

## letters

## to the Editor

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Smith applauds  
Police Department

On behalf of the Board of Education, the staff and students of the Williamsville Central School District, I would like to thank the Amherst Police Department, un-

der the leadership of Chief John Moslow, Assistant Chief John Askey, and Detective Sgt. Michael Torrillo, for their extraordinary efforts on behalf of our community and, in particular, our youth.

Recently, we experienced two  
(Please turn to page six)

## Corrections

A story in the May 2 Amherst Bee about talent agent Toni Silveri included references to several actors. Margo Davis is in no way affiliated with broadcast work for Independent Health.

Information was incorrect in an advertisement for the Village Glen Tennis Club published in the May 9-10 Leisure and Recreation section. The club has no fitness facilities.

The Lawn and Garden Special Section published May 2-3 had incorrect information regarding the owner of Greenthumb Landscaping. The proprietor is Peter Bordin. He may be reached at 863-9886.

**EXCLUSIVE**  
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**Click to vote on this Bee Poll TODAY!**

**Should students be required to wear seatbelts on school buses?**

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today, to cast your vote  
for next week's online poll!

Last week's question:  
**Are students in Amherst schools safe?**

You said:  
**68% YES 32% NO**

## How to reach The Bee

The Amherst Bee publishes community news free of charge. Mail items to The Amherst Bee, P.O. Box 150, Buffalo, NY, 14231-0150. Our telephone number is 632-4700. Our fax number is 633-8601. Our Web sites are www.BeeNews.com and www.AmherstBee.com. Amherst Managing Editor David Sherman's e-mail address is dsherman@BeeNews.com. Amherst Associate Editor Jessica Finch's e-mail address is jfinch@BeeNews.com. Senders should state on their contributions whether their e-mail address can be published.

Letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced and are limited to a maximum of 300 words. Names will not be withheld unless the author demonstrates a clear reason for anonymity. No unsigned letters will be printed. You must supply your name, address and telephone number for verification. Authors are limited to one letter every four weeks. Letters are subject to editing.

Our deadline is 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. For engagement and wedding announcements, The Bee offers a form to list names and details. Call for a copy. There is no charge to publish engagements, weddings or anniversaries.

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Senecas offer Spitzer rough road;  
Ackley authors his final column

If Eliot Spitzer thinks it's been a tough road, pun intended, with the Seneca Nation of Indians, he might be in for a whole lot of you ain't seen nothing yet.

No doubt that newly elected nation President Maurice John speaks for plenty of his constituents in ratcheting up the rhetoric with New York State in recent weeks. But in some respects, it's personal as well.

John, you see, was one of the very first Senecas to start selling tax-free gas and cigarettes more than 20 years ago, along the major east-west traffic corridor near the Pennsylvania state border. But when New York opened the Southern Tier Expressway, after a tense standoff with state and federal officials — led in part by the new President, no less — all that traffic was diverted away from his massive monemaking machine, long before anyone knew what the Internet was. Predictably, his enterprise eventually closed. He's thrived on a rebel image ever since, and that's not about to change anytime soon.

\* \* \*

Is there anything more telling about our almost daily disavowal of reality than a lawsuit challenging one of the two local fiscal stability authorities that actually went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court?

It didn't actually get to the court per se; justices returned the case without comment. But it proved yet again, and this time at the ultimate legal level, that lawsuits against control boards are often unsuccessful.

Until we learn the lesson that solutions are best crafted by reasonable visionaries sitting around a local table — not in a courtroom, not in Albany, not in Washington — the melancholy march into the muck of misery and misjudgments will continue almost unabated.

Since that's really not so hard to understand, why is it virtually impossible to execute here?

\* \* \*

As Paul Harvey would say: purely personal. This marks my final column for the Weekly Independent Newspaper group. Perhaps writing every week about what ails us, and sadly there is so much, made such a move inevitable, but better jobs and family are chief among the reasons the

Sunshine State will be home starting next week. (And where, by the way, the news has been dominated by a state legislature debating not if they will significantly and permanently cut property taxes there, but by how much.) In New York, we're content to be bribed by the "re-elect me" rebate ruse.

Four years ago, I was privileged to be chosen to occupy the space that for decades had been home to a personal idol, the late Ray Herman. His unexpected passing after decades of political commentary, both in print and on the airwaves, left an irreplaceable void on the editorial pages of many weekly newspapers.

I think he would have been proud of one particular moment a year or so ago when in the same week I received a phone call claiming I was nothing more than an apologist for the Democratic Party, followed a day or so later by a letter accusing me of being nothing

more than a mouthpiece for the GOP.

If there has been an underlying thread to almost everything I have written, it is this: the electoral power is still with you. Eventually, life being the cyclical creature that it is, the electorate will again rise up and demand that Erie County and New York State become a better place to work and do business, breaking free of the economic shackles created by the politics of personal power, privilege and protectionism that have allowed a great region to wither away.

Many thanks to all of you who have offered your own compliments and criticisms of my work, and many thanks to the WIN group for recognizing that a second, alternative local newspaper voice is an important part of what we do.

I think Ray would approve, and I know I do, that this space will henceforth be filled by the wisdom and broadmindedness of Dan Meyer, editor of The Sun newspaper of Hamburg. Recently married and a new homeowner, he is the perfect voice, for he represents the heart and soul of the generation that must swing the wrecking ball of change.

Go forth and sin no more.

(Opinions are those of the author.)

Let's protect both  
workers and democracy

Successful entrepreneurs know that a key factor in running a thriving business is a good relationship between the owners and their employees. In the current economy, with nearly full employment and intense competition for good workers, it's clearly in their interests to foster that relationship.

However, there's a movement in Congress that would not only undermine those efforts, but also would attack a sacred institution of American democracy — the right to a secret ballot.

A bill with the misleading name of the "Employee Free Choice Act" has been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and will be considered in the Senate. The bill would force employers to recognize a labor union without its employees first holding a secret-ballot election.

The bill would force the use of so-called "card-check agreements." Under a card-check system, a union gathers "authorization cards" signed by workers to supposedly express their desire to unionize. Once labor organizers collect cards from more than 50 percent of a business's workers, that business is unionized.

Once you take away an employee's right to make a free, unencumbered choice by a secret ballot, you subject the person to an environment of potential harassment where it's difficult for them not to support forming a union. In addition, the business owner may well be surprised to find their employees unionized without ever having a chance to engage employees and explain the potential effects of a union on the business, which is permitted under current law.

Further, once a union presents its contract

offer, the owner has four months to accept it. If he or she does not, the matter is turned over to the federal government for binding arbitration. That means that a bureaucrat with no familiarity with the business, or the industry that it's in, will singularly and solely, without appeal, decide the wages and benefits that business will provide.

This isn't to say that management is always perfect, or to excuse management teams that take huge compensation for poor performance at the expense of employees. There are always exceptions of owners and managers who don't treat employees fairly, and that's wrong. But it simply isn't good public policy to make legislation on the basis of a few bad apples.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that union membership continues to decline nationwide. In the private sector, 7.4 percent of workers belonged to a union in 2006, continuing a decades-long decline from the approximately 35 percent of all workers who belonged to a union in the 1950s.

However, while America has become less and less unionized, the economy has become stronger. Real wages are up, productivity is up, interest rates are low, as are unemployment rates. Why would we, as a country, want to go backward economically?

The current system of secret-ballot elections is a legitimate process that's based on a fundamental part of American democracy. Let's not throw it out the window just for the sake of increasing union membership.

Todd Stottlemeyer is president and CEO of the National Federation of Independent Business in Washington, D.C.



**BRIAN ACKLEY**

Political Columnist



**TODD STOTTELMYER**

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