OPINION

COMMENTARY | ASSEMBLYMAN PHIL PALMESANO, R-CORNING

Veterans lay the foundation for our communities

On Veterans Day, we honor individuals for making a profound choice — to put their families, their friends, their fellow citizens, and their country above everything else, including their own life. Veterans in our community were willing to lay down their life so that we can live free, so that we can pursue our dreams and take care of our loved ones. It can be hard to really process the idea that strangers would be willing and honored to do that for us. It is the purest form of sacrifice. Expressing the appropriate appreciation and gratitude for that can be difficult to put into words.

That's why our actions are so important.

Veterans Day is, obviously, an excellent opportunity to thank our brave servicemen and women for everything they've done to keep us safe, but it's also a reminder of what we should be doing all year. Get involved! Take time to volunteer at the Bath or Canandaigua VA. Contact the Red Cross and see how you can get involved in their excellent programming. These organizations are always looking for help to bolster their homeless veterans outreach, family casework and other volunteer programs. Drop in and visit a veteran in your neighborhood who may live far away from family members. Teachers can encourage their students to write cards and assemble care packages to send to active-duty personnel during the holidays. It can even be as simple as seeing a veteran or active duty servicemember in your community, stopping, shaking their hand and saying "thank you for your service," because they never have and never will hesitate to lay down their lives to protect us, our families and our freedoms.

Recently, Sen. O'Mara, Assemblyman Friend, Mayor McIntosh and I had the opportunity to attend a veteran's recognition event at Center St. Elementary in Horesheads. Students and teachers lined the hallways holding American flags paying tribute to the veterans marching through the school. The students truly appreciated a chance to say thank you, and the veterans were able to receive a small fraction of the recognition, adulation and thanks they deserve.

It was a beautiful moment that I thought about as I walked into the voting booth on Tuesday. This democracy, this free society we enjoy, is only possible based on the sacrifices of those brave men and women. They've braved war so that our transitions of leadership can be peaceful and based on principles, not violence. That is why it is so important for all of us to be engaged, active and charitable citizens. Men and women laid down their lives to give us that opportunity. May God bless our veterans and our active duty servicemembers.

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

Hope in the future of regional manufacturing

Not long ago, I toured the BorgWarner Morse Systems facility in Tompkins County, one of the region's most dynamic manufacturers. BorgWarner Morse Systems is a worldwide leader in the design and manufacturing of automotive chain systems and components for engine timing, automatic transmission, and four-wheel drive applications. Headquartered in Tompkins County, it operates 13 facilities in seven countries and employs more than 2,800 workers.

Approximately 70% of the vehicles on the road around the world carry a Morse Systems product. The company sells directly to major automotive manufacturers including Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler.

The Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions remain home to numerous, world-class manufacturers like BorgWarner Morse Systems. A foundation of manufacturing is critical to the short- and long-term strength of the regional, statewide, and national economies.

In early October, the Greater Southern Tier BOCES (GST BOCES), Chemung County Chamber of Commerce, and other sponsors hosted nearly 20 area companies to highlight the fact that good, local jobs are available in manufacturing. This year's celebration of National Manufacturing Day provided hundreds of regional students from GST BOCES and area school districts a chance to interact with representatives from 16 local industries. Many local companies have highlighted the challenge of finding highly trained local workers to fill job openings. It reflects a nationwide concern commonly called the "skills gap."

The United States Chamber of Commerce has summarized the gap, and the importance of an industry-educational-governmental partnership to address it, this way, "The overarching goal is to create a system that meets the immediate needs of employers today and adequately trains and prepares the workforce for generations to come. [We need to] establish a solid educational foundation for the duration of a student's participation in the public education structure. If we are going to compete in the global marketplace and develop a solid plan for shaping the workforce development agenda in this country, we must work together and share best practices to make a difference with the skills gap."

I serve on the state Senate Task Force on Workforce Development, which we established in 2015 to examine this trend in detail. The task force has focused on schools-based job training programs and other strategies to develop specific workforce skills for the economies of the future in high-tech manufacturing and other sectors. This year' state budget, for example, included a record level of funding for dozens of job training and workforce development initiatives, nearly all of them advocated by the task force. The Senate continued to act on a comprehensive legislative package to bolster other ongoing efforts, including legislation to: encourage high school students to participate in apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and career and technical education opportunities; establish a program to assist veterans in utilizing their military experience to build a civilian resume and gain access to employment; create a program within our state university system, including community colleges, to work with local businesses and industries to develop work force training programs to provide the skills needed for workers to find jobs in their communities; expand New York State's Pathways in Technology Schools (P-TECHs) and Early College High Schools to meet student demand and enhance educational performance; and increase access to career and tech programs at BOCES.

We must continue to encourage this critical collaboration between government, education, and private industry.

We also need to keep taking tax relief, regulatory reform, and other actions, at every level of government, to do what we can to ensure a business climate that helps our manufacturers expand, thrive, and create more good jobs for local workers.

Getting back to my recent tour of the BorgWarner Morse Systems plant. Three bottom-line reactions to the work taking place there come quickest to mind: Optimism. Potential. Pride.

Our ongoing local, state, and federal focus on building and strengthening the regional foundation of manufacturing is producing results, shows every sign of continuing to do so and, together, it delivers a convincing and hopeful message for the future of regional manufacturing.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Death to traitors

To the Editor,

Death to traitors.

Suanne O. Savino
Painted Post

Scouten thanks 3rd Ward voters

To the Editor,

I want to thank all the voters of the 3rd Ward for coming out to vote. I particularly want to thank the ones who voted for me.

Whether or not they voted for me, I want to encourage all the 3rd Ward voters to be sure to vote again in the 2018 elections. As demonstrated by the 2017 elections in Virginia and New Jersey, our votes can send a message.

Thanks so much!

Jim Scouten
Corning

Reed puts corporations before people on tax cuts

To the Editor,

The current "tax reform bill" hurts middle class families with children — and Tom Reed backs it. Reed wants to yank money from our wallets to hand to corporations, and he's hiding it with a dishonest trick.

Here's the truth about that "tax cut": it will drop the tax rate for corporations by a full 15 percent. Forever.

In his recent op-ed in the Olean Times Herald, Reed leaves out the most important point — the middle class "cut" has an expiration date. The bill will take away, forever, the personal exemptions that families take for their children. In their place, middle-class families get a small increase in the child tax credit — for five years.

The non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation found that within a decade, one of every five taxpayers will owe more money to the IRS if the bill passes. Another third will have a "cut" of less than $100. Goldman Sachs, of course, will still have its full 15% tax cut. Reed will make sure of that.

Ask Reed about the expiring middle class credit and he'll say that the people in five years will "do the right thing" and renew it.

A real congressman would do the right thing now.

Rep. Reed is handing the middle class a cookie and saying he stands with us. His other hand is giving corporations the jar, complete with free refills. Our middle class crumbs will be long gone.

Help us, Congressman Reed. For real.

Ryan Love
Bath

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