

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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Mail: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, THE LEADER
PO BOX 1017
CORNING, NY 14830
Fax: 607-936-9939
Email: sdupree@the-leader.com

Online at www.the-leader.com/opinions

GUEST VIEW

Child care costs a burden for N.Y. families

The 2015 Parents and the High Cost of Child Care report released by Child Care Aware of America (CCAA) confirms that New York is one of the most expensive states for child care. New York is ranked number one as the least affordable state for center-based four-year-old care, and number three as least affordable for center-based infant care. Further, the cost of full-time, center-based care for two children is the highest single household expense in most parts of the country, including New York, where care is nearly double (96 percent greater) the cost of rent. While families continue to struggle with child care costs and finding affordable, quality care solutions, U.S. businesses also pay the price for employee absenteeism due to child care breakdowns, losing approximately \$4.4 billion in 2014.

The report shows a continued trend of child care costs that put a strain on families in the United States, rivaling what the average family pays for one year of college tuition at a four year institution. In New York the cost of a year of care in a center for an infant is nearly double (94 percent greater) the

cost of a year of tuition at a public college, the widest gap of any state. And while families pay only about 23 percent of the cost of a public college education, with the remainder subsidized by state and federal funds, about 60 percent of funding for child care in the United States comes directly from parents.

The latest report finds that the average center-based child care in New York can cost as much as \$14,144 annually for an infant or \$11,700 annually for a four-year-old. The cost of child care is especially difficult for families living at or below the federal poverty level. For these families, full-time, center-based care for an infant is 70 percent of family income and 129 percent when two children are in care. For single parents the costs can be overwhelming - in New York annual costs of center-based infant care is over 54 percent of the state median income for single parents.

High-quality child care programs are one of the most powerful predictors of children's development and learning, and are dependent on having educated and skilled providers. However, in

SEE BURDEN, A5

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Library meter, lot need fixing

TO THE EDITOR | I suspect this is not the first nor the last letter you'll receive with comments about the city's parking lot in front of the Corning Library. I've been a volunteer at the library for many, many years, in different capacities, mainly making music during their excellent programs for the area's littlest citizens and their parents.

I've watched young mothers navigate pot-holes, snow and ice, carrying babies, leading toddlers, fishing for coins, standing in line in the rain waiting a turn at the meter. As I've grown older I know how hard it is to even READ the meter screen, retrieve a dropped coin, or thread my way through icy patches and puddles. (I don't have little kids anymore, but for some reason my guitar seems to be growing heavier and heavier).

Is there nothing the city can do to improve the upkeep, repair and management of the parking lot which serves the library? How about a more efficient, easier-to-use meter? Better still, how about getting rid of metered parking for all library patrons?

Just askin'.

Mary Lu Walker,
Corning

High school worth a look

TO THE EDITOR | Recently, I had both the pleasure and privilege of attending the official dedication ceremony highlighting the renovated Corning-Painted Post High School. It

was a lovely ceremony highlighted by musical presentations by the high school chorus under the direction of Mrs. Judith Harriman-Carlson and several speeches and comments from members of the board of education, superintendent and principal, among others.

Appropriate recognition was paid to current and past school board members, as well as current and former staff members, for their contributions in making this dream come true. It has been a long process since the initial approval of Option 2 by the voters of the district, but finally there is a state-of-the-art high school which can only help Corning regain its stature as one of the premier school districts of the Southern Tier.

Unfortunately, the ceremony was sparsely attended, perhaps related to the weather of lack of notice that is was occurring. I also noted that recognition of the roles that prior superintendents had played in advocating better facilities for Corning-Painted Post School District students and faculties was not acknowledged. I had the privilege of working with Dr. Donald Trombley on facilities when I was school board superintendent and I know that his successor, Ms. Judith Staples also worked toward this goal.

I encourage all residents of the district to ask for a tour of the renovated high school. You will be amazed at what you see and proud of what you have done.

Robert E. Cole,
Hammondsport

POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Do we really need a new RV?

Now that New York has a new Governor Cuomo RV traveling around the state proclaiming his "Drive for \$15" campaign for New York to become the first state in the nation to enact a \$15-an-hour minimum wage - it's safe to say that this debate is well underway and, indeed, has moved to a new level.

Fortunately, the Governor Cuomo RV isn't the only word being heard. And contrary to a few local opinions that I've read and heard recently that anyone who dares express reservations about New York state making such a dramatic leap to the highest-in-the-nation minimum wage (a nearly a 70 percent increase), let's be clear: these notes of caution aren't coming from the interests of so-called "big business."

In fact, they are coming straight from middle-class small businesses on Main Street, and farms, and schools, and nursing homes, and social services providers, and the tourism industry, and many others worried about the potential impact across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. It's reasonable - and important - to listen to the other side.

Any attempts by those in favor of the \$15-an-hour minimum wage to drown out opposition voices with false anti-worker rhetoric or anything like it are not only flat-out wrong, they're purposely ignorant (or worse) of the other side of the story: potential job losses, and unsustainable economic and fiscal burdens.

The New York Farm Bureau, the voice of nearly 40,000 farm families locally and statewide, strongly opposes a \$15



TOM O'MARA

minimum wage. Most recently, the Farm Bureau highlighted an important new report showing that the additional costs of a \$15 minimum wage would "clearly impact many farms' financial viability." Dairy, fruit, vegetable, greenhouse and nursery sectors would be hardest hit.

Or as one local farmer, David Boor of Boorcrest Farms in Horseheads, recently told WETM-TV (at the same time noting that farmers on average already pay employees more than the current \$9-an-hour minimum wage), "We will be reducing the number of farms in our area" if the state goes to \$15 - losses, he added, that will be felt across the local economy from equipment dealers to higher prices at the grocery store.

It worries small businesses on Main Street across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes. Mike Sorge, the owner of Sorge's Restaurant in Corning, said not long ago, "I've never been this upset about anything in my 40 years in the restaurant business."

Or as the executive director of NYSARC said, expressing the impact a mandated \$15 minimum wage will have on social services agencies caring, for example, for the developmentally disabled and the elderly in nursing homes, said, "We do not have any money to make those wage increases happen and we're going to

... have to compete with the fast-food companies and others, and also have this huge unfunded mandate placed on our budgets."

And let's not forget the voices of local school districts, as expressed late last year by Canisteo-Greenwood Superintendent Jeremy Palotti, "It is clear that this initiative was not thought through enough to protect New York state from increased state tax burdens." To say nothing of local school district employee layoffs or program cuts.

As I've said, it's not about outright opposition to increases in the state's minimum wage - which, by the way, was just increased to \$9 per hour at the start of this year. The concerns, and they're widespread, question if a nearly 70-percent increase is reasonable or fair or sustainable - and whether such a drastic increase will, in fact, work against the very workers it seeks to help.

A report last November from the Empire Center for Public Policy estimated the potential job losses that could result.

"Our report shows that a massive increase in the minimum wage would actually hurt the very low-wage, low-skill workers it is supposed to help," the Empire Center said. "The impact on job creation and employment opportunities would be substantial in every region of New York, especially upstate."

The report singled out job loss numbers for the Southern Tier. On the low end, economists estimate 7,000 job losses (2.6 percent). On the high end, it's a staggering 18,800 lost jobs (6.9 percent). Could the region ever survive that? Across the state the job losses were forecast to be in

excess of 200,000.

So what I've argued is that we simply cannot risk taking these job loss estimates lightly. If they're even remotely accurate, one thing we know in the Southern Tier is that New York state government won't be waiting in the wings to bail us out.

The question of a \$15-an-hour minimum wage needs and deserves a full-fledged, commonsense, honest, straightforward debate and examination. The ongoing push to make New York the first state in America to mandate the highest-in-the-nation minimum wage on every employer statewide - and especially small, upstate, middle-class, and already struggling to survive small businesses, farmers and others - is deserving of the spotlight, as long as it's a light that shines on both sides of the issue. That's only fair.

I only wish this governor and so many other \$15 advocates were putting equal time, equal effort and equal vigor into a campaign for across-the-board, commonsense tax relief, mandate relief, regulatory reform, and a manufacturing revival that would truly make a difference for turning around New York's nearly dead-last business climate, and unfair and unreasonable tax burden - and hold out real hope for a long-term, sustainable economy for more and more workers and farmers and small businesses and families across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions.

- 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.

ANOTHER VIEW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Burned house violates code

TO THE EDITOR | We are writing about the property next door to us. On July 4, 2008, I saw Chris Avery set his house on fire. The house remains virtually the same eight years later. It is still charred. The back entrance is open and I've seen children go into the house. The ceiling on the back porch is about to collapse. The front stairs are broken and the front porch is a mess. There is garbage around the house. We have to look at this sight

every day.

We have repeatedly contacted Lee Welles, our councilperson, Mayor Negri, and Steve McDaniel but nothing has changed. The property is in violation of the New York state maintenance code for residential properties.

For example, 301.3 of the code states that "vacant structures shall be maintained in a clean, safe, secure and sanitary condition so as not to cause blighting or adversely affect public health and safety."

The house is also in violation of 304.1 concerning

decks and stairways. It is in violation of 307.1 that has to do with accumulation of rubbish and garbage. It has other violations as well.

We assume that Mr. Avery or his family has received fines for all these violations over the years. They have a responsibility to maintain their property. They have done nothing. The fines probably add up to more than the house is worth, \$15,000. We would like the city to finally do something about this unsafe eyesore. Our lawyer is looking at the matter at the moment. Eight years is too long for

this house to remain as it is.

Dr. Jeanne Kotula,
Michael Blatt, Corning

Rolfe's death leaves a void

TO THE EDITOR | Bob Rolfe was a great reporter. He was important to The Leader. He was important to the community readers who almost never missed his articles. He was significantly unique in his style and fun to read. This is going to be a big hole to fill for the area.

Amory Houghton Jr.,
Corning