the daily transport of thousands of pigs from the infamous Circle Four factory farm in Cedar City (UT) to the Farmer John slaughterhouse in Los Angeles.

Ag-gag laws are clearly unconstitutional and are being challenged in federal courts. Assaults on press freedom need to be confronted wherever they rear their ugly heads, even when they assume the legitimacy of a state law.

Steg Carter,
Bath

Old photo brings back memories

TO THE EDITOR | The photographs on the front page of the Jan. 9 edition make the memory juices flow.

The State Street bridge brings arguments from some young folks. Those who think this mom was once the teenager who walked those bridges home on the Northside to church in Corning (First Presbyterian on the corner of First and Pine) to the movies at the Fox of Palace and even the State once in my lifetime.

We drank cherry Cokes at Pop's and Bacalles' and the Athens - where the hot dogs and Cokes after a movie or after a ball game at the stadium were the best.

To Tom Dimitroff - I am really also happy with the Sunday history lessons and the memories that come from your stories about some of the buildings. I am looking forward to your comments about Tarentelli's - maybe the railroads and the turntable up at the Baker Street yards. Northsiders complaining now about the trains could be happy to have the old yards back for trains to spend "down times".

And, I'm almost first in line to see and hear what will happen to Northside High School. I am getting nervous. Of course, I see history here too.

Ann Powers,
Campbell

HIS VIEW

Albany over-regulation keeps upstate economy a downer

It's been said that sometimes you have to look back in order to keep moving ahead.

So in continuing to look ahead to Governor Cuomo's fifth State of the State message next week, I think it's worth recalling a series of public hearings the State Senate held a little over a year ago, in late 2013, including one in Corning where leading Southern Tier manufacturers and other economic development officials delivered the following message: New York state's overtaxed, over-regulated and too expensive.

Talk all you want about a "new" New York (and I'll have more to say about that next week, especially since I suspect that not too many of us across the Southern Tier region are in that frame of mind at the moment), but the fact remains that we still can't convene a new legislative session in this state without emphasizing high taxes and upstate job losses.

And we still can't kick off a New Year in New York without a reminder that it's time to get rid of the costly red tape that keeps the upstate economy going nowhere and that keeps New York's businesses climate one of the worst in America.

Recently, the Cuomo administration touted that "more than 200 administrative and regulatory reforms have been advanced since 2011."

That's all well and good - and many of us would readily agree that positive steps have been taken, including some that have



SEN. TOM O'MARA

been extremely helpful to many of our key businesses and industries, large and small. But to proclaim that these regulatory reforms are a further indication that, in the governor's own words, "the Empire State is once again open for business," is quite a stretch.

I think the new executive director of Unshackle Upstate, Greg Biryła, was on target when he said of these 200 or so regulatory reforms since 2011, "Economic growth and development across New York State has been hampered for decades by a convoluted patchwork of rules and regulations with no common-sense purpose in today's economy ... Comprehensive regulatory reform should be a priority for Albany in 2015 and this is an important start."

In other words: Yes, we've made a start on regulatory reform. But let's not go overboard on the achievements to date.

So I'll go back to the fall of 2013, when the Senate turned a bright spotlight on state over-regulation through a series of public hearings across New York. Ten public forums were held statewide that focused on agriculture, construction, small business, tourism and other key sectors of New

York's economy as part of a comprehensive effort to address a challenge repeatedly highlighted by groups like Unshackle Upstate, the Tax Foundation and others: New York State's business climate is one of the nation's bottom feeders and over-regulation is a major reason why.

In Corning we focused on state mandates, rules and regulations that extinguish any spark for upstate manufacturing growth and job creation. We heard testimony from representatives of several prominent Southern Tier manufacturers, including Corning Incorporated, Dresser-Rand, Nucor and F.M. Howell & Company, as well as leading economic development agencies including Southern Tier Economic Growth (STEG) and the Steuben County Industrial Development Agency. Their testimony reaffirmed the absolute importance of revitalizing the manufacturing sector as the key to turning around the Upstate economy. We received straightforward input on why New York State continues to be over-regulated, overtaxed and a tough place to do business - joined by specific suggestions for turning it around.

The ideas and recommendations from the Senate hearings were included in a final report that we hoped would help set the stage for one of New York's largest-ever regulatory reform initiatives. We still hope to achieve that goal. You can find the report on my

Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov (click on the "Cutting Red Tape to Create Jobs" icon in the left-hand column of the home page).

Our original goal was to identify 1,000 regulations for revision or outright elimination. The final report points to more than 2,000 specific rules, regulations and practices that put New York's businesses, industries and manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage. Of course it's one thing to keep talking about it and quite another leap to turn the talk into action. So we need to pay attention to the politics of regulatory reform this year too, and we'll see what the governor has to say about it next week.

Let's stay focused on the most important job at hand. For me, that's turning around the economy of the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and all of Upstate New York.

Yes, governor, 200 reforms over the past four years is a start. But we should be able to accomplish 10 times as much. That's the goal we should be aiming for because the fact remains that Upstate manufacturers, small businesses, farmers and industries across the board are overburdened by far too many unnecessary state rules and regulations.

—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 | PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

In Congress, it's still party all the time

First impressions suggest the Republicans in control of Congress aren't ready to put aside partisanship and govern if it means making peace with President Obama. In a resounding rebuke of House Speaker John Boehner's past willingness to compromise with the president, 24 Republicans voted against his re-election last week.

Due to a number of absences, Boehner (R., Ohio) didn't need their votes. Still, it marked only the fourth time since 1913 that a speaker was elected without a majority of the full House.

In another signal that

Congress and the president are likely to keep fighting, House Republicans announced that their first goal would be to approve construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, which Obama promised to veto. Congress' persistence on the issue ignores gas prices, which have been plummeting even without the additional access to Canadian tar-sands oil that the pipeline would provide.

The southern leg of the pipeline was finished last year and is providing U.S. oil producers improved access to Gulf Coast refineries. Finishing the northern end of the pipeline, which Republican House members have

made a cause celebre, would help Canadian oil companies more than American ones.

But the state of politics is such that members of Congress care more about symbolic victories than common ground on issues such as rebuilding the country's deteriorating infrastructure, which would create many more jobs than building the pipeline.

Despite the unsuccessful revolt against him, or maybe because of it, Boehner stayed on message in supporting Keystone XL. The Senate, now also under Republican control for the first time since 2006, may remain the best hope for bipartisanship. It helps that the

new majority leader, Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.), says he wants to prove that Republicans can govern.

Congress welcomed 58 new House members and 13 new senators last week. It may not take long to tell whether they will become part of another "do-nothing" Congress. With Obama threatening vetoes, GOP House members are already counting override votes.

If Americans see more of the same from Congress, members of both parties can expect to pay for it at the polls. That's less likely to happen if McConnell and Boehner refuse to be pushed around by the latest wave of hardline conservatives.

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