

# Grins and groans

Microsoft. Acer. ASUS International: Major companies are going ape over Corning Inc.'s new Gorilla Glass – aptly called Gorilla Glass 2.

The company released the details last week: It is 20 percent thinner than the first-generation glass, maintains its toughness and scratch and damage resistance and will also allow for brighter displays and greater touch sensitivity, the company said.

Microsoft will begin offering it to consumers this year in its Windows-based PCs.

Gorilla Glass was introduced in 2007 and is used in more than 575 product models from 30 major brands and its demand is skyrocketing. Gorilla Glass was expected to reach \$700 million in 2011 sales, nearly triple the product's earnings in 2010. What will 2012 bring? So far, it's looking pretty good.

And what's good for Corning Inc. benefits the entire Chemung Valley.

It was a long, hard-fought battle, but the Save the Lyon Commission has the keys to the historic former school building on Liberty Street in Bath.

For 10 years, the group fought a developer's plan to raze the structure and build a store – rumored to be a pharmacy. Recently, an agreement was reached and now Save the Lyon can proceed with its plans to turn the vacant building into a community center.

We're glad the once-vibrant building will again serve the community. It has sat vacant for far too long.

The region got some bad news last week when Sikorsky confirmed more than 100 workers will be laid off at the Big Flats location. The job cuts are part of the company's restructuring to remain competitive and spur future growth, officials said.

That's no consolation to those who will lose their jobs.

Hello, winter. We knew we couldn't hold it off forever – but geez, those 50-degree days in January were nice, and not only for taking the kids to school or walking the dogs, but for keeping the heating bill low as well.

Now, those spring-like days are just a memory. The frigid temperatures that arrived last week and stayed through the weekend had us warming up the car, scraping the windows and bundling the kids up head to toe before they headed outside.

At least the minor snowstorm that blanketed the region last week allowed the kids to break out the sleds they got for Christmas.

Otherwise, this cold spell isn't fun.

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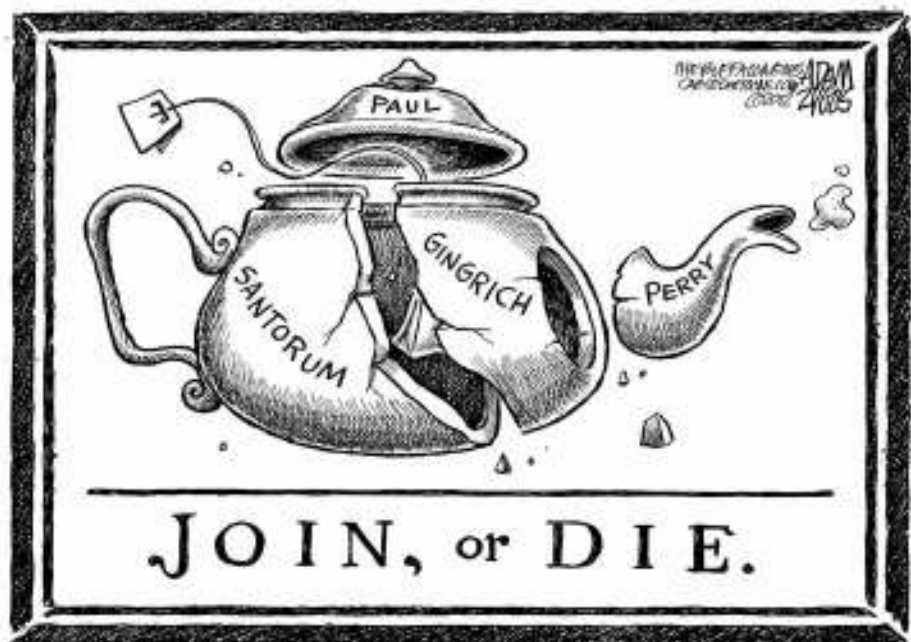
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One month	\$36.85
Three months	\$110.55
Six months	\$221.10
One year	\$397.98

## ARTIST'S VIEW



POLITICS | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

## Mandate relief

Interested in a snapshot of some of the important issues being talked about at the Capitol? One way to do that is by scanning the titles of reports being issued from the advocacy groups whose goal it is, day in and day out, year after year, legislative session following legislative session, to set the agenda for New York state government.

For example, a quick rundown of currently accessible titles includes the following:

"Reforming the way we finance Medicaid will lead to taxpayer accountability" and "State Programs Funded by County Property Taxes" from the New York State Association of Counties (www.nysac.org).

"You Can't Cap What You Can't Control" from the New York Conference of Mayors (www.nycom.org).

"The New 3 Rs: Reducing, Restructuring & Redesigning" from the New York State School Boards Association (www.nysssa.org).

That's just a short list but it's a list that serves to highlight one challenge that's going to dominate attention throughout this new legislative session: mandate relief. When Gov. Cuomo unveils his 2012-2013 proposed state budget today, a lot of local eyes will be reading to see if it includes specific actions to begin getting local governments and school districts out from under the burden of unfunded state mandates.

The Conference of Mayors once summed up the issue this way, "Local governments throughout our state are facing an imminent crisis that has been years in the making. Decades of arbitrary state

mandates have accumulated to trump local control and fiscal logic. These mandates are insatiable in their appetite for property taxes and, if left unchecked, threaten the sustainability of our local governments, communities and state. But in every crisis there is opportunity..."

Two forces are at play. There is no question that government at every level, including local government, is forced to recognize that overburdened taxpayers demand efficiency and cost effectiveness. At the same time in New York state, there's an undeniable case being made that the ability of local governments and school districts to undertake restructuring initiatives have run into a currently immovable roadblock of state mandates. While I appreciate the belief that local governments must undertake the budget tightening that last year's property tax cap imposes, it's unrealistic for the state to keep believing that local governments can find a way to do it in the face of current state mandates. Indeed, Gov. Cuomo in pushing the tax cap last year promised meaningful mandate relief would follow and that the cap would force it.

So this year, despite widespread economic and fiscal challenges, there's an opportunity to change course. We'll all be reading Gov. Cuomo's proposed budget closely for what it might contain in the area of mandate relief. But I'll also caution that in his recent State of the State message, the governor had very little to say on the topic, namely that "a government that works for the people must make

a long-term commitment to fiscal discipline, and this means enacting mandate relief ... the Joint Legislative Executive Mandate Relief Council, which will begin work this month, needs to hold public hearings to foster a robust public discussion ... then issue a package of recommendations to be voted on this legislative session."

State of the State messages traditionally serve as a general prologue of sorts for the more detailed budget documents to come. If that's the case, we shouldn't expect too much on mandate relief in Gov. Cuomo's proposed budget this week. Then again, this governor hasn't been shy about bold moves. His State of the State message called for an economic development program involving public/private partnerships totaling \$25 billion, including, for example, constructing the country's largest convention center and an energy superhighway.

So we've offered the governor the following as one truly bold move for his budget: begin a state takeover of local Medicaid costs, the largest unfunded state mandate.

It would make a world of difference for local governments and local property taxpayers, to say nothing of the message it would send that New York state is truly serious about long-term, meaningful economic and fiscal reform and responsibility, common sense and security.

That we recognize a bold move when we see it – and are willing to take it.

**■ Tom O'Mara is a Republican state senator from Big Flats.**

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Scholarship to honor educator

**TO THE EDITOR** | On Aug. 25, the Corning-Painted Post community lost an extraordinary citizen and educator when Nick Rossi lost his year-long battle with cancer. Nick was a pillar in this community and an icon in the Corning-Painted Post School District. As a teacher, counselor and school principal, he touched the lives of countless students, parents and staff before his retirement in 1998 and continuing up until his untimely death in August 2011.

Family and friends of Mr. Rossi have established the Nicholas Rossi

Memorial Fund, which will support the development and realization of the following two initiatives:

■ Dedication and naming of the Severn Elementary School auditorium after Mr. Rossi, as a lasting memorial

■ Establishment and promotion of an annual Nick Rossi Leadership Symposium, an opportunity for CPP elementary school Student Council leaders to gather, annually, for a one-day leadership conference ... something which was near and dear to Mr. Rossi's heart.

The Corning-Painted Post School District Foundation, a 501 c(3) non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization

which "is dedicated to investing in our students by providing educational and enriching opportunities not available through existing school funding" is accepting memorial contributions which will be reserved in an account to further the goals of the Nick Rossi Memorial Fund and the District Foundation.

Those interested in contributing can do so by sending a tax-free contribution to:

Corning-Painted Post School District Foundation  
165 Charles Street  
Painted Post, NY 14870  
Attention: Nicholas Rossi Memorial Fund.

**Tom Tunney**  
Hammondsport

## OTHER VIEW | MERCURY NEWS

### Have you had the end-of-life discussion?

Americans need to change the way they think about death and dying.

The United States spends about \$70 billion a year – one-third of all Medicare expenditures – on medical care for the elderly in the last months of their lives. If money for health care is going to be limited, and we know it is, then we need to think and talk about whether this is the right place to be spending so much of it

The Republican candidates for president all are promising to repeal President Barack Obama's health-care reforms, which may or may not sit well with people already benefiting from health insurance because of them. What the candidates – and the president – should be talking about instead is how to get medical costs under control so that all Americans can receive better care with the money available. Part of that has to be a serious exploration of what Americans at the end of their lives really want and need in the way of medical treatment.

And please, don't even breathe the term "death panels." No one in their right mind wants to kill grandma and grandpa, certainly not anyone running for public office. But we do need a better way to determine the right amount of testing and treatment appropriate for elderly patients.

While life expectancy of some people is not hard to gauge – late stage cancer patients, for example – doctors now lack accurate tools to predict a patient's life expectancy. But a new study published Tuesday in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* may help further that discussion. *The New York Times* reports that researchers at UC San Francisco "have identified 16 assessment scales with 'moderate' to 'very good' abilities to determine the likelihood of death within six months to five years in various older populations."

The measures are things like age, medical history and physical and mental abilities. With further research, the hope is that doctors will be better able to assess whether a certain test or treatment is appropriate to extend life or improve the quality of a patient's life in final months or years.

Obama and the Republican candidates should encourage study in this arena to help bring down medical costs as well as foster humane end of life care. They should be encouraging Americans to talk with their loved ones about how they want to spend the last months of their lives and whether they want extraordinary measures used to prolong life. When people don't write advance directives or give explicit instructions to legally responsible family members, doctors are placed in a difficult position. They feel obligated to offer tests and treatments that they may believe to be pointless. Hospitals can be forced to provide aggressive, expensive but ultimately ineffective treatment when patients could be more comfortable in hospice care.

Research already shows that elderly patients who fully engage in end-of-life discussions with their doctors and families choose less aggressive treatment.

The United States will spend nearly \$2 trillion on health care this year, a level nearly double the per-capita rate in Europe. This is 17 percent of the U.S. gross domestic produce and growing. We cannot sustain it.