

GUEST VIEW | REEGAN KEELER

Early detection critical

For those of you who have seen the Sharon and Ozzy Osbourne T.V. commercial, but can't quite understand what they are saying, the message they are trying to convey is that March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month. Here are just a few facts for you to chew on regarding this cancer that affects the last stage of your digestive system:

1. Colon cancer is the third most diagnosed cancer among men and women. However, it moves up to number two of deaths caused by cancer which is most likely because of fact number two
2. Colon cancer has very few recognizable symptoms until it is in an advanced stage which makes treatment more difficult
3. While the number of colon cancer cases is declining in people 50 yrs of age or older, the incidence rate is increasing in younger adults
4. Colorectal cancer runs in families so it is important for you to know your family history, which includes, but is not limited to, breast and ovarian cancers, Crohn's Disease and colitis, just to name a few.

These facts and others can be found on the American Cancer Society's website. Early detection is key to fighting this disease, so please do yourself and your family a huge favor and schedule a colonoscopy today. Yes, the preparation for this procedure is unpleasant, at best, but it sure beats the alternative which is weeks of uncertainty followed by chemo and radiation therapy with some surgery thrown in for good measure. The recommended age to start is 50, and the frequency is about every five years.

■ Reagan Keeler is from Corning.

Online polls: You weigh in

Question No. 1:
Should the Village of Painted Post merge with the Town of Erwin?

Visit www.the-leader.com

Question No. 2:
What movie are you looking forward to in March?
"Dr. Seuss' The Lorax"
"John Carter"
"21 Jump Street"
"The Hunger Games"
"Wrath of the Titans"
"Mirror, Mirror"

Visit www.the-leader.com/entertainment

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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

ON THE FRONT PAGE
Clocktower by artist Larry Barone

PUBLISHER
Fred Benson | 936-4651, Ext. 303

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

EDITORIAL
Stella DuPree | Managing editor
936-4651, Ext. 361

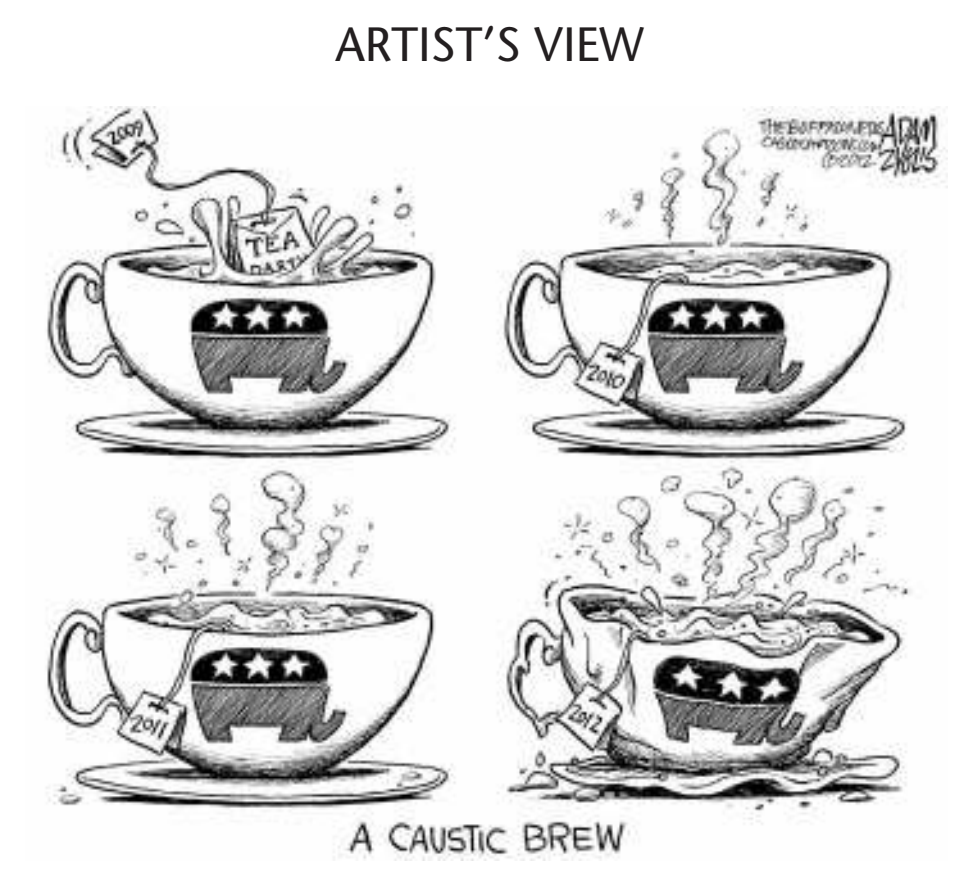
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STEBUEN COUNTY		ELSEWHERE IN USA	
One month	\$28.60	One month	\$36.85
Three months	\$85.80	Three months	\$110.55
Six months	\$171.60	Six months	\$221.10
One year	\$308.88	One year	\$397.98



POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

In like a lion, out like ...

Here's a quick musing from the Farmers' Almanac on the old "in like a lion, out like a lamb" saying about the month of March: "With March being such a changeable month, in which we can see warm spring-like temperatures or late-season snowstorms, you can understand how this saying might hold true in some instances. We can only hope that if March starts off cold and stormy it will end warm and sunny, but the key word is hope."

It's right there for the taking, so we might as well go ahead and apply this very same thought to New York state's budget adoption process, which unquestionably comes in like a lion this month (beginning this week, in fact) along with the hope that it will go out a lot more agreeably with the enactment of a new state budget sometime before the April 1 start of New York's 2012-2013 fiscal year.

There'll be plenty of barometers to gauge the contentiousness and timeliness of this year's budget in the important days ahead so, for now, let's stay focused on the facts. The process gets started in a big way this week when the Senate and Assembly finalize in-house budget plans, which sets the stage for legislative action on these separate proposals next week, which is immediately followed by the start of what's called the "joint

budget conference committee process" that's been a touchstone of New York's yearly budget-making since the Budget Reform Act of 2007.

It's worth noting that all of the above gets under way at the same time that the news media and other organizations across the country prepare for this year's "Sunshine Week," beginning on March 11th, a nationally recognized initiative to promote the importance of open government and freedom of information (read more about it at www.sunshine-week.org). So it's good timing that Sunshine Week 2012 coincides with the return of the conference committee process as part of New York's 2012 budget cycle.

It's a process consistent with the goal of heightening the public's understanding and awareness of budget and public finance-related matters.

Few would say it's the be-all and end-all of successful state budgeting, but it does facilitate openness and public scrutiny.

Each bipartisan budget conference committee (generally a total of 10 are convened) is made up of 10 senators and assembly members and meets in public to examine specific portions of the budget – education, local assistance, health and human services, public protection, taxes and economic development and several others. The agreements reached by these committees set the stage for final budget negotiations

between the Legislature and Gov. Andrew Cuomo leading up to the start of New York's new fiscal year on Sunday, April 1, 2012.

But conference committees can also bring to light outstanding controversies – in short, they serve to pinpoint the differences that can make or break a final budget. And the process can serve up debates that were often kept behind closed doors in the past. Many of these debates are worth watching and you can view them, daily, through the following Senate website: http://www.nysenate.gov/live_today.

So I personally welcome the conference committee process. Just recall that during a 20-year period from 1984 to 2004, not a single state budget was adopted on time. Not one. One culprit for this dysfunction was the lack of public scrutiny, and it helped facilitate a long line of unsustainable tax-and-spend state budgets. Conference committees help ensure a process that's more accountable and more devoted to public clarity – something that's especially important in years like this one when we're facing so many deep-rooted and substantive changes.

So March in New York state government is about to come roaring in, and I'll do my best to keep you updated on exactly how it goes out.

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

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Drug test welfare recipients

TO THE EDITOR | The state of Florida is going to require all welfare recipients be tested for drugs. If they can afford to buy them, they do not need additional assistance to buy food. Hopefully, the test for drugs will also

include alcohol and cigarettes.

In New York state, the cost of a pack is almost \$10. With that money one person could almost feed him/herself off a day. In addition, alcohol and smoke cause illnesses which Medicaid would have to pay. That affects all taxpayers.

The Bill of Rights

should also include a bill of responsibilities. When people smoke or drink, their vices affect somebody else's pocket book. That is unacceptable.

Hopefully, New York state would enact legislation similar to the Sunshine State.

Joe Vikin
Corning

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- 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.

P'burgh board unites for good cause

Was happy to read that – for once – the Prattsburg town board members have all agreed on something. They feel that an agreement between the town and Ecogen, the wind farm developer, should be reworked.

The town and Ecogen have been at odds for more than 2 years in a case that has already ended up in

THE INSIDER



Bob Rolfe

New York State Supreme Court.

The current disagreement apparently involves a road use agreement that has been pro-

posed by Ecogen. The company says the town board merely needs to sign the agreement but the town's position is that additional negotiations are needed because of differences between the developer's proposal and its original document.

The town has good reason to be concerned considering that if Ecogen builds a large number of giant wind turbines atop the Prattsburg hills the whole nature of the area could be changed forever. The town wants more control before towers are erected, and its desire is very understandable.

...

A week ago tomorrow morning, the Daytona 500 finally ended.

Yes, it was on a Tuesday two full days after the race was scheduled to begin.

Whether this was a good thing or a bad depends on who you believe.

An account of the long weekend published in the *Orlando Sentinel* makes it sound like the bummer of all time.

Yet in the same edition of this newspaper, a story by the Associated Press told how the event should be considered one of NASCAR's greatest triumphs.

The race was supposed to have run on Sunday, but it poured rain in Florida. So the race was moved to Monday.

Initially the delayed starting time was set for 1 p.m., but updated weather forecasts showed that the downpour would still be with us at that hour.

So NASCAR moved the starting time to 7 p.m. – four hours after the rain stopped.

As soon as the waters stopped falling, track-drying equipment was sent onto the pavement because a totally dry track is necessary for stock cars to compete.

International Speedway Corporation, which owns Daytona, had previously moved every piece of track-drying equipment it owned and shipped it from tracks across the country, including Watkins Glen, to Daytona.

So shortly after 7 p.m. Monday night, the green flag flew. There were many early accidents.

From there on, there were the usual ration of accidents and all was relatively well until with 40 laps to go, Juan Pablo Montoya struck a truck towing a jet engine and a horrendous fire erupted.

A fantastic repair effort finally restored the track's surface and Matt Kenseth went on to win.

The Fox TV network saw ratings jump 22 percent for its best night of the year. It may have been late but it was worth it.

■ **Bob Rolfe, a retired Leader reporter/editor, can be reached by writing theinsider1@aol.com.**