

letters



dsherman@beeneews.com
www.beeneews.com

Watch for postal carriers on roads

During our short summer season, Postal Service carriers often share the road with cyclists, especially on some of our scenic Western New York highways. We want to make sure that the mutual road experience for rural carriers and bike enthusiasts alike is pleasant and safe. That's why we're asking our cyclist friends to keep a few tips in mind when taking on the road.

Watch for our delivery vehicles; we make frequent stops. Furthermore, our rural carriers often drive their own private

vehicles when delivering mail, making it harder to recognize them as delivery people. Try to avoid the unplanned and unsafe game of hopscotch in which we take turns passing each other. The use of mirrors, horns, signals and flags will help you to communicate with us and help us to locate you on the road, particularly around blind spots. Please ride with traffic and obey all traffic laws, especially around intersections. Finally, leave plenty of space when passing.

We respect the rights of cyclists to be on the road and will do everything to watch for them
(Please turn to page six)

With six months until election, Bloomberg, Nader still lingering

They want to give voters an alternative choice. Citing their ability to provide an option that does not involve the two major political parties of our country, supporters of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and consumer rights advocate Ralph Nader are carefully surveying the field, as rumors of possible presidential campaigns for both men continue to float around Washington.

As we approach the six-month mark until voters head to the polls, the ongoing drama from the Hillary Clinton versus Barack Obama race for the Democratic nomination is still the main story line to follow.

But two sidebars have a chance of making bigger headlines, and they involve Bloomberg's exploration of becoming the first modern independent candidate to break the stranglehold the two major parties have every four years on the race for the White House, as well as Nader's plan for a third run for the presidency.

It's tough to say what impact either candidate would have on the race. It's even more difficult to predict what would happen if both men were to somehow appear on the ballot in November, but one thing is clear — political pundits are buzzing over the idea of either potential candidate somehow playing the role of wild card spoiler when John McCain takes on either Clinton or Obama this fall.

Some observers of the national political scene believe Bloomberg's entrance into the race would immediately start out of the front foot with support going his way from at least 15 to 20 percent of the voting population.

That the billionaire media magnate could make

it a three-way race is something that both Republican and Democratic strategists are fearful of, since Bloomberg has support from both sides of the aisle because of his political connections from being a lifelong Democrat before he joined the dark side and registered with the Republican Party when he ran for mayor in 2001.

Bloomberg's major strength is his billfold. He has the money to last until the final bell, especially since his personal fortune is estimated to be more than \$5 billion. Deep down inside, Bloomberg knows he doesn't have what it takes to effectively promote his independent candidacy to voters who are tired of partisan politics.

Nader is pointing out the obvious — since he last ran four years ago, the country is suffering from an increased national deficit, higher prices for fuel

and a slew of other problems that he says are the result of the "two corporate parties."

Nader's campaign is moving along as he aims at an ambitious goal of acquiring \$10 million in fundraising. Nader seeks to keep the pressure on McCain and Clinton/Obama, a trio whom he identified as "mainstream corporate candidates." Make no mistake about it. Nader wants to play the role of spoiler, and he feels his legacy from his first two runs for the White House have helped to highlight civil rights issues and the need for a recall of troops currently stationed in Iraq.

It is evident that Bloomberg and Nader will at least help encourage further conversations and hopefully an open and honest dialogue about how large corporations have an influence on our nation's political landscape.

(Opinions are those of the author.)



DAN MEYER

Political Columnist

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- 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

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State has moral obligation to suspend gas tax

An increase in the price of tolls is not the only thing that motorists have to contend with lately. Record-breaking gas prices nearing \$4 a gallon are proving to be overwhelming for the majority of drivers who already struggle to pay their bills.

As oil companies reap profits, motorists find ways to cut back so they can afford to continue to drive to work while businesses pass increased fuel costs onto consumers in the form of higher-priced goods and services. Without any real action, our economy will continue to suffer setbacks.

Our region, which relies heavily on the travel and tourism industry to help sustain its economy during the summer months, will be especially hard-hit by rising fuel costs.

If immediate relief at the pumps is not provided, the inevitable consequences will be devastating for our local economy, hurting businesses and families alike.

We cannot afford to ignore this issue any longer and must take steps to provide residents with relief now.

That is why I am proposing to suspend the state's sales tax during the summer months. This would save motorists nearly 30 cents per gallon on gasoline and 35 cents per gallon on diesel fuel.

While in comparison to the overall price it may not seem like much, every penny counts. It also gives New York State the opportunity to provide motorists with temporary relief at a time when the federal government refuses to take action.

Our state is one of only a handful of states that taxes gasoline. It collects a more than 3 percent sales tax as a percentage of the price of every gallon sold, which means that the state is reaping a "windfall" in sales tax revenue as gas prices rise at the pump. To add fuel to the fire, the gas tax amounts to a "tax on tax" because it is calculated on top of the many other taxes motorists pay, such as the motor fuel excise tax, the petroleum business tax, testing fee tax, spill tax and the federal tax.

State leaders have a moral obligation to suspend the gas tax. New York State already has some of the highest taxes in the nation, forcing residents and businesses to flee in search of opportunities elsewhere.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle contend that suspension of the gas tax won't make a difference and that the state needs the revenue.

But the truth is, if we don't take action, the consequences will be far more devastating than the need to

subsidize wasteful state programs.

The tax-and-spend policies of this state must be curtailed, and I urge residents to join me in my call for suspension of the gas tax. With a gloomy economic forecast, eliminating the state gas tax, among other things, would be a step in the right direction, and it is the least we can do for families who are already struggling to make ends meet.

I will continue to fight against this unnecessary "tax-on-tax," and I welcome your input, suggestions, advice and help. Please feel free to contact me at my district office in Williamsville at 634-1895 or e-mail hayesj@assembly.state.ny.us.



JAMES P. HAYES

New York State Assembly

On the Campus

John Cozza, a Fredonia State College senior from Williamsville, was awarded one of five Rosa Parks Scholarships from the college. Cozza was chosen from among 46 other entries. An English major, he wrote a short story, "One More Drop into the Pool of Hate." Each scholarship is valued at \$350.

Geoffrey McGovern of Williamsville has received a Graduate Student Excellence in Teaching Award from Binghamton University. The annual award recognizes the achievements of graduate students who serve as teaching assistants and instructors. McGovern is pursuing studies in political science.