

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lest we forget

TO THE EDITOR | Lest we forget that in the Korean War, when the North Korean Communist forces were in disarray retreating to the Yalu River...

Lest we forget massive waves of Communist Chinese troops came to their successful defense.

Lest we forget that tens of thousands of American soldiers were killed by Communist Chinese troops, thousands were wounded and many were missing in action.

Lest we forget that North Korea remained an oppressed country ruled by a dynasty presently represented by a grotesque eunuchoid.

Lest we forget China is still ruled by a communist gang steadily stealing American business and military secrets and dangerously increasing their military power.

If China becomes becomes a free democracy like our former enemies Japan and Germany did, friendly relations with China would be highly desirable.

Lest we forget the corporation CEOs and U.S. senators and congressmen benefit extraordinarily by outsourcing our factories to China.

Lest we forget to ask the families of the soldiers killed, wounded and MIA in the Korean War who the enemy was.

Lest we forget to explain to the soldiers' families why many are unemployed while factories are being outsourced to a non-democratic oppressive communist country.

Lest we forget to ask: Where is the conscience of the corporations' CEOs, senators and congressman?

The answer ... the newspaper might not print it.

Mario L. Lecuona, M.D.
 Erwin

NYers deserve utility help

TO THE EDITOR | I've seen reports that my electric rates are the highest in the nation.

I'm worried it's only going to get worse because of all the talk about how much money utility companies will have to spend to recover from Superstorm Sandy.

The utility companies will probably try to pass as many of those costs on to customers as they can.

This one of my biggest concerns since I spend so much of my income on my utility bill.

Legislation bill A6239/S4550 is being considered in the state Legislature to create a New York office to advocate for residential utility customers like me.

Giving New York a utility consumer advocate office that could sue over rate hikes makes sense

because I know the utility companies and big businesses send lots of experts and lawyers to make their case to regulators whenever they want a rate increase.

Most other states – and all the other big, industrial states – already have such consumer advocate offices, and they help fight off hundreds of millions of dollars in rate hikes.

The consumer advocacy office would protect consumers, and give them a seat at the table when utility companies ask for rate hikes.

The state Legislature should pass the bill and Gov. Andrew Cuomo should sign it this year, to provide consumer protection to New Yorkers.

Greg Makitra
 Bath

Residents left out on budget

TO THE EDITOR | The month of May is significant for our community, for May 1st is when our City Manager puts together the city budget.

As described in our City Charter under Article 10, the heads of the city departments report to the City Manager and advise how tax revenue should be allocated. Then the City Manager submits the budget to the City Council based on those recommendations.

Yet many feel alienated from this public process, seeing themselves as passive payers of taxes and recipients of government services. The reality is that the allocation of public budgets, especially local budgets, affects the everyday life of citizens in terms of the relationship between public spending and public services. Decisions made in the formation of budgets is one of the primary roles of democracy.

Also, the formation of a personal budget is the responsibility of private individuals because these individuals are owners of the resources being allocated. Since public budgets are the allocation of taxes paid by private individuals, the private individuals who pay taxes are the co-owners of the public services funded by those taxes.

That is why, in my campaign for mayor, I am advocating a participatory budgeting amendment to the City Charter. This amendment shall require that a form be sent to all city taxpayers that will allow them to choose where 30 percent of their tax payment will go in the city budget. This is vital not only as an expansion of democracy but an insight into the budget priorities of the community.

Darin Robbins
 Green Party candidate for mayor
 Corning

COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

'Tax-Free New York'? Sort of

The buzz around New York government over the past few weeks has been around New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and top members of his cabinet touring upstate New York touting that they're ready to go nationwide with this message: Tax-Free New York!

But maybe we should hold on before we go turning up the volume on that one.

The governor's "Tax-Free NY" initiative is obviously enticing. Who, after all, can argue against paying no taxes in New York State? It proposes to utilize the State University of New York (SUNY) system, including community colleges, to offer new businesses a place to operate tax free for 10 years -- no income tax for employees, as well as no sales, property or businesses taxes. More details and fine-tuning of the plan, which requires the Legislature's okay, are in the works. But that's the gist of it. In and around SUNY campuses, most of which are located upstate, at some private universities and in a few other chosen places, businesses will be invited to set up shop, tax free.

Here's how the governor recently described the

plan to the editorial board of the Syracuse Post-Standard, "It's big, it's bold. I think it could make a major difference."

One of the state's leading fiscal experts, E.J. McMahon of the conservative Manhattan Institute, called the Tax-Free NY plan a "promising new wrinkle." But he also stressed that "the state should go much further than this."

But for the moment let's give credit where it's due and admit that the Tax-Free NY plan is bold -- just not for all of the same reasons as many of its supporters believe it is. What I mean is that the plan may be even bolder for what it admits than for what it offers to do. That's because:

■ Tax-Free NY admits that high taxes – business, income and property -- are a problem in New York. That's good, because high broad-based taxes are New York's problem and have been for a long, long time. So we welcome the admission;

■ Tax-Free NY admits that tax cuts are the best way to attract businesses and industries, and the private-sector jobs they create. That, too, is a bold admission because tax cuts are the best answer and we've ignored it in New



TOM O'MARA

York for too long; and, finally

■ Tax-Free NY admits that upstate New York needs to be the focus. "This is directed primarily to Upstate New York," the governor said, "because that's where we have an economic problem." We sure do, governor, and thanks for acknowledging it.

And yet, Tax-Free NY is admittedly limited in the scope of its boldness. What about all of the communities where there isn't a SUNY campus nearby? What about other businesses in the neighborhood that will fall outside any tax-free zone, will still have to pay New York's high taxes and, therefore, be rendered less competitive? How do we say it's critical to carve out pockets of upstate prosperity, economic progress and job growth, but to the rest of upstate: sorry.

There are legitimate questions left unanswered for the time being.

For now, though, let's

stay focused on the underlying admissions of Tax-Free NY: New York State taxes are too high and cutting taxes is the most important thing we can do for the economy of upstate New York.

The Business Council of New York State reacted this way, "(Tax-Free NY) is an innovative approach, and illustrates that we can and should do more to make the state's overall economic climate more competitive." Translated: If tax cuts are the cure for some of what ails us, how about a healthier dose that's good for all of us.

Unshackle Upstate responded more pointedly, "(Tax-Free NY) is another step in the right direction for the Upstate economy. However, state leaders must enact additional tax relief and regulatory reforms for all businesses across the state."

My early take on Tax-Free NY goes something like this: hallelujah to the admission that New York State taxes are too high and the main reason why we can't turn our economy around, especially upstate. But let's go statewide with the broad-based tax cuts we need before going nationwide with any chorus of "we're tax free!"

ANOTHER VIEW

TEA PARTY

by
Michele Bachmann



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BIG SHOES TO FILL

OTHER VIEW | KANSAS CITY STAR

Gun makers show no remorse

The world's gun makers have a devil-may-care approach to the firearms violence that claims thousands of lives a year in America and causes billions of dollars in medical bills and other costs for unfortunate families:

Bad stuff happens, and don't expect us to do much about that.

Gun manufacturers such as Taurus, Glock, Browning, and Sturm, Ruger come by their cavalier attitude for good reasons.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, cities, states and victims of gun-related attacks had sued the makers and some dealers for negligence, saying they bear some responsibility for the firearms they made and sold that were used by criminals.

But in 2005, the GOP-controlled Congress approved and President George W. Bush signed a law that prevents gun companies from being held liable in court for crimes committed with their products.

With the National Rifle Association-backed law in place, court cases were sidetracked and testimony was locked away in boxes.

This week The New York Times reported excerpted statements from about a decade ago made by those on both sides of the firearms debate, before passage of the 2005 law.

The testimony from the gun makers is chilling, revealing officials didn't care to know how their products were used.

They didn't know, or care, that their dealers

and distributors were selling guns that might have been used in crimes. And working with law enforcement to reduce the damage caused by guns seldom crossed their minds.

Glock's chief operating officer had this response when asked whether the company had considered not selling high-capacity magazines for its guns: "Not for one-half a second, no sir."

A top Taurus executive wasn't concerned about his dealers' involvement in illegal gun activity, saying, "I don't even know what a gun trafficker is."

The lawsuits also contained testimony from those who had inside knowledge of the firearms industry.

A former NRA lawyer said gun makers weren't interested in stopping illegal

sales and "have sought to silence others within the industry who have advocated reform."

As it has with most gun-related matters, Congress got it wrong by approving a bill that shielded an entire industry from legitimate liability claims for how its products are used. Congress should revisit that law and end its unmerited protections.

The elected officials also should pass responsible and reasonable laws to help protect Americans from the mercenaries in the gun industry.

Sadly, though, Congress has given no sign that - even after the massacre of 20 children in late 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School - it's willing to stand up to the NRA or the gun manufacturers.

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