

OPINION

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READER VIEW | JOHN C. JOHNSON

Try the green eggs and ham for yourself

Sam I Am finally tried the green eggs and ham and guess what; he liked them and went on to eat them everywhere.

Well, this is the message the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) is sending out to all of us; try it before you complain about it and call for its repeal. You may just find you like it and will want Medicare to expand to universal health care for everyone.

What have you got to lose? Virtually all complaints from those who lost coverage through Obamacare, or had a major increase in premiums or out-of-pocket medical expenses, are unfounded and not based on reality.

The Republican Party is using bogus attack ads, funded by the Koch brothers, with paid actors pretending they are being screwed by Obamacare. Please don't take my word for this. Tune into MSNBC, Free Speech TV, and Daily KOS on the Internet. If you get your political news and commentary from FOX News, or even CNN, please fact check everything through MSNBC and confirm its authenticity. If you still believe what Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Bill O'Reilly, Glenn Beck and Ann Coulter tell you, then you don't really want to know the truth.

Further, you should be sick and tired of all the Obama bashing; calling him King, Hitler, Stalin and other inflammatory names! He was elected, twice, by the voters to lead us out of economic chaos, and to put us on the path to a secure future. He leads, he gets things done and he does his best to get us out of wars that we should not have been in. He has his flaws, as we all do. No one gets elected to high office without taking donations from Wall Street and Big Business. Do you really believe that Vladimir Putin thinks Obama is a weak, feckless leader? He know, however, that our nation is divided and not backing him. The President is right to use diplomacy, sanctions and allying with Europe as a means to allow Putin to retreat from an untenable position. But make no mistake, we will use military force, if needed, with Europe's support.

Remember the first Gulf War. Don't forget this president ordered the "hit" on Osama bin Laden. Can you imagine the consequences if he made the wrong call? The best honor we can pay our servicemen and women is keeping them from fighting unnecessary wars that benefit Halliburton and KBR, and sending us taxpayers the bill. Bush, Cheney, Rice and Rumsfeld should be tried as war criminals! Google "Why we did it" - Rachel Maddow.

Lastly, let's stop walking around with a chip on our shoulders constantly

spoiling for a fight. The Republicans are trying to take your health insurance away and have no plan of their own. They want to privatize your Social Security. Why? A \$2.8 trillion surplus in the trust fund! Social Security is not going broke! There is enough to pay all benefits through 2033 if we did nothing at all. We will continue to make actuarial changes to keep Social Security secure for all Americans' futures. Even if you are a registered Republican, ask Tom Reed why he votes to cut your Social Security, Medicare and repeal Obamacare while keeping tax increases "off the table" for the wealthy. To ensure the future of Social Security and Medicare, for all, we only need to make the wealthy pay FICA tax on all their income.

If you truly believe there is nothing you can do about Republican hijacking, you are misinformed. The two things you can do are simple; vote and boycott. And you don't even have to argue your point of view. Just quietly register and vote in all local, state and national elections. And don't buy products from corporations that ship American jobs overseas or underpay their employees here.

Your votes in the mid-term (non-presidential) elections in November are critical to stop the Republicans from gaining a 60 percent majority in the House and recapturing the Senate. This election is far more important than the presidential one in 2016. If you are poor, working poor, or a worker earning less than \$50,000 per year, you really need to vote; especially the younger voter. Only you can get the Big Money and corruption out of Washington. Aren't you fed up with wealthy old white men calling the shots? No one can force you to vote and no one can buy, or stop your vote; unless you allow it. If you need help, call or write your county board of elections. If you want to change government try voting and see if you like those Green Eggs and Ham too.

I did not write this article to provoke further arguments and fighting amongst ourselves, but to remind you of your duty to participate in your democracy. Everything I have written about is true you should fact check my statements for yourself. The best source for political facts is the website: BernieSanders.gov. Mr. Sanders is a U.S. Senator from Vermont and he is an Independent that usually caucuses with the Democrats. He may run for president in 2016 and, with our support, just may end Washington politics as we know them. Check him out and see what you think.

John C. Johnston is a Painted Post resident.

WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Acting for our wounded heroes

On the day that some of you may be reading this column, it's likely that both houses of the State Legislature will be getting ready to enact a new state budget. Negotiations were ongoing over the budget's final details at the time of this writing, so I held off on any overall budget review until, as they say, "all the t's have been crossed, and all the i's dotted."

Instead, I think it's worthwhile to look back at a recent event that went largely unnoticed at the Capitol. You might have heard about one key agreement that came out of it — a new law enacting what's known as the "Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Act."

This new law will ensure, through set-asides and other initiatives, that six-percent of state contracts go to small businesses owned by service-connected disabled veterans. It mirrors previously approved Senate legislation I co-sponsored known as the "Jobs For Heroes" program.

The fact that we moved so quickly to enact this legislation highlights its practical and symbolic importance: it invests in the future of wounded warriors and their families. But this agreement to further assist disabled veterans was just one of a series of state-level actions announced at New York's first-ever "Veterans and Military Affairs Summit" in Albany on March 20th. The summit itself didn't get the attention it deserved,



SEN. TOM O'MARA

largely because it was overshadowed by budget-related protests and rallies occurring at the same time. But it shouldn't be overlooked.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Department of New York Commander Michael Pascal said of the summit, "It is great to see the leadership in the state take the time to address and work on issues facing veterans and military families. This first of its kind Veterans' Summit will be the foundation on which we build future programs and legislation in New York."

New York is a military state. We're home to West Point and Fort Drum. We can boast of 900,000 veterans as state residents. Seventy-two percent of these are combat veterans, with approximately 88,000 having served in Afghanistan or Iraq. We're also home to approximately 30,000 active duty military personnel and an additional 30,000 members of the National Guard and Reserve. And New York State has the fourth-highest number of veteran-owned small businesses in the nation, trailing only California, Texas, and Florida.

So the summit's overall goal was to bring together a roomful of the state's veterans affairs-stakeholders to

discuss ways that New York can improve programs and services for veterans and military families, especially in the areas of affordable housing, employment, education and health care. And, most importantly, it produced actions, including agreements for:

■ An expansion of the state's "Experience Counts" initiative (<http://veterans.ny.gov/content/experience-counts>) to cover military spouses.

■ A new "Troops-to-Energy Jobs Program" whereby electric and natural gas utilities will undertake the first-ever statewide coordinated effort to place veterans in available jobs in the utilities industry.

■ The addition of a Veterans Working Group within each of the state's Regional Economic Development Councils.

■ The creation of a state Department of Civil Service web portal for qualified disabled veterans to submit their applications and resumes for state employment.

■ The commitment of \$50 million through the State of New York Mortgage Agency to help provide affordable housing to veterans and military families.

■ The introduction of legislation allowing New York to join the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

■ New suicide awareness training requirements for employees of the state Division of Veterans' Affairs.

■ The establishment of a statewide "Strike Force" to

expedite federal disability claims for state veterans and their family members.

On average, veterans in New York currently wait close to 500 days for a decision on their VA disability claims. Currently in New York State there are approximately 12,000 pending VA disability claims, with many of these cases more than two years old. The new "Strike Force" will significantly help New York's veterans and their family members escape this backlog.

■ Requiring every state agency to appoint a Veterans Liaison Officer to coordinate initiatives focused on veterans and military families and increase awareness of new and available benefits.

You can read more about all of the initiatives coming out of the recent summit on the websites of the state Division of Veterans' Affairs (<http://veterans.ny.gov/>) and Division of Military and Naval Affairs (<http://dmna.ny.gov/>).

One summit participant, Paul Rieckhoff, founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, summed it up this way, "With America's longest wars winding down, there's never been a more important time to recommit to the cares and concerns of our veterans and their families."

Well said.

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



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OUR VIEW

A sad day in Bath

On Friday afternoon, the Philips Lighting plant in Bath stopped production, and many of the more than 200 workers who are losing their jobs walked out the doors for the last time.

They gathered afterward at the Bath VFW, and tilted back a good many drinks. But they weren't bitter, angry, or crying in their beers. Rather, it was more about getting together one last time, reminiscing a bit, sharing a few laughs.

What else can they do at this point?

The closure is a really tough blow for the Bath area. Philips says it was

because the lighting technology made there is becoming obsolete, but it's part of a pattern of the company closing down plants across the U.S. and shifting production overseas - where it's cheaper to do business.

The plant has been a major employer in Bath for 65 years. The average worker had 25 years of service.

There have been signs of life in the local economy lately, such as Corning Inc.'s diesel plant expansion.

Even so, it's a really tough situation for the Philips workers, and we wish them luck in figuring out what's next.