

# OPINION

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### GUEST VIEW

## Change begins with constitution

Upstate is reeling from a one-two punch to the economy: the highest taxes in the nation, and high-level spending mandated by Albany.

Here's a way to understand state mandates. Government man knocks on your door and says, "You need air conditioning." You say, "I don't want AC." Government man insists: "You'll have it. It's the law. We know what's best. We'll tell you what to buy, how many to buy, where to put them, how to maintain them, and how cool to keep your home. And you will pay for it."

State mandates consume 93 percent of all your county taxes.

Governor Cuomo claims he has reduced your taxes. He has - from 13% to 12.7%, still the highest in the nation.

Cuomo's "remedy" to our economic plight is the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC).

No other state has REDC's, where the people "compete" for their own money, in a grotesque drama much like the gladiatorial games of ancient Rome. Thumbs up or thumbs down, says the Emperor!

The REDC awards amount to \$99 a year per Southern Tier resident. Not enough to revive our economy - but it's a grand distraction from Cuomo's inaction on taxes and mandates.

We are ruled by creatures of the Albany swamp: the indicted, the not-yet-indicted, and the incompetent. They've made a mess of upstate. But there is a way to reclaim our power and prevent Albany from jamming mandates down our throat. We need to change the state's constitution.

A Constitutional



MIKE MORRONGIELLO

Convention is the only way to do this, bypassing the Legislature and the governor. The vote to convene the convention will be held in November of 2017. It is in our power to call a convention and change the constitution, if we vote "yes" and encourage our friends and neighbors to do likewise. This power is in our hands, right where the founders wanted it to be.

We may get some help from the New York City left - they're not happy with Cuomo and Albany.

In a recent NY Times editorial, Anthony Weiner (yes, that Anthony Weiner) said, "There is really no good reason today for a senator in far upstate Oswego to weigh in on a housing incentive deal on 57th street in Manhattan..."

Right, Carlos Danger! And why should a Manhattan Assemblyman have authority over us upstate?

The desire for local control is on both sides of the political spectrum and both ends of the state, presenting us with a unique opportunity - perhaps a singular moment in time. We must grasp it.

We, at the county level, should have control of state mandates, or Albany should pay for each and every one of them.

Let's move government closer to the people. It always works best.

—Mike Morrongiello is a member of the Town of Corning Republican Committee.



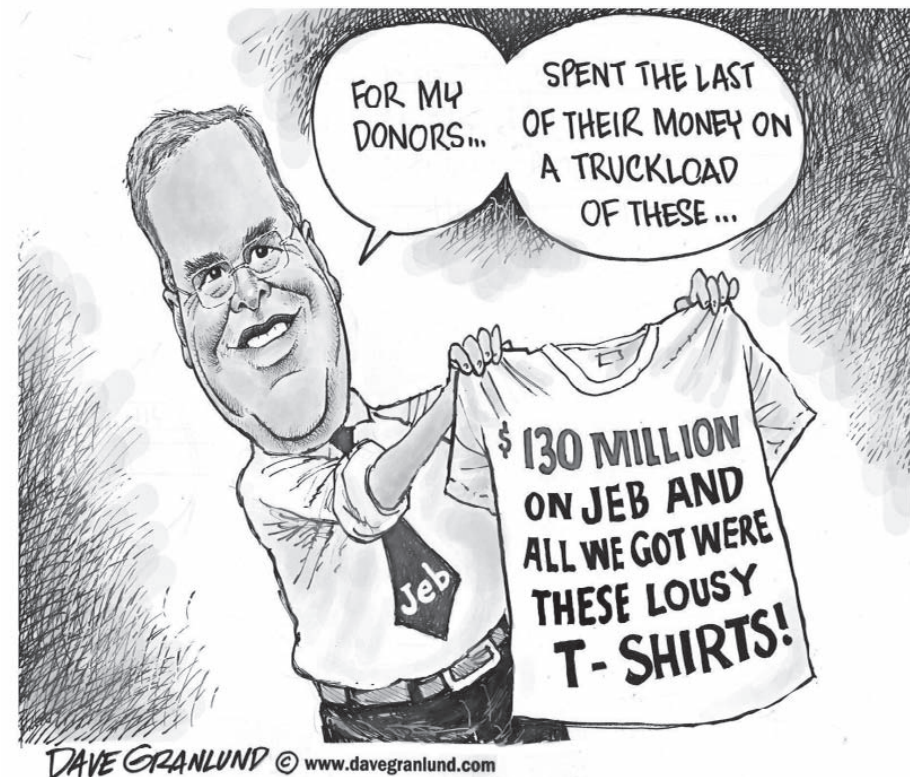
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### First Amendment

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 people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

### ANOTHER VIEW



### WEEKLY COLUMN

## Lauren's Law deserves four more years

It's worth the reminder because sometimes the most effective advocacy or the most positive response to a critical challenge is to raise public awareness and inspire, at least, individual thought. Combine that with a new law or program or service that works to encourage participation and the achievement can become especially successful.

Fortunately, we're beginning to achieve both of the above goals in addressing one of New York State's most critical needs: extending a law that helps promote greater public awareness and consideration of organ and tissue donation.

First, the bad news. We're told that New York's donor registry has the lowest rate of participation among every state in the nation. We're quick to bemoan reports showing New York's state and local tax burden as among the nation's worst, or when a new study ranks our business climate at or near the bottom of the American barrel - and we shouldn't ever tolerate findings like these. But the distinction of being the worst state in the country for registering organ and tissue donors is a shame.

According to LiveOnNy (<http://liveonny.org/>), formerly the New York Organ Donor Network, over 10,000 people are waiting for organ transplants in the New York State and another name is added to the state's organ transplant waiting list every 2 1/2



SEN. TOM O'MARA

hours. There's even more worth considering from LiveOnNY:

- One organ donor can save up to eight lives;
- The same donor can also save or improve the lives of up to 50 people by donating tissues and eyes;
- On average, 18 people die every day while waiting for organ transplants in the United States;
- 22% of New Yorkers age 18 and over have enrolled in the New York State Donate Life Registry as organ, tissue and eye donors. Nationwide, the average is 47%.

Consequently, four years ago New York State approved what's known as "Lauren's Law" to try to encourage more New Yorkers to become organ and tissue donors. The 2012 law was named after then-12-year-old Lauren Shields, whose life was saved by a heart transplant in 2009. Her story has been truly inspirational and was the driving force behind the enactment of the law named in her honor.

"I don't know who my donor was but I hope to find out some day. They are the angel that saved my life," Lauren said at the time the legislation was first introduced in the State Legislature in 2011.

Lauren's Law is straightforward: it prohibits a driver's license, non-driver identification card, or renewal application from being processed by the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) unless the organ donation section is filled out. Applicants have to check a box stating "yes" or "skip this question." Prior to the law's adoption, the application included an organ donation section but filling it out was optional. Late last year, the governor signed into law an important amendment to Lauren's Law to make the DMV administrative processes even more stringent - and it's producing welcome results.

While donor registration in New York State continues to lag behind the rest of the nation, as I've noted above, the good news is that since the enactment and amendment of Lauren's Law, in combination with other efforts, it's beginning to turn around. According to the New York Alliance for Donation, over the past three months the percentage of the state population signing up to be organ donors has risen from 11 to 17 percent. In other words, thousands upon thousands of more New Yorkers are choosing to give the gift of life.

Now we move on to the next step. Lauren's Law is set to expire this October. I'm co-sponsoring and strongly supporting legislation to extend the law for four more years until

2020. This extension was recently and unanimously approved by the Senate with Lauren and her family in attendance in the Senate Chamber. It's expected to be approved by the Assembly and then be signed into law by Governor Cuomo.

In short, Lauren's Law will have a greater and greater impact and remain a positive force in New York's overall strategy to encourage more organ and tissue donors. In fact, it's being projected that the renewal of Lauren's Law will result in 560,000 new organ donor registrants over the next four years.

Encouraging organ and tissue donation is one of the most important life-saving actions that we can take in New York State. Lauren's Law has been and will continue to be an important part of this ongoing challenge. For more information (including a feature story on Lauren) or to sign up for the New York Donor Registry, visit [liveonny.org](http://liveonny.org). Lauren Shields is a healthy and active 15 year old today. As we witnessed in the Senate last week, she remains an outspoken advocate for organ donation. And, of course, she's planning to have a future career as a cardiologist to continue giving the gift of life.

—State Sen. Tom O'Mara represents New York's 53rd Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and a portion of Tompkins County.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Arrest all iPhone owners?

TO THE EDITOR | When I first heard about the FBI wanting to get into the phone of an extremist Muslim, killed after murdering others, I had to ask myself why did the government refuse to investigate these people when they were alive? Remember, too, that it was this "nasty" Russians who tipped us off about the Boston Bomber prior to him blowing up innocent people. Unlike Bill Gates who purposely put in back doors into Microsoft, which costs the consumer billions of dollars a year, Apple apparently won't do that. So I guess instinctively I applaud Apple for their tough stand with the FBI.

But the government does have options. They could seize all of Apple's assets, arrest the bosses and make it a state-owned and controlled company. Obama and Bernie Sanders would love that.

Or how about the government extending their tyranny as they have gun, land and 1/2 pound drone owners. I think that the government should immediately make the possession of any iPhone that can not be cracked illegal to have. Just think about it! An executive order to confiscate, arrest, fine, seize homes, cars, bank accounts like they do to others who we don't care about.

Why not? If the president has the right to kill you if you are deemed a threat, why not confiscate your hot shot iPhones. I think in the long term it will be a great eye opener for those who have no empathy for others who regularly have their rights trampled on. I think it would be amusing to see a new, large and pristine class of people get pummeled by our government. Why? Because then they will know why you might need a something more formidable than 22 caliber target rifle.

Joseph DuPont  
Towanda, Pa.

#### Guthrie helps keep rivers clean

TO THE EDITOR | A big thank you to the Guthrie health organization for helping keep our rivers clean. Guthrie recently installed drug disposal boxes at its main outpatient pharmacy in Sayre, and at

Guthrie Towanda Memorial Hospital for the safe and anonymous disposal of unused or expired medicines - both prescription and over-the-counter.

Too often, medications are flushed down a toilet or a sink. Most municipal sewage disposal facilities cannot remove these drugs from the water, and they end up in our waterways where they poison fish, plants and our drinking water.

The drug disposal boxes, which resemble mail boxes, are locked and the unused medications (in their containers or placed in clear Ziploc bags) can easily be dropped through a slot in the front. There is no fee and the boxes can be used by anyone.

Guthrie officials plan to install a third lock box at the Guthrie Corning Hospital in Big Flats in the near future.

The Chemung River Friends encourages the public to use the drug drop boxes to dispose of medications and to never flush drugs down the drain.

We salute Guthrie for helping to keep our waterways and communities safe, clean and enjoyable

Jim Pfiffer

Director, Friends of the Chemung River Watershed

#### Proper tools can make Corning work

TO THE EDITOR | It can at times be difficult to see new ideas as possibly working. But Buckminster Fuller once said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the

existing model obsolete."

When we are talking about direct democracy and the commons, there are an abundance of working examples that are allowing people to practice self-determination and improve their quality of life. The Mondragon cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain have been in successful operation since the 1950's. Cleveland in Ohio, Richmond in California, Reading in Pennsylvania, and Jackson in Mississippi are all looking to improve their local economy by developing cooperatives. Since a cooperative is a direct everyday application of direct democracy, it can be shown that promoting the cooperative model in Corning is not an idealistic dream. The same can be said about the commons, where the only reason that we are not familiar with the concept is due to the last few centuries of enclosure and privatization.

But what we see at our local library is very similar to the commons, and when the commons is applied through participatory budgeting we find it in practice in communities such as New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Toronto and Tonawanda. If we want Corning to work for all of us, then the proper tools are cooperatives and participatory budgeting. And it has been proven time and again that these tools work. Please contact the mayor and City Council to express your support for these ideas.

Darin Robbins  
Corning