

## Grins and groans

**THE ISSUE** | Grins and groans from news of the week.

**OUR OPINION** | Grin to a new store on Market Street, school officials. Groan to balancing the budget on the backs of the poor and elderly.

### Grin

A Hilfiger outlet coming to one of the busiest corners on Market Street should be a draw for the downtown retail district.



The fact that Tommy Hilfiger, the company's founder, got his start in Elmira makes it a natural fit to have a store here.

His sister, Betsy Hilfiger, is returning to the area to run the business and ran a similar outlet years ago in Elmira that did very well.

The outlet will occupy three storefronts and be an anchor for the street. It's a big accomplishment for Corning Enterprises and others who helped recruit a much-needed and well-respected store. We expect it will be a destination and attract customers who will check out neighboring stores as well.

### Groan

Last week, Speaker of the House John Boehner declared that tax increases were "off the table" when it came to addressing the nation's deficit.



So reducing health benefits for senior citizens and the poor, like U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan's budget does,

is fair game, but forcing the richest Americans and companies who, in some instances, don't pay any taxes to pony up is verboten?

Used to be that Republicans would at least try to hide it when they screwed the poor to benefit the rich.

### Grin

As residents prepare to go to the polls Tuesday to vote for school district budgets, it should be noted how hard districts worked this year to keep costs down.



Officials left no stone unturned in their efforts to maximize efficiencies and cut costs without hurting students.

The lack of buzz surrounding most area budgets will probably translate to lackluster attendance at the polls Tuesday. Whether they vote or not, hopefully residents are at least mindful that school board members and administrators across the area worked their butts off to keep taxes down while preserving programs.

### LETTERS POLICY

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<b>The LEADER</b> 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 <b>ON THE FRONT PAGE</b> Corning clocktower by artist Larry Barone		<b>CIRCULATION</b> Elmer Kuehner   Circulation director 936-4651, Ext. 320 <b>EDITORIAL</b> Joe Dunning   Managing editor 936-4651, Ext. 362 jdunning@the-leader.com <b>ADVERTISING</b> 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	
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Six months	\$156	Six months	\$201
One year	\$288	One year	\$372

### ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

## Focus on business

On the same week that Gov. Andrew Cuomo and key members of his administration embarked on what's called a "People First Campaign," I received a copy of an article in the latest edition of Chief Executive magazine.

Now while that's not a publication you're likely to find on the table at your doctor's office or the neighborhood barbershop, you can be sure that it's being read in boardrooms and all of those other places where significant decisions are made on locating or expanding businesses and industries, creating jobs and making other economic investments. You can bet on it.

The article, "Best/Worst States for Business," focused on the magazine's seventh annual report on more than 500 of America's top business executives who were asked to rank the best states in the nation to do business. Some of the key criteria they took into account included taxation, regulation, workforce quality and living environment.

Texas came out on top in this year's ranking. No. 2? North Carolina. No. 3? Florida. New York State? No. 49. That's right, second-to-last in the nation.

And are you surprised? In fact, the writer identified New York as part of the "hall of shame" of the worst states for doing business. He further wrote, "Not surpris-

ingly, states with punitive tax and regulatory regimes are punished with lower rankings...While state incentives are always welcome, what CEOs often seek are areas with consistent policies and regulations that allow them to plan, as well as intangible factors such as a state's overall attitude toward business."

The full article's online at chiefexecutive.net.

So as the "People First Campaign" got underway and I read this new report, my thought was: Let's not lose the focus that's gotten this year's legislative session off to such a positive start. Some of the very first words delivered to New Yorkers by Gov. Cuomo were "jobs, jobs, and jobs." Cheers went up from every corner of the state. The Senate followed with a new jobs plan focused, in large part, on business tax relief.

And this year's state budget, with the first year-to-year reduction in state spending in a long time, no new or increased taxes or fees, no new borrowing and some small steps to brighten New York's business climate, has been widely praised as the beginning of an economic and fiscal turnaround.

One such beginning, for example, was Recharge NY (formerly Power for Jobs), that will now allow manufacturers to sign long-term contracts for the lower-cost electricity that allows them to count on consistent and competitive utility costs, plan and

make the long-term capital investments that protect and create jobs.

But the budget's just that, the beginning. And this new report from Chief Executive magazine makes it clear that we have to stay focused, above all else, on actions that will continue this economic and fiscal turnaround – tax relief, regulatory reform, debt reduction, more common sense fiscal practices.

Here's how one CEO summed it all up, "We need some political backbone to control spending, address out-of-control debts, and use common sense on environmental and other governmental regulations. Quit demonizing business. Who do they think provide real jobs?"

Our region has been fortunate to have many loyal employers whose deep-rooted commitment to this area's workers has helped us weather many economic storms and, at least, keep holding our own. That's the bright side.

But the times are getting tougher. The national and global competition is getting fiercer. If we don't stay focused on beating the drum for actions that keep driving New York's economic and fiscal renewal, we're simply going to have more and more citizens and workers hitting the pavement looking for a job – or for another state to call home.

■ **State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents the 53rd Senate District.**

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Questions about selling water

**TO THE EDITOR** | According to a recent article in *The Leader*, Corning City may sell water to natural gas drilling companies in Pennsylvania. Given the City's fiscal problems, that may seem like a wise decision. But a few questions need to be asked.

Although presently, given all the rain we may have an abundance of water, there have been times of drought, one not too many years ago, during which time cutting back on water consumption was contemplated. There was even concern then that local

golf courses might be using too much water.

We also have to ask about aquifer capacity: Not only how much can be prudently drawn, but how long does it take an aquifer to replenish itself?

Another question is whether the city will sell water mainly from the wells contaminated by volatile organic compounds (which require stripping towers to dissipate) The tremendous amount of water required to drill with hydro-fracturing is astounding. And, of course, if transported by trucks we can expect road destruction and heavy traffic.

Even more troubling is the inadequacy of "treating" or "disposing" of the

waste water (euphemistically called "product water"). Pennsylvania has had its problems with the unintended consequences of drilling so much, so fast, and without adequate safe guards and monitoring. Which makes me question whether by selling our water, we become "enablers" by providing the water that drilling demands.

These are the kind of questions we should ask our city administrators – and which we may ask at the forum on fracking at West High School, Thursday from 7-9 p.m. We need to be informed citizens.

**Frank Anastasio**  
Corning

## Odds not good for LPG storage plan

There seems to be many questions erupting concerning a plan by a company called Inergy which wants to build an LPG storage facility on and under Seneca Lake.

Inergy wants to convert salt caverns beneath its US Salt plant near Watkins Glen to store millions of gallons of LPG or propane and butane.

The Kansas City-based firm also wants to build a railroad and truck yard for transferring its substances as well as auxiliary pipelines, pumps, compressors, five 30,000-gallon storage tanks and a 13-acre brine pond.

The overall job is estimated at \$40 million and

could have considerable impact on the community and on the environment. Inergy filed a draft environmental impact statement with the Department of Environmental Conservation in March and the DEC has asked Inergy for backup material.

There is also considerable local opposition led by a Seneca Lake winery, Damiani Wine Cellars. That firm has sent emails to many area businesses claiming that what a prominent travel magazine recently called "the most beautiful lake region in the world" would be changed by the project into "a much more industrial site".

The project is also opposed by an outfit calling itself Gas Free Seneca which is pushing an online petition opposing the project.

Personally I'm not a betting person, but if I were to put down a wager right now, Inergy would be on the losing side.

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Glad to see that a Tommy Hilfiger store is coming to Market Street. The business which will occupy three storefronts at the corner of Market and Cedar Streets will be run by the designer's sister, Betsy Hilfiger.

Betsy is no stranger to operating Hilfiger stores. She ran an outlet in downtown Elmira for several years and later had a store at the Arnot Mall before she moved from Elmira to New York City.

The idea of a Hilfiger store on Market Street was developed last January and the deal was solidified last week, according to G. Thomas Tranter Jr., president of Corning Enterprises.

Local businessman George Connors owns the 4,600-square-foot space, which is currently vacant. The outlet has agreed to a five-year lease with an option for five more if necessary.

A store featuring the works of designer Hilfiger is a natural for Corning, where Tommy himself established the first branch of his initial business, The People's Place.

To feature the designs of the Elmira native seems like a winner for downtown Corning and its very important tourist trade.

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Reader Jeff Heller of Bradford apparently agrees with at least one thing he read recently in this space.

"Excellent essay on the Bin Laden photos," he said referring to the column of May 6.

Glad we're in agreement, Jeff, and I still feel the government should release the pictures of the dead terrorist.

There are too many people in the Middle East who still refuse to believe he is dead.

■ **Bob Rolfe, a retired Leader reporter/editor, can be reached by writing The Leader, PO Box 1017, Corning, NY 14830 or theinsider1@aol.com.**