

OPINION

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

Priorities can't get lost in the shuffle

Studies continue to recognize New York as the state with the highest tax burden in the nation.

In April, for example, the personal finance website WalletHub compared the tax burden in all 50 states. According to the study, "To determine the residents with the biggest tax burdens, WalletHub compared the 50 states across the three types of state tax burdens — property taxes, individual income taxes and sales and excise taxes — as a share of total personal income in the state."

You can find the results at <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-highest-lowest-tax-burden/20494/>. For New Yorkers, however, this is the only result that matters: we are the highest taxed residents in America. Number one.

Last week, recognizing the constant need for state government to take actions trying to ensure that our farmers won't be taxed and regulated out of business, the Senate approved legislation I co-sponsor to significantly increase the Farm Workforce Retention Credit. Under the legislation, the phased-in tax credit would double to \$600 per eligible farm employee in 2018, \$800 in 2019, \$1,000 in 2020, and \$1,200 in 2021.

It's a small action, granted, but at least it represents a move in a more positive direction. It would

at least strengthen the bottom line. The Senate also approved legislation to:

- help some farmers invest in facilities and buy equipment by providing a tax credit for dairy farmers to encourage investment in facilities and equipment that will allow them to take advantage of a growing demand for "value-added" dairy products, like flavored drinks, yogurts, and other products; and

- lessen the burden on small farm goods transportation by creating a 10% discount on New York State Thruway tolls for trucks transporting food produced by farms. The legislation would help farmers struggling with rising costs by allowing single unit trucks or other larger vehicles to transport food and other produce to grocery stores and dinner tables across the state at a lower cost.

The moves are among the latest efforts by the Senate Majority to stay focused on keeping key state and regional industries strong. Since 2011, including this year, we have withstood Governor Cuomo's repeated attempts to cut farm-related programs and services, and restored more than \$68 million for agricultural-based initiatives and investments in cutting-edge agricultural research, support for the next generation of family farmers, environmental stewardship, and protections for plant, animal, and public health.

ANOTHER VIEW



COMMENTARY | GUSTAVO ARELLANO, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Dems overconfident in California House races

If you think the nation has been inordinately obsessed with Orange County's House races, you ain't seen nothing yet. Democratic candidates managed to place second in races for the 39th, 45th, 48th and 49th congressional districts — districts the national Democratic Party has declared essential to winning control of the House in the midterms. I expect national political reporters to be parachuting into O.C. Nov. 6 as if it were D-Day.

I get the obsession. The possibility that O.C. could deliver control of Congress to Democrats

— a once-unthinkable proposition — appears from the outside like a great dramatic turnaround story. Yes, minorities live here — a majority of us, even! Yes, GOP registration figures are precipitously down from historical heights in the Reagan years.

But the crucial national insight out of the O.C. primary is this: The Republican Party can survive in an increasingly diverse America if it makes Asians "white."

The strategy has worked marvelously well for the Republican Party of Orange County. Contrary to any portrayal

as racist troglodytes, the GOP here has proven a pioneer in diversifying O.C.'s politics. The man who created the county's modern-day GOP, Tom Fuentes, was Mexican American. The first Latino on the Orange County Board of Supervisors was Republican Gaddi Vasquez. Although Latinos sure as heck don't embrace him as one of their own, even O.C. Dist. Atty. Tony Rackauckas is half-Mexican.

The GOP has done better at promoting Asian American politicians. America's first Thai American elected official was an O.C. Republican, as was one of the United States' first Japanese American mayors and its first Vietnamese city council member.

Today, Asian American Republicans dominate Orange County politics. Three of the five members on the Board of Supervisors are Asian Americans; the clerk-recorder is a Vietnamese refugee. This fall, there's a strong possibility the county will send two Asian immigrants to the state Senate and three to the Assembly. And I won't even get into the deep bench of

young, diverse faces the GOP has waiting in line in local offices.

Meanwhile, in this vital election year, the local Democratic Party is still relying on — there's no way to put this nicely — tired old men. O.C.'s sole Democratic congressman, Lou Correa, is nice but inspires as much passion as a lawn. Assemblyman Tom Daly was mayor of Anaheim back when I was a teen — what is he still doing on my ballot? State Senate candidate Tom Umberg was a rising local star for Democrats ... in the early 1990s.

In the congressional battlefields, the sole minority Democrat is Gil Cisneros, who will face off against Young Kim in the 39th District. But Cisneros is everything Democrats rail against on the national stage — a self-funded millionaire with no real local ties or political experience. Meanwhile, Kim's story — a small-business owner who worked her way through elections for lower office to become a state assemblywoman and possibly the first Korean American woman ever elected to Congress — is the stuff of Democratic P.R. dreams.

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The Leader (ISSN #10501983) The Leader is published daily at 34 West Pulteney Street, Corning, New York 14830 by Gatehouse Media, LLC. Periodical postage paid at Corning, N.Y. 14830-0817. USPS code | 0586-160. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Leader, 34 West Pulteney Street, Corning, New York 14830.

The Leader Staff:	Postal Rates:
Publisher Rick Emanuel Group Publisher 936-4651, Ext. 303	Steuben County One month \$39.12 Three months \$117.36 Six months \$234.72 One year \$469.44
Editorial Shawn Vargo Executive Editor 936-4651, Ext. 361 svargo@the-leader.com	ELSEWHERE IN USA One month \$49.47 Three months \$148.41 Six months \$296.82 One year \$593.64
Circulation Nicolie Harrison Circulation Manager 936-4651, Ext. 314	Home delivery subscriptions reflect basic subscription rates before additional charges. Due to the added value of special editions there will be an additional charge for each special edition which will accelerate the expiration of your subscription. There will be no more than 12 special editions per year.
Advertising Heather Falkey Ad Director 936-4651, Ext. 347 hfalkey@the-leader.com	
Business Office Becky Post Administration 936-4651, Ext. 306 bpost@the-leader.com	
Classifieds 936-4651, Ext 651 Retail 936-4651, Ext 653	www.the-leader.com

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