

## letters

# to the Editor



dsherman@beeneews.com  
www.beeneews.com

## Educate yourself before voting

"An educated consumer is our best customer" is a familiar advertising slogan that makes a lot of sense. An informed school budget voter makes the best voter; so how can we educate ourselves before we vote on our school budget on May 20?

A recent Amherst Bee editorial criticizing spending for student extracurricular activities in Williamsville focused on a tiny sliver, less than 3 percent, of the overall spending plan. There are two other school districts in the

town. I noticed in a recent Bee Heard section where a resident asked for an article showing all three district's proposals.

So, what is a voter to do? What other sources are available to educate us so that a thoughtful vote can be cast? Here are a couple of opportunities for voters to educate themselves more comprehensively. The first is the school district itself. Williamsville's Web site (williamsvillek12.org) has all of the budget information. You can also provide feedback via a link on the Web site. Second, the PTAs also provide many opportunities

(Please turn to page seven)

# Following state budget approval, worst may still be around corner

Don't look now, but the rocky start to the current fiscal year for New York State may get even bumpier when you take a closer look at some of the figures featured in the \$121.7 billion spending plan approved by legislators earlier this month.

The budget adopted by the Legislature increased spending in a recessionary time as we are being led by a new governor who somehow found it fitting to call the spending plan a "sound budget."

What about that record pork-barrel spending figure of \$200 million and an overall increase in spending of nearly 5 percent, which includes \$1.5 billion in new taxes and \$205 million in new fees? Is that considered to be sound? What about fiscally responsible? I think not.

But it goes beyond the numbers themselves. You can crunch the numbers all you want, but sometimes it is the process that was utilized to calculate those numbers that tells the true story of a state government that is still fatally flawed and hopelessly hampered by petty partisan politics.

The way the budget process was conducted — besides being nine days late — was embarrassing but not totally surprising since it was leaked last week that secretive budget negotiations took place amongst a handful of selfish elected officials who were hot to trot for those pork-barrel bucks. Talk about being out of touch. Despite the reality that should be slamming them right between the eyes, we witnessed the seedy and secretive practice of budget negotiations being held behind closed doors.

In the words of Denny Farrell Jr., who serves as chairman of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, "there was no sunshine" when it came to budget talks that obviously occurred behind the scenes.

Open government is something Gov. David Paterson has mentioned in recent weeks whenever he's addressed the future of our state, including the policies and practices preferred by lawmakers with offices in Albany. But where is this transparency, and where are the signs that Paterson is anywhere close to introducing it to his colleagues?

I don't want to blame it all on Paterson. After

all, this week marks the one-month anniversary of his introduction as our new leader following the Spitzer sex scandal. He's obviously still getting his feet wet and learning the finer points of how difficult it's going to be to change the state's senseless spending and borrowing practices.

As Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli said recently, our elected leaders in Albany should "keep an eraser handy" because, in his mind, "the worst may still be around the corner."

Amen, Tom.

Back to the budget. All hope is not lost because there were a few highlights that deserve mention despite the same-old, same-old status quo approach to the budget season that many career politicians will continue to follow until they retire.

Give credit to Paterson and his fiscal staffers for reducing spending growth when it comes to state agencies and making a commitment to investing in education and health care for children. I'm also happy to note that Medicaid spending is going to increase by less

than 2 percent for next year.

But much work still needs to be done, and that DiNapoli quote of what may be lying around the corner is likely going to strike when we're least expecting it as we prepare to stare straight ahead into the face of extreme economic uncertainty. Instability at the federal level is only going to further damage a dysfunctional state government that still won't accept the fact that you can't spend money where it shouldn't be spent.

My advice? Put the political posturing and petty partisan politics aside and focus on what should be a common goal — how to address what in about seven or eight months will likely be a more than \$5 billion budget gap. Simply put, the revenues aren't there. That means you need to go back to the basics and make it crystal clear that if you spend on anything other than deficit spending, you're not doing your job.

We the people do not want to pay taxes. This mindset of introducing heavy tax burdens is only going to do one thing — encourage more of us to leave the Empire State.

(Comments on this column can be sent via e-mail to: meyersmusings@gmail.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)



DAN MEYER

Political Columnist

## EXCLUSIVE ONLINE Bee Poll

www.AmherstBee.com

Click to vote on this Bee Poll TODAY!

# Have you made changes in your life to be "green?"

ONLINE POLL RESULTS VOTE

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

Last week's question:

**Are the town's departments being run adequately?**

You said:

**44% YES 56% 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.

## Amherst Bee

Founded 1879

Trey Measer, Publisher/President, e-mail: tmeaser@BeeNews.com  
John J. Evans, Executive Vice President, e-mail: jevans@BeeNews.com  
David F. Sherman, Managing Editor, e-mail: dsherman@BeeNews.com  
Jessica Finch, Associate Editor, e-mail: jfinch@BeeNews.com  
Michael A. Measer, Circulation Manager, e-mail: mmeaser@BeeNews.com  
Mary Anne Cappon, Advertising Sales Director, e-mail: macappon@BeeNews.com  
Linda Crist, Advertising Manager, e-mail: lcrist@BeeNews.com  
Karl Scheithir, Production Manager, e-mail: karls@BeeNews.com

Web sites: www.BeeNews.com & www.AmherstBee.com

### 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

George J. Measer Sr., Publisher 1907-1965

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

©Copyright Bee Publications Inc. 2008. All rights reserved. All advertising, news and editorial copy, including text, drawings and photographs published, are the property of Bee Publications Inc. and cannot be used without our written consent.

# Senate ensures budget invests in education, job creation

The 2008-09 state budget makes important investments in education, health care and job creation, yet still spends hundreds of millions of dollars less than the one presented by the governor in January. For my colleagues and I in the Senate, protecting taxpayers was our number one priority, and we succeeded. We said no to a massive increase in personal income taxes.

We said no to an increase in car registration fees. We said no to higher gasoline taxes. We said no to new health insurance taxes. And we said yes to across-the-board spending cuts in state government.

The Senate rejected a plan that would have shifted a larger share of the costs for certain programs to counties, that would have added \$83 million to the local property tax burden. We also rejected a plan that would have shifted \$46 million in new costs to school districts. All of these actions in the budget, initiated by Senate Republicans, will help limit the pressure on local property taxpayers.

This budget also achieves the goals we set out in education. It delivers dollars directly into the classrooms, providing resources to students and the teachers who educate them. It includes a record \$1.8 billion increase in school aid and ensures the funds are distributed fairly to our local schools.

New York spends the most money in the country per pupil. Now we must continue to work

to improve results and strengthen accountability to ensure our children are getting the most education for our dollars. Educating and training young people so they can enjoy successful careers is critically important for our future.

To help create new jobs, the budget includes more than \$1 billion in capital investments for businesses, and to fund capital improvement projects at SUNY and CUNY, as well as important improvements to housing and state parks. These investments will continue our successful partnership among the private sector, higher education and state government to help revitalize the economy for the future.

The new budget also addresses challenges we faced regarding investments in health care. The budget restores \$245 million in health care funds, including \$168.9 million directly to hospitals, nursing homes and home care.

This budget will help ensure that patients receive the treatment they need and the prescription medication they require. It focuses on prevention and ensures that quality health care is accessible to everyone.

As we negotiated this budget, the Senate paid the most attention to the taxpayers who pay for state spending. They must come first, and that is why we rejected taxes that would negatively impact our citizens. In this time of growing economic hardship, fiscal responsibility and accountability are critical to moving our state forward.



MARY LOU RATH

New York State Senator