

# OPINION

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Reed needs help with the numbers

To the Editor,  
Rep. Reed's cost-benefit calculator is broken. For example, he supported the Trump Tax Cut and opposed the bipartisan budget agreement that kept the government open. When he was asked why he voted for the Republican tax cut that added \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years and yet opposed the budget agreement that added only \$350 billion to the national debt over the same period, Reed said he "...felt the tax cuts will generate offsetting revenue."

There is absolutely no evidence supporting his feeling that tax cuts will generate offsetting revenues. When pressed about this Reed said, "This debt crisis is why I ran for office in 2010." He added, "My record is clear ... I support our young men and women in the military. I voted for a package that fully funded them, to give them the resources, training and equipment

in order to do the job successfully, but most importantly to come home safe to their families. Just this week, we did such a thing and we did it in a fiscally responsible manner. We paid for it."

The fact is, with his vote for the Tax Cut, Reed just unpaid for it!

Nevertheless, Reed's 1% donors are very happy with his voting record. That is why, according to the Federal Elections Commission, Reed has so much more money than his Democratic opponents. According to FEC filings, Reed, who is seeking a fourth term in Congress, raised more than \$1.7 million and had just over \$1 million on hand at the end of 2017.

Reed's seven potential Democratic opponents have raised less than \$500,000 the FEC report, which was released Tuesday, shows. Their combined campaigns have less than a quarter of a million dollars on hand.

Kay M. Thomas  
Dundee

## ANOTHER VIEW



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

### Remain on guard against meth's comeback

A recent New York Times article carried this headline, "Meth, the Forgotten Killer, Is Back. And It's Everywhere." While meth may have been overshadowed by heroin and opioids recently, meth certainly has not been gone nor forgotten in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes – and remember that we've been identified as a hotbed of meth-related crime in the past – but the point is well taken. Over the past few years, it is not inaccurate to say that meth has been making a comeback.

According to the Times, "Nationally, nearly 6,000 people died from stimulant use – mostly meth – in 2015, a 255 percent increase from 2005, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The percentage of the nation's drug overdose toll that was attributed to stimulants inched up to 11 percent of the deaths."

So we remain on guard regionally. Awareness and education, prevention and treatment remain fundamental responses. But so are tougher laws and criminal penalties – for the sake of deterrence,

and punishment.

I've sponsored or cosponsored numerous pieces of meth-related legislation over the past several years to significantly increase the criminal penalties for manufacturing, selling, and possessing the illegal and highly toxic and addictive drug. The Senate has consistently approved these actions with strong, bipartisan support, only to see them stall in the Democrat-controlled Assembly.

This year, I've recently introduced a new piece of legislation (S7673) targeting one of the worst dangers associated with clandestine meth labs: explosions and fires. This new legislation calls for adding the crime of first degree arson, a Class A-1 felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison, to the list of charges that can be levelled against a meth cooker who causes a fire or an explosion that damages property or injures another person. There have been increasing incidents of meth lab explosions and fires in recent years in Corning, Elmira, Elmira Heights, Hornell, and other areas. We also can never

forget the 2011 death of 20-year-old Kanisha Wood in a meth lab fire in a rural cabin in Baldwin, Chemung County.

In New York State, the crime of arson currently only covers intentional acts. Since explosions and fires involving meth labs are considered unintentional "accidents," cookers cannot be charged under arson statutes.

That needs to change. Explosions and fires caused by meth labs have caused death, injuries, and extensive property damage. The hazardous and toxic chemicals associated with these labs pose unacceptable risks to our neighborhoods and the public at large, as well as to the safety of police officers, firefighters, and other first responders.

Very simply, our laws need to be as tough and as thorough as they can possibly be to try to deter and punish the irresponsible meth cookers who have no regard for the health and safety of the rest of us. I'm also sponsoring legislation to:

- increase the criminal penalties for the possession of meth manufacturing material and the unlawful manufacture of meth, implementing

a series of increasingly severe felony offenses (S2123). Among other provisions, this legislation would get tougher on repeat offenders and on those who cook meth in the presence of a child under the age of 16;

- increase the criminal penalties for the possession and/or sale of the drug by implementing an increasingly severe set of felony offenses (S2824); and

- enhance the ability of local police and district attorneys to track and prosecute violations of restrictions on over-the-counter sales of cold medications that are key ingredients used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine (S1236).

From bath salts, heroin and opioids to meth and synthetics, the resurgence of these drugs has become alarming. Their only byproducts are addiction, overdoses, broken families, tragic deaths, and violence – and they increasingly burden local systems of health care, criminal justice, and social services.

The Assembly Democratic leadership needs to join the Senate and act this session.

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