

OPINION

TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

A nightmare for farming communities

Despite the many burdens weighing on farm families, before leaving Albany last week Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Democratic leaders of the state Legislature piled on one more.

Euphemistically called the “Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act,” there is nothing fair about it. It mandates overtime pay for a farm-worker who voluntarily wants to work on his or her mandated day off. It fails to take into account the cost of housing many farm employers provide to many farmworkers.

Further, it creates a three-member Farm Wage Board with the power to change the law whenever it sees fit and as soon as two months after this law goes into effect.

This passes the buck from the Legislature to an unelected body, an action becoming all too common under the current Legislature, including, among many others, commissions on Legislative Pay, Commuter Tax/ Congestion Pricing and Taxpayer Financing of Campaigns.

From day one, I strongly opposed this move. With the state Senate now under Democrat control, the farm community has been on high alert this year, recognizing that an extreme action like this one could very well become the law of their

land.

Bottom line: the Act’s approval could decimate net farm income for every sector of our leading agricultural economy and put family farms out of business.

I have shared this alarm with many colleagues, including area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano. Early this year, we called for state-wide public hearings to give farmers, growers, agribusiness owners, farm community leaders, farmworkers, and all others the opportunity to testify and finally dispel the falsehoods and myths surrounding the proposal.

In part, we wrote, “The misguided and misrepresented Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act poses an extreme action at a time of already severe economic struggle for New York State farmers. Worse, the Act’s consequences would produce a nightmare of a ripple effect across local communities in every region of this state and profoundly diminish the future of high quality, local food production.”

It will indeed be a nightmare of a ripple effect. Some scenarios are stunning. It’s already been shown that total farm labor costs in New York State are at least 63 percent of net cash farm income, compared to 36 percent nationally. Farm Credit East estimates the new Act would increase farm labor costs

by nearly \$300 million or close to 20%, resulting in a drop in net farm income of 23%.

For New York State dairy farms barely making ends meet under current economic conditions (and keeping in mind that New York State has already lost nearly 20% of our dairy farms over the past five years), the Act could wipe out remaining net farm income.

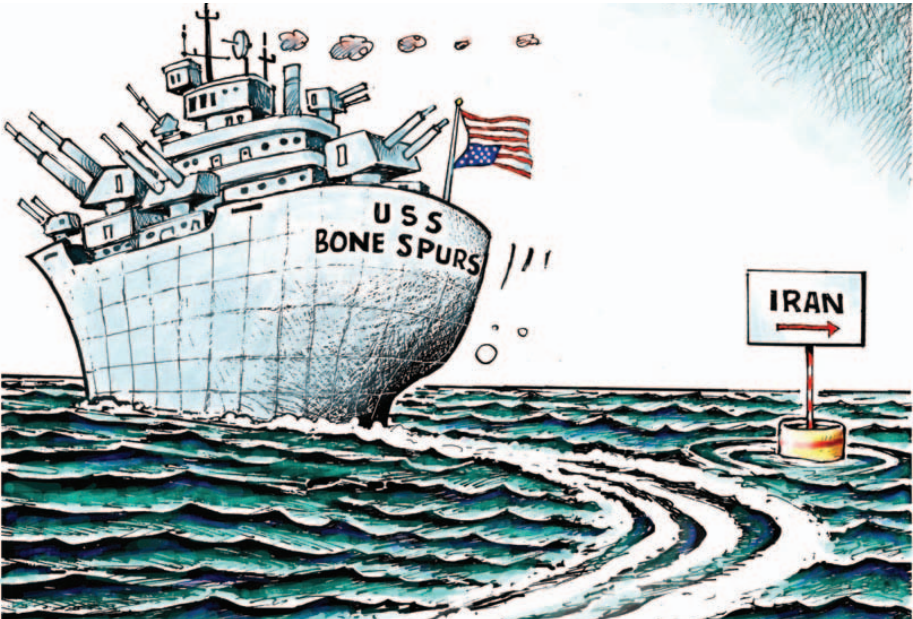
One Southern Tier generational dairy farmer said at a Farm Bureau news conference earlier this year that the legislation would drive up her costs by more than \$200,000 and put her farm out of business.

Her fears echo what many family farms now face. Far from implementing fair labor practices, this action risks an enormous loss of farms and the thousands of livelihoods these farms support.

In short, it represents another bad move at the worst possible time, when too many family farms across our region and statewide are already struggling to survive.

In a long list of similar actions this year, it is another extreme move by a radically progressive state government – under one-party control with no checks and balances – that will cost jobs, devastate hard-working families, and further weaken the foundations of local upstate economies.

ANOTHER VIEW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Parents: Talk to teens about underage drinking

To the Editor,

As teenagers across the country prepare to celebrate key milestones in their lives in the upcoming weeks of graduation season, whether at graduation itself or the many parties that come with this momentous occasion, parents can do their part to make sure they’re ready by talking with their teenagers about underage drinking.

While this isn’t always an easy conversation, there are several tools for parents and educators to start these vital discussions.

Seneca Beverage Corporation would like to remind parents about the ‘Family Talk About Drinking’ program, a free parent guide designed to encourage open and honest communication between parents and their children of all ages. Programs like this, paired with education and effective law enforcement, are essential to further reducing underage drinking.

You can find Family Talk About Drinking resources online.

As many of us at Seneca Beverage Corp are parents ourselves, we know the safety of your children is your top priority. As they

grow up, children and teenagers look to you for guidance on how to navigate our complex world.

There’s no single “right way” to talk about alcohol, underage drinking and responsible choices – what’s most important is to start the conversation, and Family Talk About Drinking can help you do just that.

Betsy Potter
Better World Manager,
Seneca Beverage Corp

Make Summer 2019 a safe one

To the Editor,

This letter is in response to the article of June 4 that appeared in The Leader on 225 arrests made during Memorial Day Weekend in New York State.

Summer is finally here and with the warm weather brings great celebrations - Graduation parties, special summer events and lake activities.

All of the above usually involve driving to the event and drinking is usually involved.

Plans must be made before we start the above activities, or you will be among the new statistics for summer 2019. Just ask the 225 people arrested last month who did not take

the warning and thought it would never happen to them. Do not be one of those for summer 2019 or ever.

It is a big price to pay for one summer celebration. \$10,000 is a lot of money to spend for a DWI and as shown in the above statistics, some people do not get it.

Points to keep in mind: 1) there will be more sobriety checkpoints this summer 2) have a designated driver 3) take a cab 4) stay over at a friend’s house or hotel 5) you can get a BWI by operating a boat under the influence of alcohol (0.08 same as autos) 6) remember the Host Social Liability allowing people to leave a party where alcohol was served to drive home can be held responsible 7) the drinking age in New York State is 21.

More news releases, monitor signs on roads, TV commercials for summer 2019, yet some people think it will never happen to them. Life has no guarantees.

Buckle up, stay off texting, drive within the speed limit, no drinking and driving, no impaired driving and drugs and make the summer 2019 the best and safest yet for everyone.

Fran Avagliano
Corning

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Education about Alzheimer’s and other dementias can turn the tide for a caregiver

By Janet VanValkenburg,
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and Nanette Friedman,
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If you have noticed changes related to memory loss, thinking or behavior in a family member, you may feel uncertain about voicing your worries. Perhaps, your loved one tells you, “Nothing is wrong.” Perhaps, you may have been hesitant to learn more yourself for fear of the future. However, these are significant health concerns, and it’s important to figure out what is going on with your loved one. Ask your doctor for a cognitive assessment test to either rule out dementia or establish at which stage of the disease your loved one is.

Learning that someone you care about has Alzheimer’s or

another dementia can be life changing. Immediate reactions of denial and fear are normal. While we understand both the person diagnosed and the caregiver need time to come to terms with the diagnosis, we urge you to reach out to the Alzheimer’s Association. We will help your family learn about the diagnosis, prepare for what to expect at various stages of the disease, and acquire strategies that will make living with dementia easier.

In our experience, it is not unusual for a primary caregiver such as a spouse or an adult child to be the first in their family to seek information about the disease soon after a diagnosis. These family members attend our introductory sessions, which focus on understanding dementia and provide tools for caregivers to process a dementia diagnosis. The sooner you are able to accept the diagnosis, the better suited you will be to help your loved one move closer to acceptance, too.

Some caregivers continue seeking more information and attend more advanced education programs we offer. But, more often than not, we don’t see caregivers for another year or two, while their loved one is in the early-stage of the disease. These families are absorbing information about dementia before they might be ready to learn more. Two or three years after the diagnosis and after we meet them at our introductory sessions, we see

the same family members come back and enroll in our advanced education programs.

As dementia progresses, communication becomes challenging. Your loved one may experience difficulty expressing themselves through language. When the person with dementia loses their ability to share thoughts, they also lose the ability to understand the caregiver. We equip caregivers with strategies of effective verbal and non-verbal communication. These strategies can be life changing. One caregiver who attended our communication session said, “This information is so incredibly powerful, it needs to be broadcast on evening news on all channels.”

Families also seek guidance on how to respond to new dementia-related behaviors. Caregivers notice mood changes late in the afternoon, when their loved one becomes too tired and overwhelmed. Sometimes, the person living with dementia no longer recognizes her or his spouse. They become frightened facing a “stranger” and often try to leave their home. Sometimes, the person with dementia wakes up in the middle of the night and keeps everybody awake. Many caregivers tell us, “I a sleep with one eye open.” We offer advice on how to create a relaxed environment and engage your loved one in quiet activities. We also help families identify what might trigger aggressive behavior

and what approaches would give your loved one an opportunity to come down and make them more comfortable in the future. Caregivers often say, “I wish I knew what I know now. I could have avoided that fight I had with Mom the other day. I feel guilty. Am I doing my best for my mom?”

Occasionally, a daughter or a son who is a primary caregiver comes to our education session together with a sibling who is visibly not interested. As we go through class and talk about the communication and behavioral changes their loved one experiences, we notice how the demeanor of the reluctant caregiver changes. By the end of class, we often hear them say, “Oh, my goodness, Mom does have dementia.” As painful as the exercise was for both siblings, in the end, they are thankful for the information.

Caring for your loved one with Alzheimer’s or another dementia often involves a team of people. Whether you provide daily caregiving or participate in the decision making remotely, our education programs will help your family navigate the journey at any stage of the disease. To learn more about our caregiver education or sign up for an education session near you, call 1-800-272-3900 or visit alz.org. This content is funded by a grant from the New York State Department of Health.

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