

OPINION

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

State leaders eyeing higher taxes, again

Several months ago in this column, I highlighted warnings about a coming storm in New York's system of Medicaid.

In early September, I pointed to a little noticed report from the state Budget Division that Medicaid spending "continues to exceed expectations." Shortly thereafter, the state comptroller revealed that the state Medicaid program made more than \$100 million in duplicate payments and reiterated the longstanding need to "eliminate this waste" and "improve efficiency."

All of which presented the chance to restate long-held criticisms that Medicaid remains a system too often undermined by fraud, mismanagement, and waste. Overall annual spending on Medicaid approaches \$80 billion, nearly one-half of New York's entire state budget. Medicaid watchdogs note that the system now provides benefits to at least one-third of all state residents.

Consequently, I wrote back in September, "As enrollment figures continue to soar, it becomes clearer by the day that counties and local property taxpayers simply cannot sustain this burden."

Little did we know, because since September reports have surfaced that the Medicaid program has exploded and leaves the state with a \$6-billion-plus budget deficit heading into 2020. The Medicaid program alone currently

accounts for a \$4-billion shortfall and multi-billion gaps well into the future.

According to one analysis from the Empire Center, "The remarkable thing about the state's multi-billion-dollar Medicaid crisis is that it is almost entirely the result of the Cuomo administration's own actions...The problem is not a shortfall of revenue, but a spike in spending - which is the direct consequence of policy changes and political deals made by Cuomo and his team."

Many of us have warned many times across the past decade that New York's Medicaid system overreaches as a public policy, overspends as a government program, and is mismanaged. A recent Buffalo News editorial references this longstanding criticism by recalling a 2014 report from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation showing that New York State administered America's eighth-most costly Medicaid program with a per-enrollee cost 36% higher than the national average. California's system was the fourth least expensive, by contrast.

Furthermore, the current system places an enormous burden on local property taxpayers. County executives, mayors, and other local officials throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide, continually point to Medicaid as their most burdensome and costly unfunded state mandate.

Now it's out in the open: Medicaid is a fiscal train wreck barreling out of control toward future generations of state and local taxpayers. Addressing this crisis now becomes the defining issue of the 2020 legislative session. It presents an opportunity to remake the system into one that is less costly, more efficient and effective for

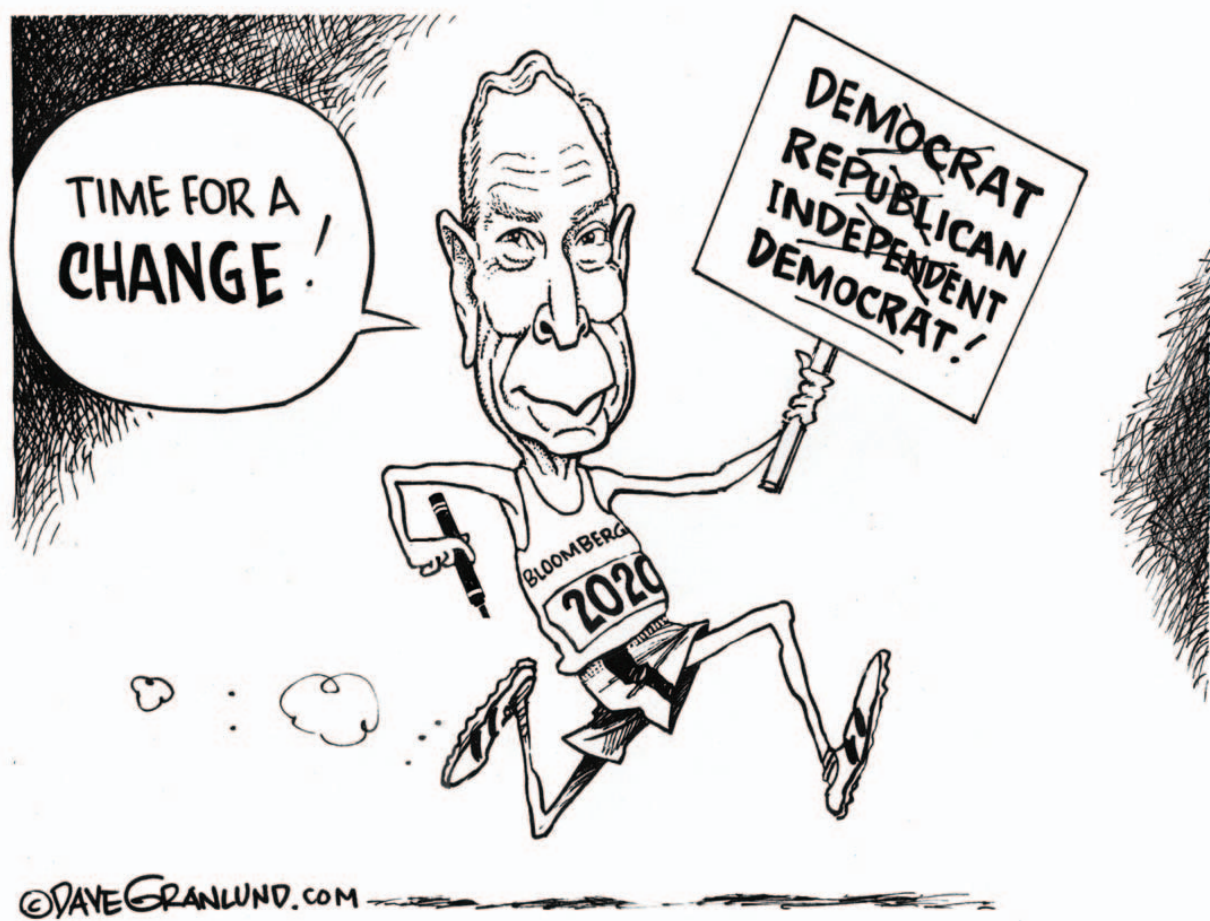
those it is truly meant to service, and more responsible to taxpayers. It presents an opportunity to put in place badly needed and long-overdue spending controls, and get rid of the mismanagement. Right?

Recently, when asked about the crisis, the Democrat leader of the State Assembly said that "when there's a concern about

having enough money, the two options always are do you cut spending or do you raise revenue and for us in the Assembly we always believe in raising revenue." The Democrat leadership of the state Senate is taking a wait-and-see approach. Governor Cuomo plans to reveal his response early next year. Ominously, what

we're not hearing is this: No new taxes. In fact, my fear is that the state Assembly Speaker may be speaking for them all when he says the first place to turn to address this crisis resulting from overspending and mismanagement is to raise taxes, again, on already overburdened taxpayers. Typical New York.

ANOTHER VIEW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trump: The political heretic

To the Editor, Impeachment drama merely a national billboard publicly cheerleading hatred for Trump, a marketing drumbeat.

An effort to destroy President Trump and his bid for re-election. The 24 hour news cycle provides barrages of smears, gossip from a Democrat party with nothing positive to offer

people. It is akin to throwing as much crap at the wall and seeing what sticks. I would call it "Blitzkrieg Slander".

The only hope lazy, lethargic, visionless, socialist Democrats have of defeating Trump. It reveals the incompetence and wretchedness in the Democrat party.

Impeachment began as a one party investigation behind closed doors. Evolving to a regimented

choreographed unholy inquisition. Like the "Holy Inquisition" of the middle ages, this impeachment is designed to tar and feather a political heretic. Someone who confronts the secular orthodoxy of the "Good ole boys and girls of the federal government Washington cabal".

That heretic is Donald Trump. He threatens feathered nests of the political elite. The businesses they have established in government, providing them riches and power, even though they are lazy and incompetent. They produce nothing but laws oppressive to the people, yet lavish in luxury for their fraudulent efforts and accomplishments. Still, they have managed to hoodwink us they are superiorly smart. The cloak of superiority and elitism

hides the corrosive incompetence and corruption of egotistical politicians.

Their intelligence focused primarily on politics. An area of study which is dishonest, fraudulent and corrupt. A dark and dirty sewer where the rats and snakes thrive. These crooked people we place on the pedestals of leadership direct our paths to mediocrity, then destruction.

Trump threatens the cushy positions politics has provided these slimy swamp creatures. Like rats backed into a corner, they are viciously going for Trump's throat to eliminate scrutiny, his threat.

Gerald J. Furnkranz Millport

Stein a natural next step to Sanders

To the Editor,

The Bernie Sanders campaign, even though it was limited by the establishment in the Democratic Party, had a vital role in introducing the issues of income inequality and crippling debt to the public debate.

The Jill Stein campaign is the natural next step for those who supported Sanders because she is now the only presidential candidate that will talk about these inherent problems and their necessary solutions.

The Green Party candidate specifically proposes universal single-payer healthcare and free higher education with student debt cancellation as two ways to address inequality and debt.

Medicare for all removes the \$400 billion spent on unnecessary corporate paperwork, bureaucracy, and added costs while insuring that people do not have to go into abject poverty in order to be healthy.

Free higher education with no student debt is an investment in the future in much the same way that the G.I. Bill originally functioned. For every dollar spent on education, the country will get seven dollars back in terms of a stronger productivity and consumer base of the next generation. And just as universally accessible education frees our future from debt servitude, universally accessible healthcare frees our present from debt servitude.

These two solutions understand that income inequality will eventually lead to crippling debt and a loss of true economic freedom. The sole purpose of inequality and debt is to keep people passive and obedient as they struggle to make ends meet in the face of corporate power and domination.

Darin Robbins Corning

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CHRISTMAS COOKIE BAKE SALE

Saturday, December 14

9 a.m. -12:00 Noon or until the cookies are gone!!

First Baptist Church
110 East First Street, Corning

Over 5000 home-baked cookies!
Come early for good selection!

For more information
Call 936-9514

CIRG'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Wednesday, Dec. 18th, 2019 • 1:30pm-3pm

Location: Riverfront Cafe

Remember to bring non perishable food items for the Corning Community Pantry or a monetary donation. Please respond to Linda McDonald at 607-368-2244 by December 11th if you plan to attend. If Corning PP schools are cancelled or on a 2 hour delay we will move the party to the 19th.

The CIRG Programs are open to all Corning Incorporated retirees, their spouses and friends. Parking is available in the Corning garage near the Arch.