

letters

to the Editor



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Justice thankful for support

I want to thank the residents of the Town of Amherst for their support in re-electing me to the position of Amherst town justice. I was truly honored in receiving the endorsement of both the major and minor parties and hope that it was a vote of confi-

dence in my performance over the last eight years as your town judge, and I thank them for their valuable support and assistance. I also want to take this time to congratulate all the winners of the Nov. 6 elections and look forward to working with them.

Thank you again for your trust and support.

Geoffrey K. Klein
Amherst town justice

Correction

In last week's article "Manna, Marlette, Weinstein elected to board," it stated Council Member Bill Kindel had been in office for 22 years. That sentence should have stated the years were not consecutive.

Spitzer's speech doesn't hold up to 'truth detector'

Eliot Spitzer finally admitted that he was wrong. In a speech made last week in Washington, D.C., our governor finally conceded, agreeing to withdraw his plan to issue special driver's licenses to illegal immigrants.

While his remarks did point out that his idea was not well-received by the vast majority of New Yorkers, he used the forum as an opportunity to try and steer attention away from his half-brained idea, instead pointing the finger at the federal government for having lost control of its borders, allowing millions of immigrants to enter our country.

So what did the governor really say? Thanks to a special device I picked up earlier this month as an early Christmas present for myself, I was able to detect what was true and what was political rhetoric through the magic powers of a mechanism known simply as "the truth detector."

So after thoroughly reading the instructions (batteries not included, some assembly is required, not for use by children under the age of 10) and following all of the proper procedures needed to put my new toy together, I was ready to run Spitzer's remarks through a machine that tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth:

- What Spitzer said: "After serious deliberation and consultation with people I respect on all sides of this issue, I have concluded that New York State cannot successfully address this problem on its own."

- Truth Detector Analysis: For two months, I've tried to jam this proposal down your throats, and virtually no one wants to jump on board. Republicans, Democrats, everyone seems to be really ticked off at me. My popularity is plunging so much that now there's talk of my having virtually no chance of being re-elected in 2010. When in doubt, blame the feds. And that's what I'm doing and going to continue to do from here on out.

- What Spitzer said: "We announced a comprehensive proposal to allow New Yorkers to choose from three secure licenses. This was a practical response to both the new federal travel requirements and the old federal inaction."

Truth Detector Analysis: Sure, it would have been confusing, but it's something new that I

thought up all by myself in my hopes of gaining enough bipartisan support to get me mentioned as a possible vice presidential candidate in 2012. The way things are going right now, I couldn't even run for dog catcher of Albany. Oh yeah, and I'm blaming the feds. Again. I'm blaming them so much I mentioned them twice in the same sentence.

- What Spitzer said: "It (special licenses plan) would have enabled us to keep our upstate economy viable, meet the demands of federal travel requirements, make our roads safer and bring more New Yorkers into the system, helping law enforcement officials fight crime and terrorism."

- Truth Detector Analysis: Of course, it's easy for me to now say that my plan would have helped our economy and made New York a safer place to live in and visit. That's why I'm scaring you with mentions of crime and terrorism. Oh yeah, and I'm blaming the feds. Again. That's the second time I've mentioned the new travel requirements. I

didn't create them. The big, bad guys here in Washington did. Blame them, not me.

- What Spitzer said: "I have concluded that pushing forward unilaterally in the face of such strong opposition would be counterproductive."

- Truth Detector Analysis: The thousands of phone calls, e-mails and letters finally made me realize voters really don't like my idea.

- What Spitzer said: "It does not take a stethoscope to hear the pulse of New Yorkers on this topic."

- Truth Detector Analysis: Talk radio shows and Internet message boards seem to do the trick.

- What Spitzer said: "I look forward to getting back to an agenda that addresses the needs of all New Yorkers."

- Truth Detector Analysis: Let's all forget I ever mentioned this idea. Nothing to see here, folks. Move along.

(Daniel Meyer is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. Comments on this column can be sent via e-mail to: meyersmusings@gmail.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)



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Political Columnist

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Changes needed to stop deadly infections

As evidenced by several local cases and a recently released study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, there is an alarming increase in hospital-based methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus infections. That is why I sponsor legislation that would require surveillance to test admitted patients at hospitals and nursing homes for MRSA.

Surveillance involves a simple swab of incoming patients' nose with a Q-tip to determine who is carrying MRSA. Most patients who are colonized with MRSA will never become infected because they are immune to their own bug, but they can transmit MRSA to others, especially in the hospital where many are susceptible because they are sick.

Once identified, targeted steps can be taken to ensure that these colonized and infected patients do not transmit MRSA in the hospital setting.

For an entire generation, hospitals have emphasized infection precautions such as washing hands and keeping surfaces clean, but few tools have been used to understand where the danger is greatest.

Continual reminders to hospitals' staff insisting they wash their hands and keep all surfaces sterile certainly are part of the solution, but not the entire solution.

In fact, many believe this approach has delayed real progress on MRSA because the shift has not been made to testing for these insidious staph infections. Since 1974, there has been a 30-fold increase in the incidence of MRSA in our hospitals. That's a 3,000 percent increase.

Patients who go into the hospital should have a reasonable expectation that they won't become even more ill. In addition to the patients who become very sick from MRSA staph infections — oftentimes having to remain in the hospital for ten or more days — nationally, MRSA deaths, once a rarity, are approaching 20,000 annually, and this number grows every year.

This alarming trend can be reversed. The MRSA rate in Denmark, where patient protocols similar to those outlined in my bill have been followed for many years, is less than 2 percent — as compared to 65 percent in the United States and rising every year.

The Veterans Administration Hospital in Buffalo is currently following protocols that have reduced MRSA infections by 50 percent in a pilot program at the Pittsburgh, Pa. VA hospital.

My bill calls for an immediate plan of action, and I am working with my colleagues in the Legislature to pass it as soon as possible. I encourage anyone who would like further information to contact my office.



MARY LOU RATH

New York State Senator

Brief

The American Association of University Women, Buffalo Branch, is offering interest-free loans and grants to Western New York women and men enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs in accredited colleges and universities. The

branch's Chamberlin Loan Fund and Funds for Education awards are made twice a year and the next deadline for applying is Dec. 1. Applications are available at www.aauw.buffalo.edu or by calling 559-3037.