

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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OTHER VIEW | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Courts finding good ID solutions

If you want to access your email, withdraw cash from a machine or use a credit card online, you have to enter some information to confirm that you are who you claim to be - a password, a PIN number, a security code. No one objects to these safeguards, provided they don't actually keep us from doing things we are entitled to do. Convenience and security can both be served, and they usually are.

The same goals ought to be paramount in the realm of voting. Many states have passed laws requiring voters to produce photo identification when they show up at the polls, to prevent ballot fraud - say, someone claiming to be John Smith showing up to vote even though John Smith recently passed away. The old joke, "When I die, bury me in Chicago so I can stay active in politics," is based on sleazy practices once common in Cook County (and elsewhere too).

But opponents think the goal is less to clean up elections than to disenfranchise certain voters. The new laws are a favorite cause of Republicans, who stand to gain if voters without such IDs - who tend to be poor or members of minority groups - are not allowed to vote. The charge gains credence because these measures sometimes accompany changes that limit early voting hours or restrict voter registration efforts.

Both sides in the photo ID battle have valid concerns. For Republicans, it's

safeguarding the fundamental integrity of elections; for Democrats, it's maximizing citizen participation in democracy. It's not impossible to uphold both purposes. And the good news is that the courts are acting to do just that.

The most recent instance came in Pennsylvania, where a state judge upheld a new law with a strict photo ID requirement - while blocking it for the November election because the state has not done enough to assure easy access to state-issued cards. Earlier, a federal court struck down a similar mandate in Texas, partly because some citizens would have to drive 200 miles or more to comply with the law.

But a photo ID rule can be done right. In 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court approved Indiana's system, which provided free IDs and allowed those citizens who don't have them to cast provisional ballots.

Critics say the laws are a solution in search of a problem because voter fraud is rare and unlikely to affect the outcome of any election. But weak ID laws are an invitation to cheating, and the best time to close an avenue to such behavior is before it happens, not after.

Tougher laws, however, should weigh the likely gain against the potential harm, namely preventing honest citizens from casting ballots. That's a real danger that sensible legislators should take great care to eliminate.

OTHER VIEW | KANSAS CITY STAR

Enact tougher sanctions on Iran

Economic sanctions against Iran are beginning to bite, and hard. The country's currency has fallen more than 40 percent since Sept. 24. Skyrocketing inflation is destroying incomes and eating at savings.

This summer brought a wave of strikes and last week riots broke out after the regime shut down black-market foreign-exchange dealers. Some protesters shouted, "We don't want nuclear energy!"

Monday, European Union foreign ministers are scheduled to discuss ways to make the sanctions even tougher. On the agenda: a ban on Iran's natural gas exports and stiffer curbs on transactions with the country's central bank.

Washington should encourage these efforts and press for even tougher measures, while urging countries that still buy Iranian oil - such as India, Japan and China - to further cut back purchases. Iranian oil exports have dropped by half this year, cutting oil revenue by \$5 billion a month.

The regime says it's staying the course and if current talks fail Iran will

press even harder to enrich uranium. But rising unrest and discontent may force other choices. The situation is already sparking internal spats. Ali Larijani, parliament speaker, publicly placed the blame for most of the economic problems with the government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose term ends next summer.

The United States and European Union should block the Iranian central bank's access to currency reserves in offshore banks.

More steps could include sanctions that bar dealings with other Iranian financial entities, measures to prevent international insurers from covering Iran-bound cargoes other than food or medicine, and a ban on transactions with any entity linked to the energy sector.

The recent riots show that such measures can significantly reduce the mullahs' shrinking support. That will steadily raise the political costs of Iran's refusal to permit international inspections and cause more in the regime to question the wisdom of proceeding with its nuclear program.

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

An economic roller coaster

It's the sign of the times. One news report sends out a ray of positive economic news, and then a headline the very next day arrives as yet another dark cloud on the jobs front. We've certainly seen and felt this economic roller coaster take its emotional and financial toll here at home - up, down and all around for nearly four years now. And it just continues its excruciating twists and turns.

In late September we cut the ribbon on a 400-foot runway extension at the Elmira Corning Regional Airport, an extension that's expected to deliver a welcome economic boost to the area. That same day I joined other state and local leaders at the Anchor Glass Container Corporation. We were there to celebrate the success of this 100-year-old glass container manufacturer and to also announce a Re-Charge NY economic development power allocation that will help the company retain 340 jobs and reinvest \$37.2 million in its Elmira Heights facility.

In other words, it was a day of good economic news for the area.

One week later, we're hit with the unexpected announcement of the closing of the Sikorsky Military Completions Center in Big Flats and the loss of nearly 600 jobs. Devastating.

Government, by itself, can't (and more importantly shouldn't) determine the success or failure of the state's economy. But there's no question that government policies



SEN. TOM O'MARA

can and do have a decisive impact on the economy's overall direction and, without question, can help improve and strengthen it. But how? That's the question at the heart of the number one challenge still facing Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Legislature as we move closer to the start of a new legislative session in January 2013.

The challenge was framed even more starkly by a recent ranking of business tax climates in the 50 states.

It's clear that the past two years in New York government have set this state in a new direction. We've achieved overdue and significant economic and fiscal reforms. But now an updated Tax Foundation ranking, which made headlines last week, drops New York from the 49th to the 50th ranked business tax climate in the nation. You can take this particular ranking for what it's worth and its findings have been dissected, questioned and spun in various ways over the past several days. But I think the overriding point is well taken.

The head of the state's largest business group, The Business Council of New York, said, "This report does not reflect the progress New York has made in its budget and tax

policy over the past two years...However, this rating shows that we have significant work to do to reverse years of bad tax and spending decisions. We look forward to working with Governor Cuomo and the state legislature in 2013 on tax and regulatory changes that help make the state's business climate more attractive to business of all sizes and sectors."

The Business Council response serves to highlight the key reality, in my view: The work of turning New York around is finally underway, but it remains far from finished.

The Business Council also recently released the results of a statewide survey that asked employers to share their short- and long-term economic outlooks, as well as their assessments of state government policies. The council summarized the survey's findings this way, "Although they have dealt with a difficult recovery and a slowly improving business environment in New York, our members believe their businesses will grow and their bottom lines will improve over the next 18 months. Employers still see many places where the government can reduce the cost of doing business, but agree they will see economic progress in 2013."

There in fact are many places where New York can become more employer-friendly. Which is exactly why earlier this year the Senate advanced a comprehensive economic development plan called "New Jobs NY."

At its core, it reflects

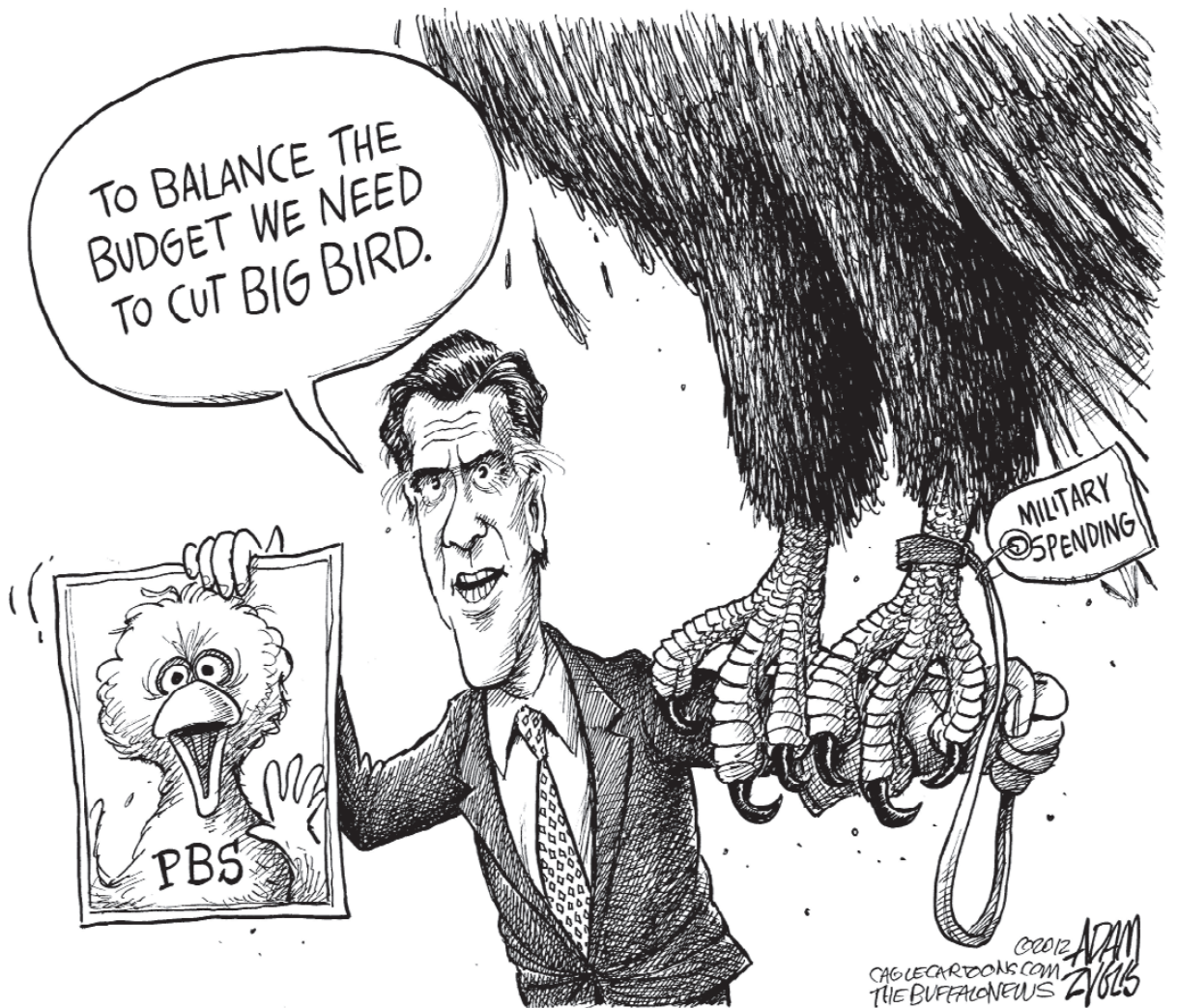
our fundamental belief in government's ability to cut taxes and control spending as a way to strengthen the overall business climate.

Our plan wasn't approved by the Assembly leadership, but we plan to keep at it in 2013. We have to keep acting, on a bipartisan basis, to achieve the goal of removing New York from the list of states with the worst business environments in America. New Jobs NY proposes to strengthen the state's economic competitiveness and improve New York's business climate through a broad strategy involving significant tax relief, much of it aimed at private-sector job creation. But the New Jobs NY plan also takes aim at the fiscal condition of state government itself. It calls for greater fiscal responsibility and spending control across state government, and it includes new regulatory reforms to cut expensive red tape for businesses. You can read more about New Jobs NY on my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov.

New Jobs NY stakes a claim to the direction of New York government in 2013. It offers a course of action that's even more committed to private-sector growth, economic competitiveness, and long-term job security and stability for workers. We believe it offers a strategy, in other words, that can help get us off this economic roller coaster.

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

ANOTHER VIEW



ONLY ONLINE | NOTORIOUS SINNER

Halloween: More than just candy?

"Tradition Halloween is one of many modern observances that we have inherited from our fathers, yet is not rooted in scripture. For me, the fact that it is not rooted in scripture is all the evidence I



need to not observe it. But I do recognize the value in looking at the history of the 'unholi-day' and seeing if it is rooted in idolatry.

A little History According to various Encyclopedias, the origins of

this holiday are of demonic origin. Listed below are some quotes."

For more from the Notorious Sinner, visit <http://www.the-leader.com/community/blogs>