

## Grins and groans

### Grin

The outcome could have been much worse. Joseph Esposito's alleged drug-fueled shooting spree Tuesday in Burdett could have ended with multiple people dead, including himself. The situation was so close to tragic – two of the shots Esposito allegedly fired came within feet of Schuyler County Undersheriff Breck Spaulding's upper body.

Ignoring the risk to their personal safety, dozens of police officers surrounded the home from which Esposito was allegedly firing. They evacuated many nearby residents and were prepared to storm the house to eliminate the threat.

Luckily for everyone involved, negotiators, likely aided by Esposito's family, were able to talk Esposito out of the house.

Ask any of the officers and they'll tell you they were just doing their jobs. Still, it takes a special kind of person to face that kind of danger.

It's incidents like Tuesday's that remind us that there are countless men and women out there who will put us before themselves.

### Groan

To missing a favorite Halloween attraction. Keith Hoover's Kingsbury Cemetery, a haunted house on Corning's Northside, always draws a big crowd. This year, though, it's closed, which is a bummer because Hoover always creates an elaborate, themed haunted attraction that's OK for kids because it's low-gore.

Also, Hoover collects non-perishable food items at the door as admission, which he donates to the Corning Community Food Pantry.

On the bright side, however, Hoover says he's moving to a new location and will be expanding to two separately themed attractions for next Halloween.

"We realize there are a lot of disappointed people this season, but we promise that it will be worth the wait until next season!" Hoover wrote in his newsletter.

We're sure it will be.

### Grin

To the Town of Horseheads' free e-cycling program.

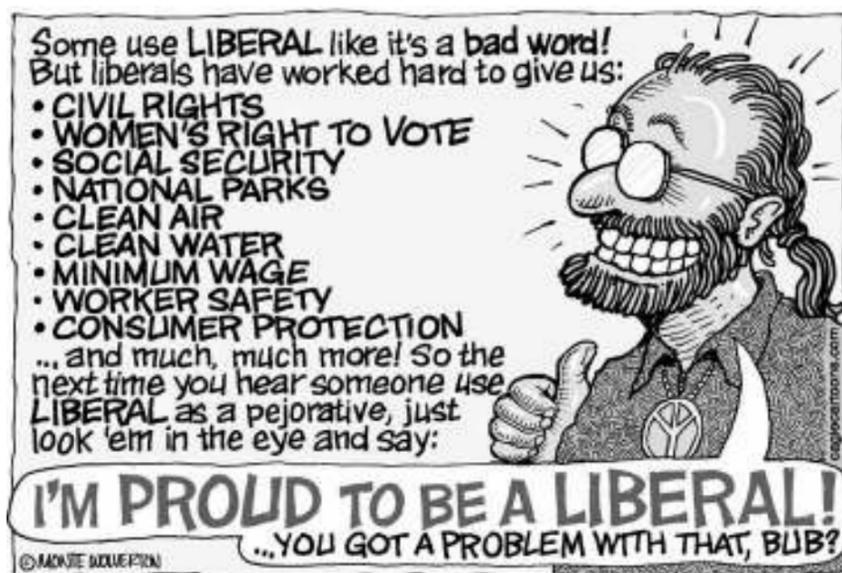
Over the past five Saturdays, a steady stream of cars and trucks have come to a storage garage behind Horseheads Town Hall, dropping off TVs, cell phones, cameras, radios, computer monitors, hard drives, keyboards, scanners, printers, fax machines – just about every type of electronics imaginable.

Huge piles have been collected each Saturday. A company that specializes in dismantling and recycling the electronics then picks them up.

It's a public service project run by Tom Nagle, a planning board member for the town. It can be expensive to recycle electronics, and Nagle says he didn't want the items ending up in the landfill – or worse yet, alongside a road in the back hills.

It's over now, but was a huge success, so look for a possible return of the program next year.

## ARTIST'S VIEW



### COMMENTARY | SEN. TOM O'MARA

## What dedicated highway fund?

From time to time in this column, whenever they become available, I like to share the results of the latest survey or study conducted by the various groups and organizations with a finger on the pulse of the nation's employers – reports that can sometimes help illuminate what America's leaders in business and industry are thinking and doing.

These reports are valuable for any number of reasons, and they can mean different things to different people. But for the purposes of local economic development, I think they're useful for the insights they offer into what's on the minds of some of the world's most dynamic job creators. Why does one corporate executive, for example, choose a particular region or state over another when deciding where to build a new business or industry, or expand existing ones?

Inevitably what you find if you pay attention are the same priorities rising to the surface time after time. The tax and regulatory climate. The demographics of the available work force. The quality of the educational system, including the availability of higher education.

Over and over, the quality of a region's infrastructure earns a leading spot on the list, too. In fact, infrastructure can often be the deciding factor in the job creation decisions that have become so competitive and so desired here at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century.

All this came to mind following a flurry of recent reports on the condition of the nation's and

New York's state roads and bridges. And it stands as a critical reminder that the short- and long-term future of New York's infrastructure deserves to remain in the forefront of the state's to-do list.

One report from the state comptroller estimates that over the next 20 years New York's going to need \$250 billion to maintain its transportation, sewer and water systems. According to the state Department of Transportation, about 12 percent of New York's bridges are structurally deficient while approximately 25 percent are functionally obsolete meaning, in other words, they've outlived their usefulness.

Of course it's an infrastructure crisis that's been building for a long time now and, it's worth recalling, was the motivating factor behind the creation of the state's Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund back in 1991. That's right, state leaders had the foresight 20 years ago to look far down the road, so to speak, anticipate the demands and, wisely, put in place a dedicated revenue stream that was supposed to guarantee a steady source of funding solely for the reconstruction, replacement, reconditioning and preservation of the state's highways and bridges.

The problem is that somewhere along the way over the past two decades a few holes were punched out of this so-called "locked box" of highway-and-bridge funding, so that here in 2011 the fund is being tapped for purposes, in my view, far removed from highway and bridge maintenance and improvement.

One news report last week noted that more than a third of the fund's annual \$3.5-billion allocation goes to the state Department of Motor Vehicles for salaries and other administrative and operating costs, as well as for state Department of Transportation snow and ice removal. That same article also stated that more money from the fund is allocated to pay debt on old road projects than to undertake new ones.

It's yet another example of a failure to abide by strict priorities and remain focused on fundamental governmental responsibilities. In other words, another failure of government to remain true to its original intent, to live up to its word.

It has to stop. So as we rapidly approach the start of the 2012 legislative session, this issue demands attention. Earlier this year the Senate unanimously approved legislation to ensure that funding from the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund would only be used for its original intent. No more taking from the fund to pay salaries or administrative expenses. In other words, let's restore the fund to its intended purpose – the reconstruction, replacement, reconditioning and preservation of highways and bridges. Period. This legislation should become law next year. It would put in place yet another key piece of the puzzle of rebuilding and remaking New York.

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

## Social Security raise won't help economy

Halleluiah! The government is about to give us old folks a raise.

Come January, Social Security checks will go up an estimated \$38

per month. Big whoop! Sorry, folks, but that is not going to improve

the national economy one whit.

But it will look good to we recipients of America's answer to the elderly dole.

The increase comes because inflation has shifted the cost-of-living index for the first time in two years. Inflation was too low in 2010 or 2011 to give anybody an increase.

The increase now is not very big but it is enough to produce this change.

The shift will not go into effect until January.

As the country prepares for another World Series, some U.S. senators and health officials want to insert their oar into the proceedings.

These well-intentioned interferences want players to stop using chewing tobacco during the games.

Sorry, gang, but players have been scratching and spitting almost since the game was invented – and when that was is a subject about which the argument will probably never end.

A baseball player without a cud of chaw in his cheek would be such a minority figure that it would be difficult to categorize him using normal numbers.

Yes, smokeless tobacco is probably harmful but I sincerely doubt that hoards of children will head to their nearest smokeless store just because they watched a game on television.

Besides this year's series pitting two central time zone teams against one another is expected to have very low TV ratings in a year when the visual market for baseball declines continually.

Amid the continuing national debate about immigration, comes a startling statistic. The U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement Agency deported a record number of illegal aliens during the fiscal year that ended in September.

Agency director John Morton said nearly 400,000 people were shown the door to the border during the fiscal year that just ended. And 55 percent of them were tossed out because of felony or misdemeanor crime convictions.

That is an 89 percent increase in the number of convicted criminals over 2008, the last year for which comparable numbers were available.

Immigration officials properly come in for a great deal of criticism these days but this number shows that they are doing a far better job than most of us would ever imagine.

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

## LETTERS POLICY

- Letters should be typed or neatly printed.
- Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. No letters will be published unless verified with the author in person or by telephone.
- Letters may be edited for space considerations.
- The publication of any letter is at the discretion of the editor.

The deadline for letters regarding the upcoming election is Nov. 1

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Cap and Trade: Higher taxes

**TO THE EDITOR** | Cap and Trade in New York state.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative or RGGI has already been implemented in ten states. RGGI is the first market-based mandatory effort in the USA to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. REGGI consists of a board of ten state conglomerates whose energy producers must buy permits. This is a hidden tax on our electric bills. In our area, we pay fifteen cents per kilowatt hour; the national average is only ten cents. REGGI is the most devious program in

history. Cap and Trade was developed by Enron. Carbon dioxide output needs to be stopped. New York state was the birthplace of Cap and Trade in 2006; in 2007 New Jersey signed on also. One billion dollars in permits have been sold in the northeast and passed on resulting in higher utility bills. This tax was levied on New York state residents without representation! One half billion dollars is being taxed on us. This is unconstitutional and certainly has not created economic growth. RGGI has misled us secretly, and is a huge lie. Thus, the cost of electricity will double. We must repeal RGGI. New York state has lost 22,700 jobs

in August 2011 and seven million people since 1980! Several New York State fossil fuel generating plants have already closed including Dresden, while others are producing low power just to stay on line. Contact Americans for Prosperity New York at www.Americansforprosperity.org. All good patriots must call the governor's office at (518) 474-8390. I am confident that these contacts by all of us will put an end to this outrageous practice.

Remember: Cap and Trade means higher taxes, lost jobs, and less freedom.

**Gloria B. Misnick**  
Corning

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### CIRCULATION

Elmer Kuehner | Circulation director  
936-4651, Ext. 320

### EDITORIAL

Stella DuPree | Managing editor  
936-4651, Ext. 361  
sdupree@the-leader.com

### ADVERTISING

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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