

OTHER VIEW | SEATTLE TIMES

Frustrations filling streets around globe

Roiling political frustrations are making headlines in parts of the world that prized and enforced civil order above all else. The tenacity of the response to despots and authoritarian regimes is extraordinary.

In Syria, the United Nations estimates more than 7,500 have been killed since the resistance to President Bashar Assad began in spring of 2011. His father slaughtered thousands to hold power over decades.

China is reported to be sending an envoy to Syria. The same news cycle reports that China will, for the third year in a row, spend more on internal security than on the military. Worries about social turmoil anticipate reaction to the closed-loop rotation of Communist Party leadership this fall.

Vladimir Putin was plugged into another six-year term as Russia's president, and legions of angry protesters are unimpressed, especially with the thin veneer of democratic process that surrounds the election.

Nations whose confronting entrenched powers can have consequences for employment, education or survival are watching their streets fill with determined protesters. Bold, direct challenges that defy history.

Young people in Greece, Spain and Ireland discovered their futures were pawned for short-term economic gain and partisan political advantage.

Here in the U.S. presidential campaign, the capacities of the Democratic incumbent and his Republican challengers to react to this changing global environment need to be explored. Beyond bluster on Iran, GOP candidates act as if they have ceded foreign-policy expertise to President Obama. They need to articulate their concerns, visions and abilities.

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ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Women of Distinction

Spring's in the air, as they say, with reminders of it everywhere.

We've turned the clocks ahead and welcome these longer hours of daylight. It's time to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, the official first day of spring's just around the corner, and the sports pages are filled with reports on a new season of baseball and the NCAA's "March Madness."

And let's not forget, for the past 15 years, that it's also the time when the New York State Senate turns our attention to the national observance of Women's History Month in March with what's become a highly anticipated program at the Capitol known as "Women of Distinction."

It starts with the announcement I recently made that the nominating process is under way once again across my 53rd District, and in senate districts across New York, to identify local women making outstanding contributions to their communities. My Senate colleagues and I seek to select one new "Woman of Distinction" honoree from each of our respective districts who's then honored at an awards ceremony in Albany in May.

Last year, my first year in the Senate, Carol Berry of Hornell, a long-time regional library professional and currently

director of the Dormann Library in Bath, was chosen as my inaugural inductee.

It's a simple idea that's generated a strong response here at home and statewide since 1997. We all know someone who makes an enormous difference to the community at large and whether she's a service provider, a teacher going above and beyond the call of duty, a businesswoman, or simply a community resident known for her good deeds, the Senate's "Women of Distinction" tribute offers an opportunity to give an outstanding local citizen a statewide round of applause.

The deadline for submitting a nomination this year is Friday, April 6. Anyone interested can find out more about the program and obtain a nomination form through my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov, or by contacting any of my offices in Bath (607-776-3201), Elmira (607-735-9671), or Albany (518-455-2091).

In addition to the local nominating process, the Senate also unveils an exhibit in the Legislative Office Building paying tribute to "Women of Distinction" from throughout New York's history. The opening of this year's exhibit is scheduled for March 19. This historical exhibit features notable New York

women, past and present, including Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Eleanor Roosevelt and, since 2007, the career and life of astronaut and Elmira native Eileen M. Collins.

For the first time this year, the exhibit will also include, as a result of a nomination I received last year, a tribute to Susan E. Hall, who was raised in the Tompkins County town of Ulysses and is recognized as one of the first women from New York State to be accepted as a nurse in the Civil War. She served in field hospitals on numerous Civil War battlefields, including Bull Run and Gettysburg. You can visit omara.nysenate.gov on March 19th for an online look at this year's historical exhibit and Susan E. Hall's place in it. It's fantastic local history.

In short, the Senate's historical "Women of Distinction" exhibit is our version of a New York State Women's Hall of Fame. It's a great way to help remind all New Yorkers that March is Women's History Month and to help ensure that the women honored here will endure in this way for the benefit, the education, and the memory of future generations of New Yorkers.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just do the right thing

TO THE EDITOR | I am not writing this letter as a veteran, although I am a combat veteran; I am writing it as a citizen of the United States of America. I praise Anthony Savino for bringing this issue to light. What appalls me is the defensive posture of the Village of Painted Post. Their contention is that this issue is taking the focus off of the "off the meetings" according to Village Trustee Ralph Foster. And as William Smith states, "I think (making it an issue) is petty. I think it's absurd, and with all the issues that face this country today, to be dividing people over questions like this is mean and ridiculous." What we are losing in this country, Mr. Smith, and Trustee Foster, is a sense of pride, and a sense of belonging to

something that is bigger than ourselves. Your civic duty is to build a community, and paying respect to a symbol that binds us all as Americans supports that duty. So instead of wasting time and quibbling over such a "petty" issue, why don't you just do the right thing, and show just a tad of respect to the Flag. Is it that hard? Really?

Aaron J. Gorges
Caton

Help county workers

TO THE EDITOR | As an employee of the Steuben County Health Care Facility, I am asking you to hear my plea. In a matter of months, four departments within the facility will be outsourced. Our employees have anywhere from 32 years of County employment to 1 year, but whether you're a 32-year

County employee or a 1-year County employee, we care about our jobs and our residents. We are committed to caring! We have always taken pride in our jobs and the dedication we have to our residents, as well as the building itself. The Steuben County Health Care Facility is the diamond in the Nursing Home industry of the County. Many residents of Steuben County and their families have chosen to spend their final days at SCHCF because they know our reputation! On behalf of our employees, I am asking you to commit to caring by calling or writing your Legislators and County Administrator at the local level and your Senators and Congressmen at the state level asking them to not only save our jobs but our residents' home. Thank you very much!

Dawn M. Patton
Arkport

Negotiated proposal stands a far better chance

Thanks to a judge the New York State Legislature now has a model from which to work when it starts the job of congressional redistricting.

U.S. Magistrate Roanne Mann unveiled a proposal last week which would put our area into one of the largest districts in the whole

state. It would run from the western end of the state near Erie, Pa. to the eastern tip of Tioga County with a jog protruding north into central New York.

Her plan would eliminate the current 22nd Congressional District represented by retiring Democrat Maurice Hinchey.

She would also axe the 9th District in Queens and Brooklyn. That section is represented by Republican Bob Turner who won the seat last year following the resignation of the disgraced Anthony Weiner.

This plan sets up a number of contests by placing two incumbents in the same district. For example, Democrat Kathleen Hochul of Amherst could wind up facing another Democrat, Brian Higgins of Buffalo.

Democratic Rep. Gary Ackerman, who represents a district based in Queens but also including parts of Long Island, would be thrown in with another Democrat, Rep. Steve Israel.

It is doubtful that Mann's proposal will ever be enacted but Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said it provides a template for an eventual deal between Assembly Democrats and Senate Republicans.

If those two disparate political bodies could come to an agreement, it would eliminate the possibility of a system dictated by a court.

A negotiated proposal stands a far better chance of public acceptance. Now let's see if the boys in Albany can do it.

Now Chemung County Executive Tom Santulli wants his County Legislature to hold off on making any decisions regarding the future of Elmira's First Arena pending results of a special investigation.

He wants to hire a consultant to look into the management and operation of the facility since it opened 12 years ago under the management of the Afr family.

Under the current deal, the Afrs are responsible for paying the taxes and the upkeep of the facility which is owned by a local entity called Southern Tier Economic Development.

Santulli is questioning what has happened under the Afr deal and suggesting that a number of conditions arose which were forbidden by the contract.

The Afrs borrowed \$7.25 million to finance the building and the rest of the \$15.5 million project came from city, county and state grants.

The Legislature will discuss his proposal at a meeting set for 7 p.m. today.

Public comment will be heard during that session.

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