

# OPINION

TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

## What's your opinion?

Governor Andrew Cuomo will deliver his 10th, that's right, tenth, State of the State message to the Legislature later this week.

That will be followed by the unveiling of the governor's proposed 2020-2021 state budget to begin a new decade in state government.

The loudest alarm is that after a decade of the Cuomo administration, New York starts this new decade more than \$6 billion in the hole and still with a reputation as one of America's highest-taxed, most expensive and overregulated states - with one of the worst business friendly environments in the nation to boot.

It raises, in my view, some tough choices for the future of communities and taxpayers across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions.

We need to get to work on a new direction, a more commonsense approach, a clearer vision.

Numerous advocacy groups are busy setting the stage for this new year in state government by staking out public policy positions, advancing legislative priorities, and even recommending specific legislation from agriculture to workforce development.

"No new taxes?" will be one prominent question that needs to be answered this session, especially with state government under one-party, Democrat control and many Democrat leaders already eyeing higher taxes as the way out of the current budget deficit.

What about the new bail reform law that took effect on Jan. 1 and is now being widely recognized as a disaster and an outright danger to communities throughout this state. Will Governor Cuomo and the Democrat leaders who wrote it and are responsible for its enactment, despite repeated warnings that it was a bad law, finally recognize the threat it poses to the public at large?

Every year I hear from thousands of constituents who take the time through an e-mail, a letter, a phone call, a community meeting, on the street, or in some other way to share ideas and views on the issues of the day. As you can imagine, we don't always see eye to eye - and that's as it should be.

The input - negative or positive, constructive or not - is what matters. It helps provide the insight and understanding every legislator must have to represent his or her legislative district effectively.

Consequently, as I have done annually since joining the Senate, an online Community and Legislative Survey will be posted later this week on my Senate website, [www.omara.nysenate.gov](http://www.omara.nysenate.gov).

The goal is to encourage local input on a range of specific challenges facing the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, such as private-sector job creation, government reform, education, mandate relief, public safety, health care, and transportation, among

others.

For example, as I noted above, one of the overriding decisions in 2020 will be how best to close the state's current budget gap, as well as address short- and long-term budget priorities.

It's a long list of challenges and difficult choices. It's also a list with no quick-fix solutions. Consequently, it remains important to have a

full public airing of what we are facing now, in the foreseeable future, and potentially even years from now - and this is one way to encourage it.

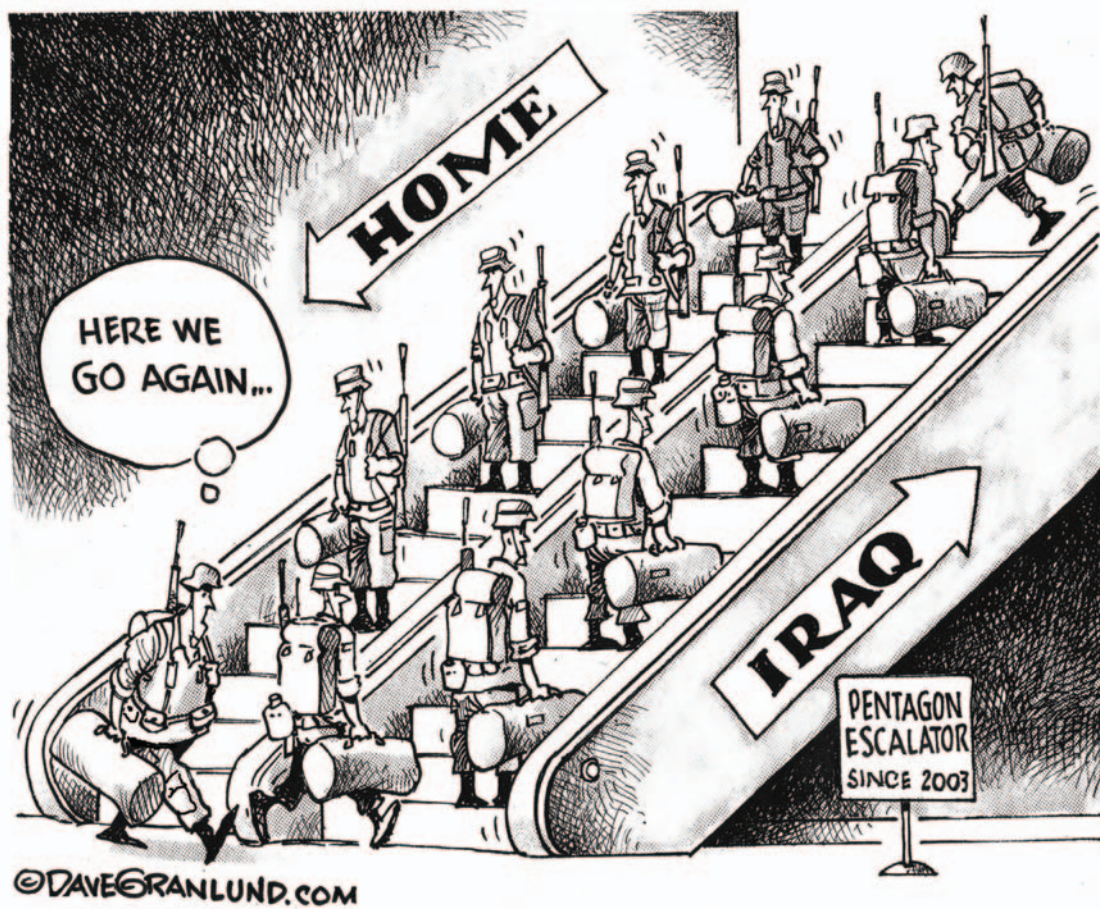
The online survey offers meaningful and useful snapshots of what's on the minds of area residents paying attention to New York State government and willing to give some thought to the choices being debated in Albany.

In addition to answering a series of detailed questions, most respondents also take the chance to share more extensive, detailed comments.

Again, I cannot say enough about the value of this local input as the Legislature begins working in earnest toward solutions in 2020. It's timely, it's informative, and I truly appreciate the participation.

What's your opinion?

### ANOTHER VIEW



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Partisan voting not good for America

To the Editor,

I recently called Tom Reed's Washington office to ask if Congressman Reed voted for H.R. 3, the Lower Drug Costs Now Act.

The answer was, "no" because it was a partisan vote. Only Democrats voted for it, Republicans voted against it.

I then asked if Tom approves of what was in the bill, specifically:

-- It allows the federal government to negotiate directly with drug manufacturers to secure fair prices.

-- It creates a new \$2,000 out-of-pocket annual maximum on prescription drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries.

-- It prevents unwarranted price hikes above inflation for thousands of drugs.

-- It reinvests savings from lower drug prices into critical areas: new dental, vision, and

hearing benefits to Medicare Part B; lifesaving research at the NIH; modernizing the FDA to speed new cures; grants to fight the opioid crisis; and new infrastructure and health services at Community Health Centers.

Is the bill good for America?

Yes it is. But it was a partisan vote. It may be good for America, but not for the Republicans?

If Congressman Reed would have voted for America, then it would not have been a partisan vote.

Congressman Reed is in favor of lowering prices on insulin because he has a family member with diabetes.

What would you say if your family member was a pancreatic cancer survivor and had a pancreatectomy? Would you then know that in addition to insulin, pancreatic enzymes for digestion can cost \$1,000 a month, even with a prescription plan? Would you then fight for reduced enzyme prescription costs?

HR 3 would help everyone. Not only insulin users. But HR 3 is at the mercy of partisan voting.

It may be good for our citizens, but not for Republicans. Only the Democ-RATS voted for HR 3.

Not good for Republicans.

America isn't built on partisan voting. We expect our representatives to vote for America, not party.

**Mel Solomon  
Ithaca**

#### Incompetent and desperate timing

To the Editor,

Our President has been impeached by the House of Representatives.

The debate to consider his removal from office was to begin Friday in the Senate.

However, in an instant, all national attention has moved away from this historic impeachment process.

The shift in focus came about because, late at night, before the impeachment trial was to be discussed the very next day, our country's attention was dramatically shifted to the President's successful order to assassinate the Iranian commander Major General Qassim Suleimani.

Military advisors and everyone who understands how our government works are wondering how such an order could have even been considered. How could such a bold move be made without consulting any Congressional leaders? How could such a bold move be made without informing our European allies? How could such a bold move be made when the Iranian response is sure to be powerful, deadly and threaten global security?

Now we are on the brink of war because the President was desperate.

Backed into a corner, Trump ordered an assassination that has surely been on

his agenda for a long period of time. There is little doubt our President ordered Suleimani's assassination on the eve of an impeachment trial that was sure to present overwhelming evidence of the Trump's scandalous, self-serving and illegal actions as our President.

In the big picture of US/Iran relations, it is difficult to believe the very best time to assassinate Suleimani was precisely the night before the biggest trial of Trump's life.

While difficult to believe, we can see also see our President's actions as "typical Trump."

Along with disparaging NATO, denying climate change and befriending Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin, we now see Trump's late-night decision as desperate, incompetent, unpredictable and thereby further weakening our position in the world as a country of integrity and goodwill.

**Gary A. McCaslin  
Corning**

### OTHER VIEW | ADIRONDACK DAILY ENTERPRISE

## No easy fix for nursing home staff shortage

The shortage of nursing home workers isn't likely to go away any time soon.

One reason for it is the current economy, which gives workers plenty of options but is tough for those competing to hire them. Nationally, just 3.5% of the workforce is unemployed, the lowest in roughly 50 years. In New York it's not much higher at 4%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Local nursing homes are desperate for staff at all levels, from registered nurse to certified nursing assistant, a job that doesn't necessarily even require a high school diploma. They offer competitive wages, but many restaurants and supermarkets are increasing their pay, too. And there's no way around the fact that nursing home work is harder than most; it involves lifting, bathing, cleaning up after our elders who can't manage

on their own so well anymore. For nurses, it's scary to have so few of them on each shift, and many flee to work at places that aren't so understaffed.

On the upside, nursing home work is also more honorable than most jobs, and people appreciate the service - even if it doesn't always seem like it.

The economy will eventually shift in favor of nursing home employers, but even

then, demographics will keep exacerbating this particular staff shortage for at least a decade or two. Soon, the huge generation of Americans born in the baby boom after World War II will start entering nursing homes. The later generations that make up the workforce are smaller, and therefore the ratio of people of nursing home worker age (18 to 64) to senior citizens (65 and older) has shrunk rapidly. In 1900 the ratio was 13.6 to 1,

but by 2030 it is projected to be 2.8 to 1. Management at Mercy Living Center in Tupper Lake says it's already close to 2.8 to 1 in the Tri-Lakes area, which is credible since demographic studies consistently show the Adirondack Park has an older average population than all but a few parts of the U.S.

Again, there's no easy fix. Raising wages would be nice,

**See SHORTAGE, A6**