

OPINION

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COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

'It is altogether fitting and proper'

Spread throughout the Empire State Plaza in Albany, tucked here and there between the State Capitol and other government buildings, are a number of lesser-known memorials that are among the capital's quieter, yet most powerful attractions. There are memorials to the veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. There's a Purple Heart Memorial, and places of tribute to women veterans and others.



TOM O'MARA

They capture the essence of Memorial Day, and I encourage you to visit them if you ever have the chance (you can view photos and brief descriptions of many of these memorials online at <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/ESP/CT/Memorials/>.)

These memorials and all the others like them dotting the American landscape are remindful of the words of Lincoln, at Gettysburg: "We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this."

It remains "fitting and proper" that American citizens throughout this great land of ours gather every Memorial Day to remember our veterans, past and present. It is one of our nation's most important traditions, a time to celebrate our past, honor our present, and look forward to our future.

Let's hope it will always be so. Many of us locally are meeting in cemeteries, parks and veterans memorials across the region this Memorial Day, in Penn Yan and Hammondport, Montour Falls and Ithaca, Watkins Glen and Dundee, Rock Steam and Southport, among others.

I'll be attending ceremonies in Elmira, Savona and Horseheads. There'll be tributes at the Naval Monument in Watkins Glen, the Veterans Park nearby Odessa, and other veterans' monuments, American Legions and VFWs throughout the region.

There will be specific remembrances this year: of the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, and of the last American combat forces leaving Vietnam forty years ago, in March 1973.

And there will be so many personal recollections shared among friends and family members of individual veterans — stories of battles, heroism and honor and, always, abiding love of community and country.

It is always a great privilege to carry on the essential observance of Memorial Day.

We must especially

remember and salute the men and women who serve in harm's way this very moment to keep America strong and the world safer in the war against terror. They remain shining examples of the bravery, courage and perseverance on which the American way of life has survived.

It's a time to reflect on the greatness of a nation built on the sacrifices of her soldiers, soldiers who still today stand tall to serve the underlying dreams of our homeland: freedom and peace, compassion and decency, and democracy.

In remembering, of course, we turn our thoughts and prayers to those young soldiers whom we've lost from here at home in the recent past.

We honor our wounded warriors.

We salute the millions of veterans living in New York State, and all of the many millions more across our nation.

They have earned our gratitude.

Because of them, we can look into the eyes of our young people this Memorial Day, the faces of the future, and have faith that they, too, will be instilled with the spirit to keep America great. To keep believing that the American way is a good, decent, worthwhile way.

In the end, perhaps this is the greatest justice for all of the missions flown, for all of the foxholes dug, for the hills taken and the battles fought. Our soldiers — American soldiers — have made and continue to make the ultimate sacrifice to keep America free, so that she can lead the way to a more free world. Our soldiers sacrifice to keep alive America's promise, so that people throughout the world can look to her for inspiration.

Our soldiers sacrifice to keep America strong, so that other nations can draw courage from her strength.

For as long as we remember and keep our soldiers alive in our hearts, we will stand as we do — free in a land of opportunity and promise.

(To read more on the history of New York State as the "Birthplace of Memorial Day," visit New York's Hall of Governor's website at <http://www.hallofgovernors.ny.gov/generic/memorialdayexhibit>)

COMMENTARY | JOHN ZICK

Eat, drink and remember

I'm as guilty as anyone. Come Monday, like millions of other Americans, my focus will be on barbecuing and cold beer. And which friends have their pools open for the year.



JOHN ZICK

Memorial Day marks the unofficial beginning of summer, a time when we finally shake the winter haze and embark on a three-month stretch of cannon balls, bogeys and ball games.

It's a glorious time in New York.

On warm, grill-scented days, it's easy to get lost in the moment. But I'm not going to let that happen Monday. At some point between burgers and beverages, I'll take time to reflect on the true meaning of Memorial Day and recognize the men and women who sacrificed their lives for my country and way of life.

Admittedly, the sacrifices that inspired Memorial Day have never impacted me directly. Friends of mine who've gone off to war have come home

again, and my grandfather survived his run-ins with the enemy over the skies of Europe during World War II.

But I've witnessed up close the costs of war and defending the American way. As a reporter, I've covered the homecomings of fallen warriors. The circumstances are always unique, but the pain never changes.

I can't explain it, but I always feel a connection to our fallen fighters. Maybe it's because all of them are mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, and sisters and brothers. It's easy to relate to those relationships. Or maybe it's because so many of them are just slightly younger than me — I've recently experienced the

things they'll miss.

Just how many soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines from the Corning area have lost their lives since the Revolutionary War is a statistic that I don't have, but the area has undoubtedly shared the burden of protecting freedom.

Since the turn of the century, the United States has been involved in two major wars. We're still fighting one of them, and local men and women continue to die. Their sacrifices can't be forgotten, and we ought to remember their names.

They are:

■ Army Spc. Ryan P. Jayne, 22, of Canisteo (formerly of Corning). Died Nov. 3, 2012, in Pakia province, Afghanistan. IED.

■ Army Spc. Christopher J. Scott, 21, of Tyrone. Died Sept. 3, 2011, in Kandahar province, Afghanistan. KIA.

■ Army Spc. Devin Snyder (female), 20, of Cochocton. Died June 4, 2011, near Mehter Lam,

Afghanistan. IED.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Michael G. Plank, 25, of Cameron Mills. Died June 9, 2010, in Helmand province, Afghanistan. KIA.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Zachary D. Smith, 19, of Hornell. Died Jan. 24, 2010, in Helmand province, Afghanistan. KIA.

■ Army Pvt. Justin P. Hartford, 21, of Elmira. Died May 8, 2009, at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Non-combat.

■ Army Sgt. Christopher Pusateri, 21, of Corning. Died Feb. 16, 2005, in Mosul, Iraq. KIA.

■ Marine Gunnery Sgt. Shawn A. Lane, 33, of Corning. Died July 28, 2004, in Anbar province, Iraq. KIA.

■ Marine Cpl. Jason Lee Dunham, 22, of Scio. Died April 22, 2004, in Husaybah, Iraq. KIA. Medal of Honor recipient.

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ANOTHER VIEW



COMMENTARY | SEN. JOHN MCCAIN, R-ARIZ.

The right way to provide cable television

America's 100 million cable and satellite subscribers are forced to pay ever-higher bills for a growing number of channels they do not watch. The American people are being ripped off.

Meanwhile, services such as iTunes and Netflix have led a revolution in how consumers purchase and experience music and video entertainment. They have upended entire industries to allow consumers to buy digital content where they want, when they want. Amid all this change, two entrenched interests - the cable television and video programming industries - have teamed up to use federal regulations to stack the deck against consumers.

The numbers are striking. According to the Federal Communications Commission, the price for basic cable has grown by an average of 6.1 percent a year over the last 16 years - three times the rate of inflation and far outpacing the average American's paycheck. Cable bills are projected to continue rising to an average of \$200 a month by 2020.

The 82 percent of American households that subscribe to cable or satellite

television are stuck paying escalating prices for "bundled" packages of more than 100 channels, despite the fact that the average viewer tunes in to only about 18 of them.

Reinforcing this fundamental unfairness is a federal regulatory and legal framework that tilts in favor of cable companies and television programmers at the expense of consumers.

This framework, which includes arcane but important benefits such as "compulsory copyright licenses," "syndicated exclusivity," "network non-duplication" and "retransmission consent," was originally developed to help the fledgling industry grow. Today, these benefits, vigorously defended by armies of well-paid lobbyists, are helping sustain the status quo while failing to push the industry to meet modern consumers' evolving demands.

Case in point: I am a certifiable sports nut and ESPN fanatic. I enjoy just about every sport, and I stay awake many nights in Washington watching games in Arizona that don't end until well after midnight. Although I'd never go without ESPN, the fact is that millions of other

viewers have no interest in sports programming. What many of these Americans are beginning to realize is that included in their cable bill is a charge of about \$5 a month to carry ESPN.

That's an "ESPN tax" of \$60 a year that they're forced to pay for having cable. And because it's part of their bundle, the only way to avoid it is to cancel their cable subscription entirely. This status quo is fundamentally unfair and wrong.

Now, many will say that the government should stay on the sidelines and out of the free market. I'd normally agree. But the truth is the government already has its thumb on the scale in favor of industry and against the interests of consumers. It's time for that to end.

I have introduced the Television Consumer Freedom Act, which aims to provide consumers with the option to buy only those channels they want to watch. The bill includes no mandates. Rather, it sends a powerful message to cable and satellite companies, such as Cox and DirecTV, and television programmers, such as Disney-ABC and NBC-Universal: If you want to continue

to enjoy government-aided regulatory benefits, offer TV-watching Americans an a la carte approach to programming rather than the take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum we have today.

Another provision in the bill seeks to end the practice of sports team owners punishing fans by blacking out home games that don't sell out. It provides that games taking place in publicly financed stadiums can't be blacked out.

This is an uphill battle, but I'm sure that the market will ultimately find a way to meet consumer demand. Many industries over the years - from the stagecoach builders and saddle makers to those who made the eight-track tape and the Sony Walkman - didn't much like the change forced on them by the tide of history.

Sooner or later, companies standing in the way today will face a similar choice: Meet consumers' demands or become obsolete.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., is a member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. He wrote this for the Los Angeles Times.

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