

OPINION

COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA, R-BIG FLATS

Getting outside benefits local economies

The remnants of a stubborn winter are hanging on, but the calendar says April and more and more of us will be heading outdoors to do a little fishing, biking, hiking, gardening or any number of other outdoor pastimes.

In fact, according to the Outdoor Industry Association, consumers spend \$88.7 billion annually on outdoor recreation, which is "now counted as an official U.S. industry and a major contributor to the U.S. economy."

It is an extremely telling development for many reasons, including its impact on local economies. In New York alone, the industry generates \$33.8 billion in consumer

spending, directly supports over 300,000 jobs, and is responsible for \$12.4 billion in wages and salaries and nearly \$3 billion in revenue.

In other words, "getting outdoors" is officially big business. Its importance is widely recognized throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions.

The regional grape and wine industry, for example, goes on attracting visitors by the millions. The state Wine and Grape Foundation has pegged the economic impact of grapes, grape juice and wine in New York State at \$4.8 billion. The Finger Lakes region is recognized as one of the Top 10 "must-visit stops" on a

wine tour of the world.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service surveys have revealed the huge economic impact of the nearly 90 million Americans who fish, hunt or engage in other wildlife-related recreation. It certainly has a significant impact in New York State where hunting, fishing and trapping are deeply rooted as part of our region's culture, experience and tradition. According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, New York's more than one million sportsmen and sportswomen generate nearly \$2 billion worth of statewide economic activity and directly create 28,000 jobs.

In addition, do not

overlook the importance of our regional parks and trails. New York can boast of one of America's outstanding systems of state parks, including a network of historic sites, parks and trails throughout the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions that are second to none, including the nationally renowned Watkins Glen State Park.

Every year, we have a great opportunity to help celebrate (and enhance at the same time) this amazing network of outdoor recreational opportunities thanks to Parks and Trails New York's (PTNY) "I Love My Park Day," which is scheduled this year for Saturday, May 5. This incredibly successful PTNY event aims

to encourage volunteer efforts to enhance New York's parks and historic sites and promote the entire park system. Events take place regionally and statewide. Last year, over 8,000 volunteers took part in more than 250 cleanup, improvement and beautification projects at 125 state parks and historic sites statewide. Additional "I Love My Park Day" information, including an online volunteer registration process now underway, is available on the PTNY website, www.ptny.org.

It is an outstanding and highly productive initiative supporting one of the state's most worthwhile commitments and investments. PTNY has pegged

the economic impact of New York's 178 state parks, 35 historic sites, 1,350 miles of hiking trails and over 8,000 campsites (not to mention boat launches, beaches, swimming pools and nature centers) at nearly \$2 billion in revenue, almost \$500 million in employment income and 20,000 jobs. Reports from the state Office of Parks and Recreation continue to show impressive annual attendance at state parks and historic sites.

The bottom line remains this: The trend toward getting outdoors very clearly keeps moving in the direction of a long-term, vital component of New York State's economic future.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

City's Charter more than an opinion

To the Editor,
Our City Charter regulates the city government. It outlines the duties of the Mayor, Council, City Manager and departments. It was adopted by the voters in 1995.

One important section authorizes the Mayor to appoint Councilmen to committees. The appointments do not need Council approval. The Mayor selects the best people for the position not subject to the political whims of the Council.

In 2011, Frank Coccho, challenged Mayor Rich Negri on this issue. The City Attorney at the time stated it was improper for the Council to vote on the Mayor's committee assignments.

This year, Frank revived this old issue. With several new Councilman, Frank began leading a new band of followers with no experience in local government. In a 5-4 vote, Frank passed his "interpretation" of the Charter

to require the Council to approve the Mayor's appointments despite the City Attorney's opinion.

Frank never explained why the attorney was wrong, only that the research was "just an opinion." Frank failed to explain it's an opinion based on attending law school, passing the bar exam, and practicing law.

Most disappointing is Mark ReSue. He won election as an independent, but followed Frank, not confident enough to establish his own position. ReSue stated, "I don't think any one person should have the power to appoint committees." If so, he should change the Charter, not ignore it.

I encourage new Councilmen to listen to advice from professionals such as the City Manager and Attorney, and form conclusions based on sound reasoning. The City runs best with a professional City Manager AND professional City Council.

My hat goes off to Bill Boland, Councilmen Alison Hunt, Chris Karam,

and Kate Paterson. Let's see if the others follow their lead or continue to follow Frank.

Warren Blackwell
Former City Councilman

Closer look at 2nd Amendment

To the Editor,
How many gun owners are members of a well-established militia?

If a well-established militia was the necessity for including the second amendment why are bazookas and flame throwers disallowed?

Do those conditions exist today?

Is it time to repeal the second amendment?

William A. Plummer
Painted Post

Put an end to abortion

To the Editor,
Thank you to all public servants.

Please put an end to the killing of all preborn children. It is murder.

Please recognize the value of each human life. It is not ever in the best interests of the mother or her baby to have life terminated. There are resources to help all mothers who find their circumstances to be challenging. Fathers of preborn babies have rights, too. Please think of them, also.

Please promote an agenda of life, not death. Thank you.

Janice Mc Laughlin
Interlaken

Reed should join his colleagues

To the Editor,
A recent report (Republicans who won't be coming back to Congress after 2018 midterm elections, FOX News.com, March 5, 2018) states that 36 Republican Congresspersons will not seek re-election in 2018.

Congressman Costello (R, PA 6) recently became the 37th to withdraw from the November elections. In a typical year, about 22 seated Republicans announce they will not seek re-election (Pew Research Center, March 2018).

This is the largest number of Republican House members to decide not to run for re-election since 1930, (Pew Research Center) – and there may be more. Among the reasons for leaving are health concerns, length of service, running for other offices – and perhaps the writing on the wall. One would just have to look at results of the PA-18 special election in March (Lamb, Democrat, winner) to see that it looks like a sea change is happening.

Mr. Lamb won in a reliably Republican area that Trump won by nearly 20 percentage points in 2016. The victory may be an ominous sign for Republicans ahead of this year's midterm elections. Congressman Reed's margin of victory in 2016 was about 14.4%. I am guessing that Reed speaks with his Republican colleagues

frequently and knows all this information well.

Although people usually vote with their wallets, there may be enough discontent in America (#WomansMarch – not to mention the new #MarchforOurLives movement) to swing the midterm election in many red districts like the 23rd.

Many feel that the Republican agenda is very oppressive (look at the President's very recent decision to ban the transgenders in the military after he spoke as a "friend of the LGBT community" in the campaign for example). As one of the President's supporters, Congressman Reed may wish to follow the lead of fellow Republicans and retire – not seek re-election in November.

Vincent Nykiel
Wayne

Thank you to area firefighters

To the Editor,

I would like to extend a thank you to all 14 Fire Departments that responded so quickly to the brush fire between Theresa Drive and the Corning Hospital.

Our home was in grave danger once the wind shifted and 30-foot flames came through the hedge-row and into our yard. This fire burned 14 acres and it was no small feat to bring it under control.

The gas well also had to be protected as well as the two houses behind ours.

These men and women should be commended

and are probably not thanked enough for the time that they spend training and please remember that most of them are volunteers.

Since it was our house at the end of Theresa Drive that was in danger, I got to see first hand the professionalism of these firefighters.

Since residents on Theresa Drive chose not to unite and bring a water line down the street, there was no fire hydrant. All water to fight this fire had to be brought in by tankers.

Think about that if there is a working house fire on your street.

Phyllis McDonald
Corning

Reply to Morrongiello letter

To the Editor,
Dr. Michael Morrongiello's March 25 letter to the Editor titled "The Left is Wrong on Gun Laws" is an all-to-familiar rant from Republicans that neglects to discuss essential truths in the gun debate. The main argument is simply a fear-based statement repeated over and over: "Any gun laws would weaken the 2nd Amendment and the government will then begin taking away weapons from law-abiding Americans."

The truth is this: meaningful gun legislation does not need to include taking away guns.

What would be wrong with registering and licensing any firearm as we now license and register our cars?

It would be easy because a national registry is already in place. Whenever anyone registers a car or receives a license, that information is then readily available in all fifty states.

That same, state-managed system can be duplicated for the licensing of guns.

And what would be wrong with allowing research on gun violence? If the NRA believes guns are not the problem, then why did the NRA pay for legislation that now prohibits any research?

If we have a gun problem, we will never solve it without researching the gun problem.

Please understand, even if Congress bans bump stocks, high-capacity magazines, raises the age to buy a gun to 21, implements more reliable

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