

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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READER VIEW | ELIZABETH WHITEHOUSE

Step back to move forward

Other View by the Chicago Tribune in The Leader on Oct. 19 rightly suggests that the U.S. should be focused on the debt, which “looms over this nation’s future”. Their idea is to limit the growth of borrowing, particularly for Medicare, Social Security and other entitlements. Their view itself is limited.

The one really sane voice in the Senate, Sen. Bernie Sanders, (an Independent, please note) hit the nail on the head in a newly published interview when he blasted the “unfettered capitalism” that has collapsed the middle class, and the corporate power fueling climate change, which poses a “far more serious problem than Al-Qaeda.” We can handle Al-Qaeda and live with the consequences of their actions. But we cannot continue along the current path without substantial damage to our quality of life. To put it another way, if we gobble down the whole cake today, we may not even have bread tomorrow. And those who only had crumbs, will have nothing.

There are several ways that the federal government could reduce spending without touching entitlements, which actually they are not “entitled” to do. Are there not “Trust” funds for Medicare and Social Security? If these trust funds are running out of money, increase revenue by removing the artificial cap. There could also be a means test for Social Security, and those who need it least get the least. And, of course, a single-payer health care system (also known as universal Medicare) would be a much more efficient and less expensive way to cope with the deteriorating health of the nation.

The rest of the debt can be mitigated by removing subsidies to oil and other companies who make more money than God, and who should be discouraged from further development of any substance that will be burned — for the sake of the planet. Put a hefty tax on carbon, thereby reducing CO2 emissions and forcing the world to look for alternative sources of energy (of which there are many).

The other side of the coin is to rethink and reduce consumption. As the population has exploded worldwide, so too has the demand for more water and more raw materials to produce

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more and more consumer goods.

Continued growth is unsustainable: There are too many people and too few resources to meet the demand. Water is already at a premium, and increasing climate disruption compounds the problem every day.

We cannot grow our way out of debt. Like the earth that has been ruined by industrial agriculture, the economic soil is barren. Under “unfettered capitalism”, there are no new jobs, and wealth comes from unearned income realized on the stock exchange, and profits for stock holders at the expense of the average worker. Machines do more and more of the work because they reduce costs and raise profits. This is not just my idea — read Jeffrey Rifkin’s “The Third Industrial Revolution” and his 1995 book “The End of Work.”

The step back that I am suggesting does not quite go as far as returning to a barter system, but it does mean a serious re-evaluation of what we each need (as opposed to what we think we want or must have), and how we are going to meet our needs. We need to become more self-reliant and find ways to support ourselves, not the corporations driven solely by greed, or the organizations that direct our thinking. We need to think for ourselves, to be more aware of our surroundings and the consequences of our actions; consequences which affect the entire planet and our fellow-travelers on the planet, whether they be humans, humpback whales, water hyacinths or harvester ants.

Elizabeth Whitehouse is a Corning resident and a leader for The Climate Reality Project. She may be contacted at ew@compostinternational.org.

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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POLITICS | TOM O'MARA

Broadband promise not met



TOM O'MARA

In a largely unintentional linking of the future and the past, New York’s recognition, throughout October, of the nationally observed Cyber Security Awareness Month stands to highlight two — that’s right, two — of the great technological challenges still facing our state.

The first challenge is the obvious one: cyber security. It looks into an exciting, but also troubling future.

But there’s a second challenge that’s coming to mind this month, one that focuses on the need to get us out of a rapidly fading past.

Cyber security is the “new world” challenge. At the beginning of October, Gov. Andrew Cuomo named the head of the state’s new Cyber Security Advisory Board, which was created earlier this year to ensure that statewide safety and security keeps pace with the ability of cyber terrorists, cyber thieves and any other would-be cyber criminal to cause harm. The board’s also charged with keeping our existing public safety and security systems as up to date, effective and responsive as possible.

Building on these state-level efforts, the state Senate has schedule a public hearing in Utica in mid-November, “Cyber Security: Defending New York from Cyber Attacks.”

The public concern over cyber security simply wouldn’t have crossed most of our minds just a few short decades ago. But here we are, and there’s no turning back. It’s not just about a post-9/11 emphasis on preventing

terrorism anymore. We constantly read stories about the across-the-board threats that make cyber security one of modern life’s inescapable realities. For most of us the obvious impact asks, “How can I protect my home computer?” But it becomes a much more complicated task for governments, corporations, health care systems and other large organizations. The threats range from straightforward identity thefts to more sophisticated attacks that pose at-large risks to public security.

So the digital age is now inextricably bound with everyday public safety — at least for most New Yorkers, a point which brings me to the second, “old world” challenge of this digital age: closing the digital divide.

As I’ve written here so many times, we’re facing unprecedented short- and long-term economic and fiscal challenges as a state and nation. But there’s an undeniable case to be made — one that’s echoed across every level of government — that a successful and vibrant future depends on the development of a top-flight broadband infrastructure. Whenever we examine how best to strengthen local economies or create more jobs for more workers, the

discussion inevitably turns to today’s “digital economy.” The same holds true for education, where “digital classrooms” have become fundamental to the success of our students.

So it’s hard to believe that, according to the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources (LCRR) and others, an estimated 750,000 rural New Yorkers do not have broadband (high-speed Internet) service. Despite its fundamental importance, the so-called “digital divide” remains a serious, demanding challenge. It speaks to fostering good citizenship, yet providing New York with a broadband and telecommunications infrastructure that’s second to none remains a primary economic and educational goal and responsibility.

Closing this still-gaping divide is underway throughout New York — at the local and state levels — in a variety of important ways. In early 2013, for example, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a round of state funding through the state’s Connect NY Broadband Grant Program to expand high-speed Internet access in rural upstate and underserved urban areas. This year’s funding, according to the administration, set in motion “the largest statewide broadband funding commitment in the nation.” It’s helping to support a number of critical broadband expansion projects underway across New York, including right here throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions.

According to the New

York State Broadband Program Office (<http://www.nysbroadband.ny.gov/>), “Better broadband means greater opportunities for New Yorkers. By leveraging today’s Internet, citizens have greater opportunities to connect to educational and workforce development training resources; communities can foster more economic development; businesses can access new markets and create more jobs, and our schools, colleges and universities can conduct high-tech research and development and build an innovative and talented high-tech workforce. But, residents cannot fully participate in the digital economy without access to affordable broadband and the ability to use it.”

New York state must stay focused on cyber security and all of the looming, troubling threats that we see coming on this horizon.

But we also have to recognize that, for far too many of New York’s citizens and communities, the startling fact is much more simple and straightforward: Broadband has not arrived. It has to. We need to keep taking steps to more fully deploy affordable and accessible high-speed Internet which, ultimately, is the gateway to a more educated, more economically strong and more competitive State of New York.

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.

ANOTHER VIEW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Support Lando, Mayo for Council

To the Editor | I am writing today to encourage the residents of Corning, first to vote on Nov. 5 and then when they do, vote for the pro labor-working class candidates Hilda Lando for City Council in the 3rd Ward as well as county Legislature, and for Steve Maio for City Council in Corning’s 1st Ward.

Hilda and Steve have been overwhelmingly endorsed by the United Steelworkers Executive Boards at both Local

1000 and Local 1034 at World Kitchen.

They also have been endorsed by the Steuben Livingston Labor Council AFL-CIO.

Hilda has always been a friend of Labor and been there when we needed her, whether it has been working on a charitable cause or just a friendly ear.

This is not the first time that our organizations have endorsed her, and I am proud to add my own personal endorsement to Hilda and Steve.

Mike Le Barron

Director, United Steelworkers Southern Tier Political Affairs, Corning

Time to take a stand in Caton

To the Editor | I am writing because I feel it is important for everyone to know that I have witnessed unruly and disrespectful behavior at many Caton town meetings over the past year. It is disturbing to realize we voted for the people on the board who are behaving badly. It is a black eye to all Catonites.

I am not happy with the intimidation and

degrading behavior shown. We can do something.

On Nov. 5, we can vote for restoring respect and dignity by voting for Michele Fitzsimmons, Diane Card (for the town board positions) and for Karen Lamie (assessor). Join me in making a stand and standing up for our beautiful community that deserves better and truly represent us and not assume what we want.

June Gordon
 Corning

Ed note | Letters to the editor regarding the general election must be received by Oct. 30.