

# Evolution in opinions and in the law

**THE ISSUE** | New York legalizes  
same-sex marriage.

**OUR OPINION** | As more and more Americans  
accept that we all deserve the right to wed,  
laws against gay marriage will fall.

Different states have taken different  
routes to legalizing same-sex marriage.

New York has now become the largest state to  
legalize same-sex marriage by act of the state  
Legislature. Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who pushed  
hard for the measure, signed it into law shortly  
after a state Senate vote June 24.

This civil rights victory happened because  
elected officials changed their minds amid polit-  
ical pressure and personal soul-searching. Posi-  
tions “evolved,” especially through the  
process of getting to know gay couples and com-  
ing to realize their families are as worthy of  
respect as anyone else.

One of the New York legislators who changed  
his vote put it in blunt terms: “You get to the  
point where you evolve in your life where every-  
thing isn’t black and white, good and bad, and  
you try to do the right thing.”

Across the country, public opinion has been  
evolving at a rapid pace on this issue. Polls find  
more than half of Americans now support legal-  
izing same-sex marriage.

Count President Barack Obama among those  
who says his opinion on this issue is “evolving”  
– though not yet evolved enough to say he actu-  
ally favors it. Obama has been all over the map  
on this issue, and his current position is that  
states should make their own decisions. He has  
called for the repeal of the federal Defense of  
Marriage Act, which inserted Washington into  
an issue that has always been left to the states,  
and Obama refuses to defend it in court. We’d  
like him to go further, but it’s a start.

Obama-administration sources say his attitude  
has evolved for the same reasons others have  
changed their minds: he has “very close friends  
who are married gay and lesbian couples.”

This is where the personal becomes political.  
If it affects someone you know, suddenly the  
issue isn’t ideological anymore. Indeed, those  
pushing for same-sex marriage in New York  
included prominent Republican political  
fundraisers and Republican Mayor Michael  
Bloomberg.

This sea change started with gay and lesbian  
men and women having the courage to come  
out of the closet. More and more Americans  
now know that they know people who are open-  
ly gay. More and more Americans have friends  
and relatives in same-sex marriages.

Many states have erected legal barriers to stop  
the tide, and removing them will take time. But  
nobody’s going back into the closet, and in New  
York, thousands of gay couples are preparing to  
tie the knot. Their friends and relatives may feel  
ambivalent at first, but by the first Champagne  
toast, their attitudes will have evolved.

## LETTERS POLICY

- Letters should be typed or neatly printed.
- Letters must be signed and include an address  
and phone number. No letters will be published  
unless verified with the author in person or by  
telephone.
- Letters may be edited for space considerations.
- The publication of any letter is at the discretion of  
the editor.
- All letters become the property of *The Leader* and  
cannot be returned to sender.

**Mail your letter to:** **Fax your letter to:**  
**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** Attn: Jbe Dunning  
**THE LEADER** (607) 936-9939  
**PO BOX 1017**  
**CORNING, NY 14830**

**E-mail your letter to:**

[jdunning@the-leader.com](mailto:jdunning@the-leader.com)

## The LEADER

The Leader (ISSN #10501983)  
The Leader is published daily at  
34 West Pulteney Street,  
Corning, New York 14830

by Liberty Group Corning Holdings, Inc.  
Periodical postage paid  
at Corning, New York 14830-0817.  
USPS code | 0586-160

Postmaster:

Send address changes to  
The Leader, West Pulteney Street,  
Corning, New York 14830

Publisher: Dennis Bruen

**ON THE FRONT PAGE**

Coming clocktower by artist  
Larry Barone

## CIRCULATION

Elmer Kuehner | Circulation director  
936-4651, Ext. 320

## EDITORIAL

Jbe Dunning | Managing editor  
936-4651, Ext. 362  
[jdunning@the-leader.com](mailto:jdunning@the-leader.com)

## ADVERTISING

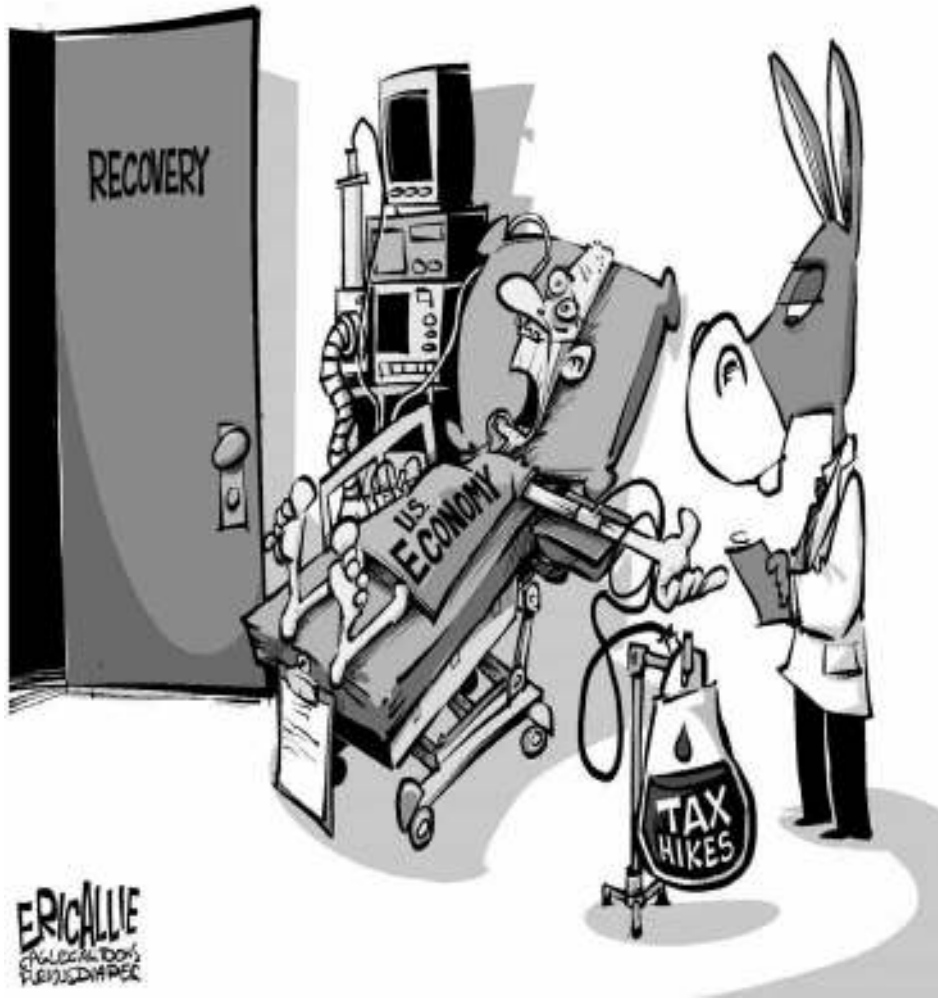
**Classifieds** (607) 936-4651, Ext. 651  
**Retail** (607) 936-4651, Ext. 653  
**Adv fax** (607) 962-0782

Kurt Bartenstein | Ad director,  
936-4651, Ext. 388  
[kbartenstein@the-leader.com](mailto:kbartenstein@the-leader.com)

## POSTAL RATES

STEBUEN COUNTY		ELSEWHERE IN USA	
One month	\$26	One month	\$33.50
Three months	\$78	Three months	\$100.50
Six months	\$156	Six months	\$201
One year	\$288	One year	\$372

## ARTIST’S VIEW



POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

## The beat goes on

The start of sum-  
mer has so far  
been a season of  
victory laps for the  
Cuomo administration.  
In the wake of a 2011  
legislative session that’s  
received many positive  
reviews, the governor  
and key members of his  
cabinet have been out  
and about across New  
York State touting this  
year’s achievements.

Fair enough, for now.  
I’ve read upbeat reviews  
of this year’s session  
from statewide advocates  
representing business  
and industry, the envi-  
ronment, and good gov-  
ernment, to name a few,  
who have welcomed this  
year’s successes from  
ethics reform to green  
jobs to property tax  
relief. To say the least,  
it’s been an uncommon  
round of applause by  
Albany standards.

But there’s just no  
denying that this year’s  
session produced action  
which, probably more  
than anything else, sets  
it apart from so many  
other sessions. What’s  
the single word that’s  
been most associated  
with Albany over the  
past decade?  
Dysfunction. That  
changed this year.

Here’s another change.  
For as long as I can  
recall, the end of the  
annual legislative session  
meant that Albany  
would be left a largely  
forgotten place in the  
public’s mind. The  
Capitol produced very

few post-session head-  
lines. Not this year. As I  
said on the floor of the  
Senate on the last night  
of the 2011 session, even  
with all we did there’s a  
long ways to go, first and  
foremost in the area of  
mandate relief. Which  
means there’s plenty for  
all of us – and I do mean  
all of us – to keep work-  
ing on. I’ll start with  
these three:

1.) Medicaid. Let’s not  
forget that one of the  
session’s significant  
actions – maybe the  
most significant – was  
the creation of a  
Medicaid Redesign Team  
(MRT) that produced the  
recommendations con-  
tained in the 2011-2012  
state budget and remains  
at work on more long-  
term reforms.

The MRT website  
(<http://governor.ny.gov/medicaidredesign>) allows  
all of us to stay updated  
on the team’s work and,  
most importantly, it pro-  
vides yet another place  
for public input. Area  
taxpayers, local leaders,  
health care professionals  
and anyone else can pro-  
vide direct input to the  
MRT. From the website’s  
home page, just click on  
the “Help Redesign  
Medicaid in New York”  
box at the top of the  
left-hand column. You  
can also review sugges-  
tions that have already  
been submitted.

2.) Mandate relief.  
Governor Cuomo has  
also established a  
Mandate Relief Redesign  
Team that remains at

work. You can stay up to  
date on this effort  
through the team’s web-  
site (<http://www.governor.ny.gov/mandaterelief>), where you can also  
share your own ideas  
and suggestions.  
Additionally, this year’s  
property tax cap legisla-  
tion puts in place a  
Mandate Relief Council  
to ensure a long-term  
commitment to this  
challenge.

3.) State spending. The  
new state budget created  
the Spending and  
Government Efficiency  
Commission, commonly  
known as the SAGE  
Commission. The SAGE  
Commission is charged  
with leading the first  
major overhaul of the  
state bureaucracy since  
the late 1920s. My

suspicion is that what  
we’re going to hear from  
this commission in the  
coming months will be  
especially eye-opening.  
Once again, the public  
can participate. The  
SAGE website ([www.governor.ny.gov/sage](http://www.governor.ny.gov/sage)) is  
aimed at collecting the  
public’s suggestions for  
improving the efficiency  
of government services.  
To provide input, click  
on the “Submit a  
Suggestion” link on the  
home page.

So maybe the best, and  
most hopeful, final few  
words on the just-con-  
cluded legislative session  
are these: stay tuned.

■ Tom O’Mara is a New  
York state senator.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Kids notice tobacco ads

**TO THE EDITOR** | The  
last time you ran into  
the convenience store  
did you notice the num-  
ber of tobacco product  
advertisements dis-  
played? If not, you’re  
like many other adults  
that overlook these  
types of advertisements.  
If your teenage son or  
daughter came with you,  
however, he/she would  
notice. Young people are  
almost twice as likely as  
adults to recall tobacco  
advertising and are  
influenced by their sug-  
gestions. By reducing  
the number of stores  
permitted to advertise  
and sell tobacco prod-  
ucts in our communi-  
ties, we can take an

important step towards  
reducing smoking rates  
among young people.

Tobacco products are  
far too easily accessible  
to youth in New York  
state. One in 5 high  
school smokers reported-  
ly purchase their ciga-  
rettes from a retail store.

Reducing the number  
of retail stores selling  
tobacco products limits  
teens’ access to this  
harmful merchandise.  
Reducing the number of  
retail tobacco outlets  
also reduces teens’ expo-  
sure to tobacco adver-  
tisements.

Tobacco retailers dis-  
play an average of 18  
tobacco ads per store.  
Since 75 percent of  
teenagers shop in con-  
venience stores at least  
once a week, it is essen-  
tial to reduce the num-

ber of stores advertising  
tobacco products.

Studies have shown  
that even brief exposures  
to tobacco advertise-  
ments influence a  
teenager’s decision to  
smoke. Tobacco adver-  
tisements appeal to the  
physiological needs of  
teenagers to be consid-  
ered popular and attrac-  
tive by their peers. They  
give teens the impression  
that tobacco products  
are socially acceptable. It  
is essential that we work  
toward reducing the  
number of retailers in  
our communities permit-  
ted to advertise and sell  
tobacco products.

**Hannah Murray**  
Steuben Rural Health Network  
at The Institute for  
Human Services Inc.

## OTHER VIEW | MERCURY NEWS

### Protecting kids from violent video games

The Supreme Court’s  
rejection of a  
California law ban-  
ning sales and rentals of vio-  
lent video games to minors  
doesn’t change anything.  
The law was never enforced.  
It remains the responsibility  
of parents to see that their  
kids don’t play the most  
offensive and disturbing  
games.

Still, the court’s 7-2 deci-  
sion is puzzling. Justice  
Antonin Scalia, writing for  
the majority, says the First  
Amendment does not allow  
restrictions on sales to pro-  
tect children. Scalia argued  
that violent content is not  
the same as obscenity,  
which isn’t protected by the  
First Amendment, and that  
children have long been  
exposed to violence in fairy  
tales and the like.

Leaving aside the obvious  
differences between “Mortal  
Kombat” and “Hansel and  
Gretel,” why is there a dis-  
tinction between sexual and  
violent obscenity? Violent  
images can be just as offen-  
sive as pornography, particu-  
larly in the vivid detail video  
games allow. Justice Stephen  
Breyer, in his dissent, focuses  
on that absurdity.

“What sense does it make  
to forbid selling to a 13-year-  
old boy a magazine with an  
image of a nude woman,  
while protecting the sale to  
that 13-year-old of an inter-  
active video game in which  
he actively, but virtually,  
binds and gags the woman,  
then tortures and kills her?  
What kind of First  
Amendment would permit  
the government to protect  
children by restricting sales  
of that extremely violent  
video game only when the  
woman – bound, gagged,  
tortured and killed – is also  
topless?” Hard to argue with  
that.

Parents aren’t defenseless,  
however. The industry’s vol-  
untary rating system,  
according to the Federal  
Trade Commission, does a  
decent job keeping games  
rated “Mature” and “Adults  
Only” from being sold to  
minors. And where it fails,  
parents still can pull out that  
time-tested technique: the  
word no.

## Contact your representatives



**U.S. Rep. Tom Reed,**  
**R-Corning**  
1037 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-3161  
Fax: (202) 226-6599



**U.S. Sen. Charles**  
**Schumer, D-N.Y.**  
322 Hart Senate Office  
Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-6542  
Fax: (202) 228-3027



**U.S. Sen. Kirsten**  
**Gillibrand, D-N.Y.**  
478 Russell  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Tel. (202) 224-4451  
Fax (202) 228-0282