

## letters

## to the Editor

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## Tiny fire company, huge public service

My oasis in the storm was North Bailey Fire Hall. After no heat, power, warm food, even coffee for more than 24 hours, Lois and I found ourselves at North Bailey Fire Hall Friday night.

We were greeted by Kathleen, who offered a hot beverage to start and showed where the spaghetti dinner was, our first meal. It was delicious. Firefighter Bill took a brief history to determine if we had any medical concerns the volunteer EMTs should know. He kept a running

list off all those present should someone call trying to locate a loved one. As I watched more people arrive, everyone was made to feel welcome and at home. We stayed about two hours; we felt like we were home — good food, heat, good conversation. The hall had volunteers who really cared how we were doing. We left only after promising to return if things got rough.

Even though each volunteer firefighter or auxiliary had the very same concerns and problems we had, the community came first. Hearts as big as all outdoors. I observed  
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## Unlike some politicians, emergency workers praise FEMA

It's hard to figure what killed more trees in the last two weeks or so: Mother Nature and her slushy slapdown or every politician from here to Washington, D.C. and back.

Mother Nature's wrath was instant and stunning. The politician's limb liquidation came in a less furious but equally breathtaking squall of self-congratulatory and shallow press releases that undoubtedly took as many trees to produce as there were power line crews in our area last week.

Actually, for the most part, most of our elected officials did what elected officials do: act like moths around a blazing bonfire. Most of the grandstanding was relatively harmless; in fact some of it was downright humorous.

Brian Higgins, whose congressional game plan seems to be to swing for the fences on every issue and hope for at least a double (which still leaves a pretty good batting average), temporarily confused FEMA and the Red Cross, chastising the federal agency for its turtle-like response, as if FEMA was designed to be a first-response agency. In talking with actual frontliners — those interested in providing meaningful, minute-by-minute assistance and not out glad-handing emergency workers in front of a media pack acting like hormone-driven teenagers who just spied a rock star down the street — the town and village officials who barely slept for days on end generally praised the FEMA effort.

Sen. Hillary Clinton, the undisputed front-runner of frivolous faxes during her almost six years in office, moved quickly to reassure us all that she, "will continue to monitor developments closely to make sure we do everything possible to help those affected." Fortunately, she didn't have to reach far into her past. One of her mindless missives during the devastating floods which hit south central New York earlier this year dutifully reminded us all that she would, "continue to monitor the work of the federal agencies on the ground and get our communities the right kind of help as we move forward." As they say in the beer commercials, "Brilliant!"

In Amherst, Councilman Bill O'Laughlin made a mountain out of a Mohan, perhaps hoping the

heat he turned up in his cauldron of personal politics would waft over the town, providing a blanket of warmth so many were so desperately seeking. Mohan, once again, seemed well intentioned. The actual execution of his taxpayer-first mantra, once again, seemed a little lacking. It was not the kind of emergency situation performance, however, that one would hope for from a councilman who in 2008 fancies himself on the 16th floor of the Rath Building, especially since his private sector job as a financial advisor is to protect people's money,

Obviously, the biggest benefactor is incumbent Rep. Tom Reynolds, who should he actually pull victory from the jaws of defeat, can thank a most unexpected but fully exploited \$250 million campaign contribution, or whatever the final cleanup bill turns out to be. We saw everything but Reynolds with 25 or so saplings at his side during one of his imperious pressers. "They're my supporters," he would explain.

And why is it that Jack Davis is acting like a guy who still had fallen Redwoods in front of his factory's doorway? Whose advice is he following exactly by staying cloistered in his plant, publicly eschewing the idea that — gasp! — he should actually get out and meet a few of the voters who he claims he so badly wants to represent.

His let-them-eat-cake nonchalance over everything from the seemingly trivial — such as baby kissing and flesh pressing — to something truly important — such as the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, one of the region's few true jewels — shows a disturbing, tunnel-visioned, free-trade disconnect which makes reaching for the Davis lever more problematic than it should be.

The storm even allowed County Executive Joel Giambra to claim something other than his handling of county finances as a wreck after his sport utility vehicle was broadsided at an intersection with a nonworking traffic light.

Whether it was one of our favorite polls, or Old Man Winter himself, no one seemed to remember that a tree is a terrible thing to waste.

(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)



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**1-2 Days 7%**

**None 4%**

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## Take advantage of your right to vote

Vote early and often. That old saying often heard around Election Day is meant as a funny throwback to the days of rampant vote fraud and ballot-box stuffing. Although said in jest, there's nothing funny about denying someone the right to vote.

And yet 32 million potential voters failed to register in 2004, denying themselves that very right because they never took the time to exercise this most basic of American rights. In addition, according to the Census Bureau, 19 million registered voters failed to cast their ballots in 2000; 10 percent of them said business kept them from voting.

Think about that: Nearly 2 million people who could have supported business-friendly candidates stayed at work and let others decide who would represent them in public office.

Of course, every small-business owner is busy managing employees, handling the paperwork and making sure customers are happy. But most still vote: According to a 2005 NFIB National Small-Business Poll, 95 percent of small-business owners are registered to vote, and 84 percent usually do vote. That's a good start. Now it's time to think about encouraging employees, family members, customers and vendors to vote.

Vote early — As a small-business owner, you can make sure you vote regardless of what crisis might arise on Election Day. If you're already registered, you can go to www.NFIB.com/politics for information about ways to vote before Election Day. Voters can either complete an absentee ballot and send it in by mail or, in some states, vote early in person at designated locations.

Vote often — figuratively speaking, of course. NFIB surveys have shown that 96 percent of small-business owners believe that every citizen should participate in the political process. And they can multiply the power of that vote by urging employees, family members, customers and vendors to support candidates and issues that will improve the regulatory and economic environment for small business.

Every small-business owner should take the time to talk to employees about the impact of higher taxes and burdensome regulation. Let them know that every extra bit of paperwork the government forces upon the company has a potential negative impact on their paychecks and level of benefits. Tell your family how the impact of government at every level doesn't end at your small business, but comes right in the front door at home and affects them, too.

Thank your customers for their business and urge them to help you reduce the costs of their purchases by voting

to ease the burden of excessive government regulation. For more help, visit www.NFIB.com/politics where you'll find a variety of materials, talking points and even a new video to help you discuss these relevant issues with others.

And there's still time before Election Day to support pro-small-business candidates with a financial contribution, use of your facilities for a campaign event, or by volunteering to help get out the vote. Remember, Election Day is not the first day to vote; it is the last.

Todd Stottlemeyer is president and CEO of the National Federation of Independent Business.



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