

letters

to the Editor



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Grant writing company too costly

As a resident of the Town of Amherst, it is appalling that the town cannot receive even the same amount of money through grants that it is spending on a grant writing firm.

This fly-by-night firm, O'Connell and Associates, apparently

doesn't have any local clients because it has exercised the same practices in other area municipalities. Approximately \$13,000 for a Police Department grant that would have been funded by the federal government provided that the paperwork was filled out correctly? And the company has the gall to offer to write additional grants

(Please turn to page six)

Corrections

In the Bee's special section, Death: A Guide for the Living, an incorrect photo was used with The Holiday Inns of Buffalo story.

The Web site listed in the March 12 edition for Katie Weisser's run to benefit Ryan Dinnocenzo was incorrect. The correct Web site is www.activecom/donate/tntwny/kweisse.

Emptying the 'Musings mailbag'

As we prepare to hopefully finally turn the page on Western New York's wintry weather season, I thought it would be fitting this week to share with you some of the "fan mail" I've received in recent weeks as I once again take some time to clear off my desk, empty out my notebook, clean out my e-mail inbox and respond to messages left on my voice mail.

The following are just a few of the messages I received either via e-mail or handwritten letter regarding items discussed in this space.

The recent resignation of Eliot Spitzer and the continued lack of leadership in our state capital are common themes. Enjoy:

• "Dan, I'm a big fan of your weekly column. As a state employee I just wanted to tell you when news of Spitzer's resignation became official we were notified today that, effective 1 o'clock on Monday, March 17, all letterhead, memos, Web sites, signage, and photographs had to be changed or altered to reflect the new governor."

"Needless to say, after that expensive process took place and we soon found out about our new governor's marital missteps and rumors of other skeletons in David Paterson's closet that our entire department was holding our breath and just waiting for another notification of a change in power."

"We've actually considered starting an office pool about the subject. Of course all bets, wagers and odds would be established and made during non-working hours. You know, just like the office college basketball pool."

• "The Spitzer resignation and the subsequent coverage were disgusting. What he chose to do was neither a tragedy nor a mistake. A mistake doesn't happen a reported eight or nine times. His arrogance finally caught up with him and now he's paying for it."

"Which brings me to another point. The worst part of all of this besides the actually immoral acts is that he probably doesn't feel he did anything wrong and I'm sure somehow he (is) saying behind closed doors that it was the state's Republican Party that "had it out for me."

"I seriously am embarrassed to say I live in New York State. I'm one of five children and all of my

siblings have fled within the last five years. My brother moved to Virginia and is loving every minute of it. My older sister lives in New Hampshire while the two younger ones are both in Florida. I'm growing more envious of them with each passing day."

• "Mr. Meyer, I want to join the group of people who wants to scream loudly that we are officially sick and tired, and quite frankly, actually offended, by people who continue to label the Spitzer affair as a "tragedy."

"It is not a tragedy. Not even close. The 9-11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington were a tragedy. The Challenger space shuttle exploding was a tragedy. When my son was killed in a five-car pile-up in Syracuse the week after he turned 18, that was a tragedy."

"No one died. The final impact and actual consequences on Spitzer's family aren't tragic. What a horrible decision by the media to allow it to be classified as something it's not even remotely close to actually being. Shame on the newspapers, television stations, radio talk show hosts and online commentators for using that term to describe a selfish man's involvement with a prostitution ring."

• "Hey Dan, a whole lot of "walls" involved with this Spitzer fiasco. Consider this — his wife's name is Silda Wall. His hired hooker went to Wall High School. And of course, Eliot tried to clean up Wall Street."

• Count me among the business owners struggling to stay alive in New York State who is not impressed with David Paterson as our governor. From what I've read and heard, he has been totally unable to exert any influence over the state legislature. He's accepting the status quo philosophy of Albany and quietly allowing back-room deals to take place. He's been in office since March 17 and it's been nothing but one big disappointment. I was excited for about a week but now I've realized that nothing has really changed and I shouldn't expect it to change."

• "Spitzer was a hypocrite. Bruno is a bully. Silver is a pathological liar. Paterson is completely useless. There is no hope for the future of this state. Help!"

(Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)



DAN MEYER

Political Columnist

EXCLUSIVE ONLINE Bee Poll

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Click to vote on this Bee Poll TODAY!

Do you favor the Town Centre project on Maple Road?

ONLINE POLL RESULTS VOTE

Log onto www.AmherstBee.com today, to cast your vote for next week's online poll!

Last week's question:

Would cameras make major intersections safer?

You said:

58% YES 42% NO

How to reach The Bee

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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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New state budget will hit taxpayers hard

Because the deadline for publication of this column arrives before the final passage of the 2008-09 state budget, I can't say with certainty what the final outcome of this year's debate will be.

Unfortunately, what I can say is that taxpayers will once again be hit hard due to the refusal of Albany leaders to reduce spending and cut costs in a time of economic recession. I continue to use my voice — and my vote — to oppose these irresponsible acts of the majority in Albany who refuse to bring spending in line with the economic realities of the business cycle.

An economic downturn is the worst time to be raising taxes and fees. Yet that is once again Albany's answer to a projected \$4.7 billion deficit resulting from years of overspending and the current decline in revenue from slower economic activity across the state.

In spite of a huge drop in anticipated revenue from Wall Street activity (which generally accounts for more than 20 percent of the revenue to the state's general fund) and big job losses in the financial industry, Albany leaders announced a budget deal this weekend that will spend at more than twice the rate of inflation.

With most rank-and-file legislators remaining in the capitol on Saturday and Sunday to participate in budget conference committee meetings and debate competing proposals between the Assembly and Senate, the old ways of secrecy and backroom deal-making took over in the name of getting an agreement done — or nearly done — by the April 1 deadline.

It didn't take long for leaders to rip through the "no new taxes" pledge announced when negotiations began in January. At the time of this writing, the majority in the Assembly and Senate are set to vote for higher taxes and fees on Internet sales, health insurance policies, credit cards and tobacco.

There is also a strong chance that higher gasoline taxes, higher mortgage recording fees and even a tax on beverage containers will make it into the final budget.

If past practice is an indicator, any spending not able to be paid for with higher taxes and fees will almost certainly be paid for with borrowed money as the state goes deeper and deeper into debt, mortgaging our children's future to fund all the things that the special-interest groups want and legislators just can't say no to.

State debt currently amounts to more than \$54 billion. The \$5 billion in

interest and debt service the state pays annually was recently described by State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli as the fastest growing line item in the state budget. That's wrong.

People often ask me, "What's the solution?" To me, it is a simple answer but one that has eluded Albany leaders for years: cut spending and cut taxes in order to stimulate, not stifle, the economy.

I will continue to fight to represent this view as your representative in Albany, and I welcome your input, suggestions, advice and help.

Please feel free to contact me at my district office in Williamsville (634-1895) or via e-mail at hayesj@assembly.state.ny.us.



JAMES P. HAYES

New York State Assembly