

OPINION

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The LEADER

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OUR VIEW

Not putting safety first

A proposal announced recently by the Transportation Security Administration has us scratching our heads.

Under the TSA plan scheduled to take effect April 25, airline passengers could include some knives and other items in their carry-on luggage.

Knives that fold and have blades that are 2.36 inches or less in length and are less than 1/2-inch wide would be allowed.

The "other items" would include golf clubs, hockey and lacrosse sticks, two golf clubs, novelty-size baseball bats less than 24-inches long, toy plastic bats, billiard cues and ski poles.

According to the TSA, none of the above represent any real danger. And, says a TSA spokesman, pilots and airline crew members know what to do if those items are "misused."

We're sure they can protect themselves and their passengers against a knife-wielding crazy person mid-flight. But we prefer it never become an issue, and we're not sure what the TSA was thinking when it made this decision.

It's a fact that knives of any kind and even pool cues can be used as weapons. Anyone who has seen an episode of "Walker, Texas Ranger" knows that.

While we agree a would-be terrorist is unlikely to choose a lacrosse stick as a takeover weapon, allowing these items as carry-ons is still asking for trouble.

Two tipsy passengers fighting over the arm rest can cause enough trouble on a plane. Add a knife, golf club or hockey stick and someone's getting hurt.

We're not the only ones who think the idea stinks.

Sen. Chuck Schumer and the head of Delta Airlines are demanding the TSA change its mind before April 25. Aviation insurers and the flight attendants' union aren't happy, either.

"While it's true that pilots are safe, locked behind cockpit doors, these dangerous items still pose a significant hazard to the flight crew, other passengers, and even the integrity of the plane," Schumer said.

Exactly.

We hope the pressure continues on the TSA to rethink this unwise decision.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Using guns to win male votes

TO THE EDITOR | Concerning State Sen. Tom O'Mara's extremely lengthy piece in the March 5 edition of The Leader (Safe Act unleashes upstate), it appears that O'Mara has labored long and hard over his kerosene lantern to invoke every possible reference to incite hysteria in my fellow upstaters.

First of all, dear senator, the Second Amendment allows for a "well-organized militia" and the "right of individuals to bear arms" ... etc.

When this amendment was penned, its authors were using flintlocks and muskets, not assault weapons. For years, the leadership of the NRA has purposely misconstrued that very important amendment to further the aims of its organization which, now, has evolved from hunter safety courses to the super sales of guns and magazines that have no place in hunting large animals unless you want them to be instant Mulligan stew.

As for the referenced cost to taxpayers for background checks, what about the much-higher cost of hiring many thousands of extra psychologists, mental health workers, counselors, etc., to keep the lunatics from possessing such arms? The NRA thinks the professionals can do it all.

Furthermore, I personally resent Sen. O'Mara's blatant "spin" words in

his insufferable tome that clearly only serve to incite the general public, such as "trampled," "controlling downstaters" (Gee, I thought Sen. Chuck Schumer has done a great deal for the upstate region and has visited here often), "liberal powers-that-be" etc.

O'Mara didn't miss a trick when it came to being super-divisive at attempting to split all New Yorkers. Shame on him!

If O'Mara has any courage at all, he will clip The Leader article and mail a copy to each and every parent of those beautiful little first-grade angels in Newtown and sign his name and let these grieving souls know exactly where he, the all-important New York State Sen. Tom O'Mara, Esq., really stands.

The state residents here in the Southern Tier, by his monumental essay to The Leader, laden with spin and invective, surely know what his precious "values" are. His entire purpose in writing this "essay" is to rally male voters to ensure his future elections and nothing more. It's embarrassing that a man elected to the bar of New York state has so misinterpreted the Second Amendment and worse, encourages others to do so as well.

For years, I voted for O'Mara in all of his attempts at public office. He can just discount that vote from now on.

Rosalie Niemczyk
Bath

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

'Proud to be a part of Grown in NY'

Baseball and a farmer's field were forever linked in one of the great sports movies of all time, "Field of Dreams", but otherwise these two iconic symbols of American life aren't often mentioned in the same breath. Yet baseball and farming had something in common at the Capitol last week – even more than you might think at first – with the unveiling of a new state Senate plan, "Grown in New York," which I'm proud to be co-sponsoring.

So with the beginning of spring and the start of another baseball season right around the corner, I'll turn to the game to make this larger point about effective government: "covering the bases" is as fundamental to good public policy as it is to good baseball.

Forget to cover the bases in baseball and it costs your team. Same goes for this latest case of policymaking in New York. If we forget to cover the bases for our farmers, just imagine the consequences. Grown in New York acknowledges agriculture's enormous impact on our state. On consumers. On our culture. On the economy.

A whole lot of things have fallen by the wayside across the generations, but not the importance of farming. To this very day, the success of New York's \$5.2-billion agriculture sector starts with the success of New York's 36,000 farm families. So Grown in New York tries to touch every base for farmers



TOM O'MARA

– from aging to tax relief, and from energy costs to overregulation. It comes from a pretty simple and straightforward belief: We can't risk taxing, regulating and pricing farmers out of business.

Why? Just think about all that's at stake. New York's farmers are the source of the freshest food for New York's consumers at a time of ever-increasing demand for locally grown products regionally, statewide and nationally. Farmers are the first stewards of the land. They provide thousands of livelihoods and anchor so many communities in so many ways.

Thanks to our grape growers and winemakers, one of New York's greatest success stories can be told through our wine industry, the second-largest in the nation. New York's dairy industry is America's fourth largest.

Farmers also make New York the second-largest producer of apples, cabbage and maple syrup; third in cauliflower, grapes and corn for silage; fourth in pears, snap beans and squash; fifth in tomatoes, onions and tart cherries; and sixth in pumpkins and Christmas trees.

It's an All-Star lineup,

in other words, one that we can take great pride in. There's a whole menu of good reasons for doing everything possible to keep our farmers competitive for the next generation.

As I said before, plenty has changed but agriculture has been a mainstay of our culture and economy, especially upstate. It's difficult work though – it's always been tough work – and the margins are tight. The inescapable truth is that if a farm can't be profitable, it just won't survive the long haul.

The challenges and the competition are tougher than ever.

So we cover the bases in Grown in New York. Clearly we recognize the constant reality that our farmers try to make a living under one of the most oppressive tax and regulatory burdens anywhere in America. That has to end, for agriculture and for all of our leading industries, including manufacturing. We begin putting an end to it.

But Grown in New York digs even deeper.

The plan recognizes the demographics of farming today. Nationally and in New York, the average age of a farmer is 57. Increasingly, farmers are 65 and older. To try to encourage a younger generation, we're seeking initiatives like the creation of tax-free savings accounts that could be used to purchase a farm or to help cover unexpected expenses and farming-related losses.

Grown in New York recognizes agriculture's modern-day need for diversity. We want to encourage the production of new field crops like malt and hops to accommodate the expansion of a New York State-based craft brewing industry, or so-called "fuel crops" like woody biomass to produce ethanol and biodiesel.

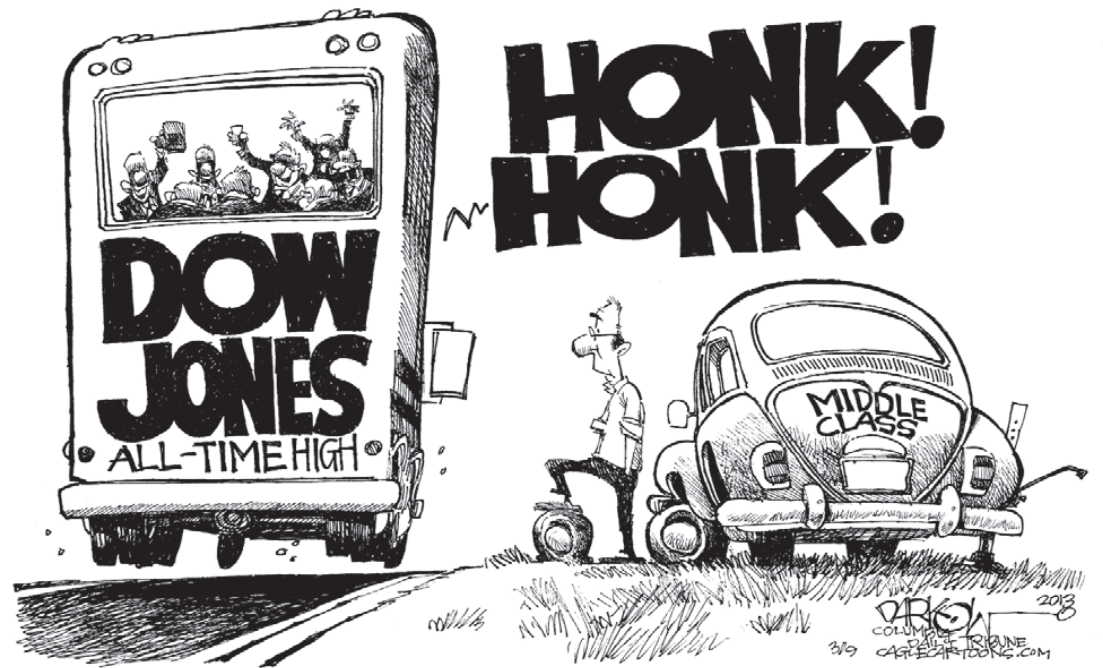
And our strategy keeps looking to the future. One key provision would accomplish estate tax reform, for example, because no New York State farmer should be forced to sell off the family farm to pay taxes.

There's a lot more to Grown in New York, and I invite you take a closer look. Just visit my website www.omara.nysenate.gov and click on the Grown in New York icon in the left-hand column of the homepage.

We may not achieve it all at once, but we're committed to the effort. It's worthwhile. We need to keep taking actions that help our farmers stay competitive. Grown in New York is the kind of bold, common-sense blueprint that it's going to take to keep our farmers in the game, and keep New York a proud and strong agricultural state for generations to come.

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



COLUMN | STELLA DUPREE

Kids these days make me feel old

Spring ahead! Sure, why not?

While many people hate to lose the hour of sleep, it really doesn't affect the DuPree household. Kendyll pretty much ignores the red numbers on the clock – if she's ready to rise, we're up! Sleeping past 7:30 on the weekends is a treat; my days of lounging in bed until noon are long gone.

Lucky for my Sissy, I feel as if I've wasted the day if I've accomplished nothing by 9 a.m.

I've become an early-riser. I hate to admit that, because I used to view getting up early as something only old folks willingly did. Now, I'm doing it.

Because I'm old. Or at least, that's how I feel, nowadays.

Sigh. Soon I'll be meeting other early-risers at

Wegmans for 6 a.m. coffee and gossip, then joining the mall-walkers by 8 a.m. and taking my mid-morning nap at 10 a.m.

But that's okay, I guess. I like coffee and with a little practice, will be able to keep pace with the others. And naps are good at any time of the day.

Spring ahead. Fall back. We can mess with time all we want, but it still catches us in the end.

I'm not so old, though, that I don't appreciate some of the music my 10-year-old plays on his iPod. Much to Kelly's chagrin, his mom's favorite song currently is "Thrifty Shop" by Macklemore & Ryan Lewis.

I know you've heard it: It's the "I'm gonna pop some tags, got \$20 in my pocket" song. It's catchy and fun. I may be old, but

I'm not ready for "easy listening".

And there's nothing like embarrassing your kid by singing loudly in front of his lax bros. You should try it some time, it's a real hoot.

Is saying "it's a real hoot" another sign that I'm old?

I guess it is. It's not something kids say these days.

Of course, my children play as much of a role as time does in turning my hair gray.

The day I realized Patrick was taller than I ... when he got his driver's license ... received his acceptance letter from Alfred University.

All made me feel old.

The day Kelly scored his first lacrosse goal ... showed me how to do his math homework (stupid fractions!) ... joined chorus

to meet girls.

Old.

And then there's Kendyll, whom last week I registered for kindergarten.

Where did the time go? I don't know. Or maybe I did and forgot. We old folks do forget, once in a while.

All I know is my baby girl is now my little girl, who likes Barbie and clothes and has a crush on Peter Parker. She talks to him all the time on her toy cell phone, while she's doing her hair and makeup.

Old. Yep, that's me.

And speaking of kids ... Shouldn't they be in school? I wish they'd get off my @#%\$! lawn!

It's time for my nap.

Stella DuPree is managing editor of The Leader. She can be reached at sdupree@the-leader.com.