

letters

to the Editor

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Reynolds should keep fighting

With the current political atrocity that has grabbed the public's attention, the liberal-biased media taking the Mark Foley scandal into full throttle, and the upcoming midterm election just around the corner, Rep. Tom Reynolds is still standing after everything that has been thrown at him.

The Republicans should continue to support Reynolds and focus on his achievements. People should look upon who will fight for the region, with strong prudential power and much de-

served respect. I believe Reynolds has achieved all of those leadership qualities and will represent the region with our confidence. Ignore the news stories, and take the real issues into consideration, not the political bologna.

Tom Reynolds has produced a plethora of money during his congressional history and has served his country well. He should be winning this election by a landslide, but due to political indignity and the liberal media, Reynolds is forced to fight.

A question arises: who will the people decide upon? If Jack
(Please turn to page seven)

Reforms in Albany remain cosmetic only

We're just mere days away from Eliot Spitzer's final ascension to his Albany throne, assuming the only skeleton that comes out of his closet between now and Nov. 7 is nothing more than one of his teenage daughter's musty old Halloween costumes.

Of course, he won't be the only one who will take his elected spot in the state capital come Jan. 1 who barely had to break a sweat in seeking their respective offices. All 212 state lawmakers — and their near six-figure salaries, when you figure in perks, stipends, reimbursements and any other word you can think of for extra cash in their bloated pay checks that don't fall under the heading of actual salary — are up for re-election as well this year. About 210 will stroll in without having to wear out even one pair of shoes; so inconsequential is their opposition in most cases.

Let's put it this way. Tom Casey is probably a nice guy. I, for one, had never even heard of him until I got an e-mail from him a couple of weeks ago, noting he is running against Albany gray-beard Dale Volker, who basically continues to hang around to simply make sure the Senate, with its four Republican majority, doesn't lose its grip on the one center of power that the GOP can still call their own in New York. Just for a touch of perspective here, remember that Volker took his Senate seat two years before Buffalo's last historic snow event, the Blizzard of '77.

Casey has a swell Web site, is an involved citizen, and even leads off his Internet home page with a nifty Thomas Jefferson quote, "The whole art of government consists in the art of being honest."

And he has as much chance to uproot Volker as an electric line against a falling 500-pound tree branch.

Exactly 23 days prior to his race, I have seen exactly one campaign sign, no mailed literature and no television, radio or print advertisements. And he's in my legislative district.

Which brings us to the news last week that the Brennan Center, authors of the now famous 2004 report (which, make no misunderstanding, was kind in its announcement of the study, which labeled the Legislature dysfunctional — discon-

nected, disgusting and disgraceful also come to immediate mind), decided to take a peek to see how that whole Albany reform thing has been working out.

To the shock of only the 212 within Albany's legislative chambers and a few assorted bodies and underlings in the governor's mansion, the nonpartisan think tank found that the cozy group's reform efforts are "still plagued with endemic problems."

It came out about the same time that the Washington, D.C. group Center for Public Integrity noted that New York has 3,842 lobbyists, or 18 for every one of our elected state lawmakers. Florida was No. 2 with a distant ratio of 13-to-1. In all, state capital lobbyists — the equivalent of Albany's private ATM for senators and assemblymen alike —

spent \$144 million to buy political favors. California, with almost twice the population, spent \$212 million. At third on the list, New York is more than a whopping \$90 million more than the fourth place state in ranking how much cumulative ammo all the hired guns can spread around.

Said Volker of the latest findings, under the guise of it being more favorable to New York City, that the report was "an attempt to bludgeon people into doing things," according to the Buffalo News. Spoken like a man who is feeling all the re-election heat of an ice cube manufacturer. In the other house, Assembly speaker Sheldon Silver, whose lining gets most ripped when reform inches ahead, labeled the information "deeply flawed."

Truth be told, Albany's so-called recent reforms have so far been the equivalent of cheap mascara — cosmetic only. And even those came only after lawmakers were collectively bludgeoned the first time around in 2004.

Undoubtedly, Tom Casey and all his anonymous, underfunded and almost wholly unknown candidate colleagues would embrace such a report as a blueprint for obvious change. Too bad we'll never get the chance to find out.

(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. For more information or to provide feedback on this column, visit www.wnynewspapers.com. Opinions are those of the author.)



BRIAN ACKLEY

Political Columnist

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Amherst Bee

Founded 1879

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Subscription rates:

	One Year	Two years	Three years
	\$39.00	\$72.00	\$98.00
Sr. Citizen	\$36.00	\$66.00	\$89.00
Out of county	\$55.00	\$91.00	

Adam L. Rinewalt, Publisher/Founder 1879-1907

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George J. Measer, Publisher 1965-1994
(USPS 024-300)

5564 Main Street, P.O. Box 150, Buffalo, NY 14231-0150

(716) 632-4700 ▲ FAX 633-8601

Circulation: 632-1791 ▲ Classified: 632-4712

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Amherst Bee, P.O. Box 150, Buffalo, NY 14231-0150

Published every Wednesday by Bee Publications Inc. Periodical postage paid at Buffalo, NY 14240

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Purple Heart recipients to be honored

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, where veterans' extraordinary stories of service and sacrifice will forever be preserved, is set for its grand opening on Nov. 10. Noting there are approximately 150,000 veterans in Western New York, I am currently working to help ensure that our local Purple Heart recipients are represented in the Hall of Honor.

The Hall of Honor is located in the picturesque setting of the 1782-83 encampment of George Washington's Army at the New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site in Vails Gate, where 150 veterans of World War I received their Purple Hearts in 1932.

Sixty miles north of Manhattan, and 10 miles north of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, this location reminds us to remember those who are no longer with us, to appreciate those who live on as witnesses to war, and to pass this legacy and lessons on to young people all over the world.

Inside the new facility, a computerized interactive "Roll of Honor" will recall the names and stories of Purple Heart recipients from across the nation and the generations, which will be shared with citizens of the world over the Internet. In video theaters, guests will learn unique history lessons directly from those who made history through interviews with Purple Heart recipients themselves.

Film and exhibits will convey the experience of going into battle and its outcome, the heroic efforts of medical personnel, and the return home as a changed person.

The Purple Heart is one of the most recogniz-

able and distinguished of military honors and given to those who have sacrificed their very bodies and souls for our nation.

It's only fitting these heroes be provided a hall of honor in order to give them the recognition they deserve. To help ensure that constituents in my district who have received a Purple Heart are appropriately honored, I am asking for those who have received a Purple Heart or know of a Purple Heart recipient to contact my office.

The Purple Heart Medal has been awarded to nearly 2 million brave Americans who have been wounded or killed in combat in service to their country.

The Purple Heart Hall of Honor aims to preserve the extraordinary stories of all medal recipients, deceased or living, through videotaped interviews, photos, letters and other mementos — perhaps a good luck token a Purple Heart recipient carried — in order to bring visitors that much closer to understanding the experience shared by all veterans.

Currently I am working with local veterans organizations, including VFW and American Legion posts, and the Vietnam Veterans of America, to identify local Purple Heart recipients.

Whether you are a Purple Heart recipient yourself or would like to recognize a comrade in arms who was, or remember a family member, your help is essential.

Those with information on Purple Heart recipients may contact my office at 633-0331 or visit www.senatorrath.com.



MARY LOU RATH

New York State Senator