

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

■ Letters should be typed or neatly printed.
■ Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number.

■ Letters may be edited for space considerations.
■ The publication of any letter is at the discretion of the editor.

■ All letters become the property of The Leader and cannot be returned to sender.

Mail: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, THE LEADER
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CORNING, NY 14830
Fax: 607-936-9939
Email: svargo@the-leader.com

Online at www.the-leader.com/opinions

SHAWN VARGO | FROM THE EDITOR

Rules for Letters to the Editor

The 2017 election season is in full swing and The Leader wants to hear from our readers.

We will print Letters to the Editor on upcoming Opinion Pages - but we request that the following rules be followed:

- Letters must be less than 300 words. Adhering to a word count is the best way to ensure that letter-writers stay focused and on topic. While 300 words may seem restrictive for one's opinion, it is actually very generous compared to some larger newspapers in the country. The word limit will also allow us to publish more letters.

- No election-related Letters to the Editor will be accepted after Thursday, Oct. 26. There is always a late surge in order for folks to try to get the last word in before an election. A cut-off date is the most fair way to deal with this. The last day we will run letters for the upcoming Nov. 7 election will be Sunday, Oct. 29.

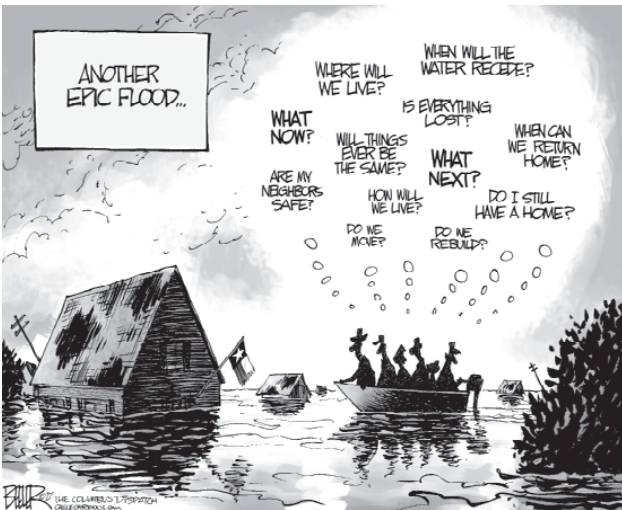
In today's letter section, there are no letters in regard to Tuesday's primary - because of this rule.

- Letters must include the writer's full name, mailing address and phone number. We will contact letter writers before we publish their submissions. If we cannot confirm the identity of the writer, we will not publish the letter. We will publish the writer's name and home city with the letter, but not the full address or phone number.

- Mail your letter to: Letter to the Editor, 34 West Pulteney Street, Corning, New York, 14830. Letters may also be dropped off in person at our office, or emailed. To email a letter, send to svargo@the-leader.com and please put "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Again, include your name, address and phone number for verification purposes. We look forward to hearing from you.

Shawn Vargo is the Executive Editor and can be reached at svargo@the-leader.com.

ANOTHER VIEW



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

Never take emergency preparedness for granted

With the people of Texas and Louisiana recovering from Hurricane Harvey - together with, as of this writing, Hurricane Irma cutting a path of destruction across the Caribbean and barreling toward South Florida - the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season serves as a reminder, everywhere, of the importance of never taking emergency preparedness for granted.

Of course, our region is no stranger to natural disasters, emergencies, or tragic accidents.

We understand that disaster can strike at any instant.

Accompanying this knowledge is a recognition of the absolute bravery and selflessness shown by ordinary citizens, passersby, family members, friends, neighbors, and, of course, first responders in the face of disaster.

The instant outpouring of assistance and generosity is always, without fail, remarkable.

As always, we can never be grateful enough for the continued service of local emergency first responders to all of our communities.

I have said it many, many times in the past however it always bears repeating: On behalf of the residents of the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions, "thank you" to those who come to the rescue in so many different and crucial ways.

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Time after time after time we have been reassured - and had our faith and hope restored - through countless gestures of caring and commitment, rescue and recovery. A thousand stories go untold but collectively they stand as the most powerful force of renewal. We simply do not carry on without them. In recent days, local Red Cross volunteers, businesses, churches, schools, scout troops, and so many other institutions, organizations, and everyday citizens have responded to the current disasters.

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In 2014, New York State launched the Citizen Preparedness Corps with the goal of training 100,000 New Yorkers "to be first responders in their own homes and in their communities." The program seeks to provide citizens with tools and resources to help them better prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters.

To date, forums have been held in every county within the 58th Senate District (Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins, and Yates counties) and

more are scheduled each year.

Members of the New York National Guard lead the sessions and work with experts from the state Division of Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Management, and Office of Fire Prevention and Control.

All of the programs are coordinated with local county emergency management personnel.

The course provides a valuable introduction to disaster response. Participants are advised on properly preparing for any disaster, including developing a family emergency plan and stocking up on emergency supplies. Additional information is on the New York State Prepare website: <https://prepare.ny.gov/>.

State and federal governments also provide critical funding to help localities strengthen and upgrade their emergency response capabilities. For example, just last week regional counties were among the counties state-wide awarded a share of \$220 million in funding to

help enhance and support local emergency response systems.

These timely and important public safety and emergency response grants make a difference for local emergency response teams. Emergency preparedness, response and recovery are fundamental government responsibilities.

Yet as the years have gone by, whenever we highlight the importance of local emergency services, one fact has been constant: the ranks of local volunteer firefighters, EMTs, and other emergency services personnel are declining. It's been well documented by prominent organizations like the Firemen's Association of New York (FASNy). Some rural counties across upstate New York, for instance, have experienced as much as a 50-percent depletion of their EMT ranks.

For the foreseeable future, New York government will have its hands full on many fronts. We face stubborn economic and fiscal challenges, as well as challenges in our schools, on maintaining our local roads and bridges, and so many more.

Our long-term focus, in my view, must include the ability of local volunteer fire companies and ambulance services to recruit and retain volunteers. There are factors outside of government's influence that contribute to declining volunteer ranks. Nevertheless, there are actions that government can and should take to help reverse it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We should treasure our library

To the Editor,
The Southeast Steuben County Library is a shining example of how libraries have transformed themselves into the vital center of learning, opportunity, and access for a community.

We are so impressed by the work the dedicated staff and volunteers do to make this important and necessary community hub as welcoming as possible. They have created a diverse and inclusive space, given voice to important and needed conversations, and crafted a place that has something for everyone no matter your reason for visiting.

Ever since our daughter was born, the library has been key in introducing her to the joy of books, reading, play, storytelling, and so much more.

We are continuously amazed at the thoughtful and diverse array of books available. Our daughter can go on amazing adventures, explore new worlds, meet important historical figures, learn about other cultures, and find out what happens when a pigeon finds a hot dog.

We were recently in Washington, DC visiting a number of museums. At each step along the way, we learned

about important people such as Edna Lewis, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair Jr, Joseph McNeil, and many more. But because of the books made available by our library, this wasn't the first time our daughter had met them. It's so wonderful to know that our library strives to bring the outside world to us. We can't wait to see who our daughter will meet next.

This is just one example of how our library is at the forefront of creating an engaged and vibrant community. It's clear the effort the staff and volunteers take in preparing children and adults for life inside and outside the Southern Tier.

We should treasure this and everything else our library represents, the hope, the opportunity, and the love.

Anne and Chris Walters
Corning

State flags should be larger

To the Editor,
After having been fortunate enough to have traveled to 49 of the 50 states in this great country, I find it appalling that the State of New York has a low budget on the size of flags it flies over certain state offices - the New York State Troopers

Barracks, for instance.

In no other state have I ever seen smaller flags flown over state offices than private businesses or homes.

Bill Allen
Avoca

Movie stars smoking in movies - A bad idea

To the Editor,
Going to the movies should be a family-friendly activity, but a report, released on July 7th, from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that movie stars smoking in top-grossing movies is happening more than ever before.

Research has shown that images of people smoking on the big screen are associated with more youth smoking.

Young people who are heavily exposed to images of onscreen smoking are two to three times more likely to begin smoking than are young people who have less exposure.

Nicotine addiction is very powerful and can keep young people smoking into adulthood.

Finding ways to protect children, such as designating movies that depict onscreen smoking with an R rating, is one way to limit and

de-normalize tobacco use among youth.

If you smoke, contact your doctor and the New York State Smokers' Quitline at (866) 697-8487 or online at nysmokefree.com for help.

Keva Collier, MD, MBA
Preventive Medicine
Residency, University of
Rochester

Gural's support admirable

To the Editor,
I have been a member of the Valley Color Guard for more than 10 years and I believe I am qualified to make the following assessment: The Valley Color Guard works tirelessly to ensure veterans receive the final military honor and respect that they have earned.

As much as it is a privilege, it can also take a personal toll on the members of the Guard.

That burden has been lessened in recent years by the unconditional support of Jeff Gural. Gural, the owner of Tioga Downs exemplifies all the value associated with never forgetting those who have served and have earned the heartfelt admiration of every member of the Valley Color Guard.

Charles Zimmer