

OPINION

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READER VIEW

Shaming taxpayers

Just got through looking at the delinquent tax notices in The Leader Wednesday, August 17th. I remember when the list was maybe a page long. It is now five pages long. There is one reason and one reason for this: property taxes in New York State are obscene. Obscene property taxes are a cancer that is killing this state. When one has experienced property taxes in other states, especially in the south, why would anyone in his or her right mind want to stay here.

Property taxes and liberal policies in general have put New York state at a huge disadvantage competitively with low tax states. As one who was born and raised in this area, it makes me not just sad but physically ill to see what is happening. I love this area, its beauty, its people, its quality of life, all of it being destroyed by obscene taxes in general and property taxes in particular.

My prayer is that some day politicians will wake up to the fact that the main reason people leave this state is not for warmer climates (although that is a factor) but that people in this state are being taxed to death.

The headline of the delinquent taxes is "notice of pending advertising". I guess the purpose of putting delinquent taxpayers

on this list is to shame them into paying their property taxes. I think the headline should read "notice of people who are being taxed to death". That would be a more accurate depiction of these people. Most of these people are hard working members of society but are being crushed by property taxes.

Until the politicians quit giving lip service to the tax problem in this state, New York and Steuben County will continue to lose people to states where their tax money is not squandered and the property taxpayers are not being robbed of their hard earned income.

Whoever is running for any office this fall, the first question asked should be, "what is your plan to lower property taxes". Don't let them get away with the "it's state regulations" argument. That can be changed if there is the political will to do so. Hold their feet to the fire.

Let's start a movement in Steuben County to "bring sanity back to New York taxes". Maybe it will spread throughout the state and maybe we can wake up the politicians so that our beloved state and region do not become a place where the last person leaving should turn out the lights.

—Richard Davis is a Corning resident.

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Real chance to break logjam on mandate relief

Recently, the Steuben County Legislature took an important action and officially voiced the county's support for a critically important mandate relief action: Governor Cuomo must sign legislation I co-sponsored and which was unanimously approved by both houses of the Legislature in June, to get county governments and local property taxpayers out from under the burden of the state-mandated cost of public legal public defense for the poor, commonly known as "indigent criminal defense."

The New York State Association of Counties has identified the move to relieve Steuben and other counties locally and statewide of this unfunded state mandate as one of its top priorities. It would save counties and local property taxpayers statewide nearly \$155 million a year. In Steuben County alone, it would save taxpayers \$1 million a year when fully effective.

I'm fully on board with the Steuben County legislative resolution which states, in part, that "the New York State Senate and Assembly have passed historic legislation entitled the Public Defense Mandate Relief Act (S.8114/A.10706), which will require New York State to reimburse counties for expenditures made fulfilling the State's obligation to provide representation for those



TOM O'MARA

financially unable to afford counsel ... Requiring counties subject to a State-imposed tax cap to finance the State's obligation to provide public defense services imposes a significant, uncontrollable financial burden on counties dependent on real property taxes to fund needed services."

Or as it's been noted in no uncertain terms by the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), "The decision to place responsibility at the county level in the State of New York has resulted in a system that burdens property taxpayers with the majority of the costs for indigent defense, despite the fact that the constitutional right to counsel is a state, not county, obligation. The state can improve the public defense system by incrementally increasing state funding, designing a cost-effective way to finance the system over time, and relieving counties of a responsibility delegated to them since 1965."

Relieving counties of the burden of unfunded state mandates is, after all, the

ultimate goal and the only way to ensure a future for local property taxpayers defined by property tax cuts, not just a slower rate of property tax growth.

To be clear, the local property tax cap the state enacted in 2011 has largely been successful. It's provided local taxpayers with a combined, four-year savings of \$7.6 billion. I strongly support making the cap permanent. Add to this the fact that the state's self-imposed, two-percent spending cap — which should also be made a permanent fixture of New York State's fiscal practices — has produced an additional \$31 billion in taxpayer savings. Combine these two, and we're making progress.

But I've been more than outspoken about the fact that New York has not lived up to Governor Cuomo's original promise in 2011 to lift the existing burden of unfunded state mandates on local governments and local property taxpayers.

The current legislation to get county governments and local property taxpayers out from under the cost of providing indigent criminal defense would mark a significant mandate relief action. Governor Cuomo needs to sign it into law once it reaches his desk. Very simply and straightforwardly, it's the kind of action we need to take if we're ever going to truly transform the state-local partnership and

lead the way to a future of property tax cuts for our local taxpayers.

And further, it could serve to break the logjam. If we can achieve this relief, we might just open the door to additional and ongoing actions.

For example, we should immediately put an end to any future unfunded state mandates. That's why I continue to co-sponsor legislation, which the Senate again approved this year (but there was no action from the Assembly leadership), to end the practice of unfunded state mandates on local governments and school districts. Specifically this legislation would ban the imposition of any future unfunded mandates that are not accompanied by state funding to localities to pay for delivering the required programs or services. It's a commonsense, straightforward message: if the state mandates a local program or service, the state pays for it. No more passing the buck to counties, cities, school districts, towns or villages. As I noted above, the Assembly leadership chose not to act on it, but we'll keep fighting for it.

—State Sen. Tom O'Mara represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and a portion of Tompkins County.

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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ANOTHER VIEW

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

State of the Disunion

TO THE EDITOR | William Clinton is very profuse with compliments to his wife Hillary. Being such an admirer of Hillary (a chronic liar and irresponsible person), why did he repeatedly abuse his position of governor of Arkansas and president of the United States by frequently for years committing adultery?

The press should ostracize the psychopath. William Clinton should only be mentioned in the police blotter. Hillary is a despicable, arrogant liar (the FBI director outlined her careless conduct as a Secretary of State). She lies that he did not say that. He

advised not to prosecute Hillary. Of course some time before his testimony I am sure Obama, the Attorney General and the FBI director had planned the verdict, tantamount with burying justice in cow manure. Watergate was far from worse than Hillary's actions and did not endanger the United States of America's security. Other people for lesser offenses were convicted.

Mr. Kahn's accusatory speech at the Democratic National Convention was very inopportune. Most U.S. citizens regret that Mr. Khan lost his son to the Iraq War protecting marine comrades. Mr. Khan's son ought to be recognized as a

very honorable citizen. Reciprocally, Mr. Trump may call to the podium families of "hundreds" of U.S. citizens murdered or mutilated by Muslims that penetrated our frontiers. I am sure their number far exceeds Mr. Khan's family. I agree with Mr. Trump that Muslim immigration should temporarily (how long?) be stopped. While the Muslims are in a minority, most of them will respect Western civilization (including freedom of speech, respect for the other sex, etc.). But who can guarantee if ever the Muslims get close to the majority that they shall want to impose Sharia law? Some Muslims wanted to impose Sharia

law in certain areas in England.

Hillary's admirers ought to think who is to pay the \$19 trillion debt of the USA. Our children and grandchildren. The debt was caused in great part by faulty international agreements, incompetent politicians, to the great satisfaction of greedy CEOs. However according to information, in the Bloomberg Business Week, a few years ago, there were \$3 trillion from American investors in Swiss banks not paying U.S. taxes. However, they belong to Americans receiving food stamps. Believe that?

Mario L. Lecuona, M.D., Painted Post

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