

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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GUEST VIEW | MICHAEL J. SWARTZ

Serve those who served

On Veterans Day, Americans come together to recognize and honor those who have served our Nation. It is a day for remembrance, gratitude and inspiration. It instills in us a sense of pride to know that we are blessed that men and women have selflessly sacrificed on our behalf.

It has been said that how a nation remembers its defenders reflects its true character and conscience. President Calvin Coolidge put it more directly when he said, “The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten.” We will never forget.

For employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs, we are privileged to serve America’s heroes and, for us, every day is Veteran’s Day. We are proud to fulfill the solemn pledge set forth by President Abraham Lincoln – “to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.”

From our World War II and Korean War veterans reaching their twilight years; to our Vietnam veterans entering retirement age; our younger Gulf War veterans and those returning from the global war on terror; and to those who have served during other time periods; thank you for your service.

Although the majority of veterans successfully readjust to life after deployment, some veterans need additional assistance in dealing with physical or mental health issues or even homelessness. No veteran who has honorably served our country should ever be homeless.

So as we reflect this Veteran’s Day, let’s ensure we are honoring all those who have served and are currently serving. May God bless America’s veterans and may God bless America.

Michael J. Swartz is the director of the Bath VA Medical Center.

OTHER VIEW | L.A. TIMES

In D.C., a crisis in competence

Elect officials in the nation’s capital have spent the past several weeks demonstrating that they can’t do the jobs voters sent them there to do. On Capitol Hill, lawmakers got into an extended spat that shut down much of the government for 16 days and threatened to turn Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew into the world’s biggest deadbeat.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration launched a website for the new federally operated health insurance exchanges that failed epically, with so many design flaws and technical problems that it may take weeks to reach a basic level of reliability.

Granted, the government shutdown and the HealthCare.gov meltdown happened for very different reasons. The former was a result of a cynical and ill-conceived gambit by House Republicans, who tried to force changes in Obamacare that they didn’t have the votes to win.

The latter stemmed from the administration’s inept management of a complex project, a problem exacerbated by political imperatives that repeatedly trumped technical ones.

The overarching message to the public, however, is the same in both instances: Your leaders are incompetent.

And the people are listening. Gallup reports that Congress’ approval rating sank to an abysmal 11 percent during the shutdown, after rebounding slightly from its record low of 10 percent in February.

President Obama, meanwhile, has seen his approval rating slide steadily this year to 39 percent, nearing the low point of his tenure. Dwindling faith in government has contributed to a pessimism about the economy that discourages consumer spending, the lifeblood of U.S. growth.

The administration can undo some of the damage by fixing HealthCare.gov soon, giving people ample time to shop before policies are supposed to go into effect Jan. 1.

But Washington faces another potential shutdown and default early next year, when the temporary measures enacted in mid-October expire. The best way for lawmakers to avoid a replay of last month’s debacle would be to strike a deal before the end of the year.

That’s easier said than done, considering how far apart House Republicans and Senate Democrats are – and how polarized their constituents are too.

Yet the lesson of Tuesday’s gubernatorial elections in New Jersey and Virginia may be that ideologues are in less demand than leaders who can work across the political aisle to get things done. Having failed in three previous attempts to reach a bipartisan “grand bargain” on taxes and entitlements, lawmakers need to show their constituents that they can at least handle the simpler task of funding the government without resorting to yet another manufactured crisis.

We’re not asking for miracles here, just competence.

ANOTHER VIEW

Thank you for your service and your sacrifice



COLUMN | SEN TOM O'MARA

Our obligation, responsibility

Fifty years ago, on November 11, 1963, then-President John F. Kennedy led the Veterans Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery overlooking Washington D.C. He laid a wreath at The Tomb of the Unknowns.

It would be one of President Kennedy’s last official acts, just 11 days before his tragic assassination.

Two years earlier, on November 11, 1961, at President Kennedy’s first Veterans Day observance as the leader of the United States of America, he gave us the following in his remarks at Arlington, “We celebrate this Veterans Day for a very few minutes, a few seconds of silence and then this country’s life goes on. But I think it most appropriate that we recall on this occasion, and on every other moment when we are faced with great responsibilities, the contribution and the sacrifice which so many men and their families have made in order to permit this country to now occupy its present position of responsibility and freedom, and in order to permit us to gather here together.”

This echo of former President Kennedy remains so very fitting – and poignant – to hear again on this Veterans Day, when we indeed live in a time of great responsibilities and as we continue to gather to salute the contribution and the sacrifice of our military men and women, living and deceased, past and present.

On November 11, 2013, at ceremonies today (and

throughout the past weekend) at local cemeteries, and at the monuments and memorials which so many area communities have seen fit to build to honor our veterans, we carry on this essential observance of Veterans Day.

Travel throughout this region’s communities and it’s striking to reflect on the common landmarks that stand as everyday reminders of the guiding principles and underlying strengths of our nation: city, town and village halls, county courthouses, churches, elementary schools, local public libraries. These fundamental American places still speak to the very reasons for our nation’s founding and her endurance as the world’s great democracy.

But perhaps most powerfully of all, on this day every year we are drawn to the cemeteries, monuments and memorials in our midst that still, and hopefully always will, rise up to honor those who have served and sacrificed, and still do. We gather together throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions to honor the sacrifices and the victories of our soldiers – past, present, and future. By doing so, we reaffirm our pride in this nation’s servicemen and women and, of course, we turn our thoughts and prayers to all of the young soldiers whom we’ve lost from here at home.

Since the tragic unfolding of September 11, 2001 this generation has realized, all too painfully, that our freedom here at home can



TOM OMARA

be threatened at any moment. We realize, as well, that our troops always stand ready to protect freedom again and again. The freedoms we cherish have been hard-won by the soldiers of previous generations and by those of this generation who have continued to serve. They are true American heroes, and we are grateful to each and every one of them. Sacrifice is the fundamental truth that’s recalled on Veterans Day, especially today when sacrifice can too often seem an on-the-decline virtue in American life.

One way that New York government seeks to constantly honor the service of veterans has been through the creation of state agencies and legislative committees devoted to the development and administration of programs and services that seek to address the many challenges facing today’s veterans in areas such as health care, employment and education.

The state Division of Veterans Affairs was established in 1945 to assist veterans, members of the armed forces, their families and their dependents.

Since then, the Division -- in concert with its offices in counties locally and across New York -- has

strongly advocated for veteran’s issues at the local, state and national levels. It’s a proud history of service.

In addition to the Division, each house of the state Legislature has established a veterans committee dedicated to these affairs. In the Senate, the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee concentrates each and every legislative session to identify and formulate legislative responses to the many issues confronting our veterans.

On November 11, 1961, as he stood so tall, so proud and so hopeful on that long-ago day and recalled for all Americans and the world how Arlington National Cemetery was created 97 years earlier to bury the soldiers of the Civil War, President Kennedy said, “It was a crucial moment in our Nation’s history, but these memories, sad and proud, these quiet grounds, this Cemetery and others like it all around the world, remind us with pride of our obligation and our opportunity.”

“Our obligation and our opportunity.”

These words deserve to remain with us on this Veterans Day, to guide us, now and forever, as a solemn reminder of the clearest duty of a proud nation and all of her citizens.

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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bason will act on public’s needs

TO THE EDITOR | I would like to thank the Town of Tyrone residents for their support in last Tuesday’s election. That support came from across party lines, which reinforces the importance of working together. During my campaign I listened to your comments, concerns and suggestions; and I pledge to continue doing that as we move forward on issues that you

indicated are important to you.

The Town Board is here to work for you; and if you have questions or concerns, I welcome you to come to the meetings. The Planning Committee meets the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. and the Town Board meets the second Tuesday at 7 p.m. Again, thank you for your support.

Christopher Bason
Tyrone

Looking forward to

next 4 years

TO THE EDITOR | I would like to thank all those who were instrumental in my victory. I appreciate the support and endorsements I received from SEIU 1199, CSEA 851, Corning’s Local 1000 Steelworkers, World Kitchen’s Local 1034 and IBEW Local 139.

Thank you to all those who donated to my campaign, made phone calls, walked the wards etc.

I especially want to thank my friends for their

confidence in me and my family for their ongoing support. I couldn’t have done it without all of you. Finally I want to thank all those who voted for me.

I’ve enjoyed my tenure on the City Council and I am very happy to continue to represent the residents of the City of Corning on the Steuben County Legislature. I look forward to working hard for you the next four years.

Hilda Lando
Steuben County legislator