

Grins & groans

THE ISSUE | Grins and groans from events last week.
OUR OPINION | A groan to Eliot Spitzer and grins to Silda Spitzer and Gov. David Paterson.

Groan

Eliot Spitzer.
Today, he is citizen Spitzer. Soon, the former governor of New York may be charged with serious crimes for his alleged involvement in a prostitution ring.
Some day, the impact of his misdeeds may fade but will always be part of a dark time in state history. Certainly his family will have a very difficult time recovering from last week's shocking revelation. Not to be overlooked is that the family's health, particularly that of Silda Spitzer, was put at risk.
Everyone has flaws, and that's acceptable. But Spitzer's deviant and dangerous actions combined with his public position and pious personality are downright disturbing.

Grin

Silda Spitzer.
What a tough woman.
Having to twice go out in front of cameras and stand next to her cheating spouse was remarkable. How she resisted the urge not to scream or choke her hooker-happy husband in front of the world, we'll never know.
But it was obvious the nightmarish episode had taken a toll on her, physically as well as emotionally. To her credit, she put up a strong front and has everyone feel-

ing sympathy for her and her children.
The family is the real victim in this sad story. Hopefully, they'll get the support and understanding they need to get through it.

Grin

Gov. David Paterson.
So far, he seems capable of handling the tough tasks of taking the reigns of office and renewing public confidence in it.
His early message has emphasized the importance of state government refocusing on the critical matters of crafting a workable state budget and providing the programs residents need. That includes stabilizing taxes, controlling spending, investing in education and promoting business. He has also vowed to continue to find ways to reinvigorate the ailing upstate economy.
But none of that will be easy. The state faces a large deficit and partisanship is stronger than ever in legislature chambers.
But Paterson has 22 years of experience as a legislator to draw on and a proven ability to compromise that should help find acceptable solutions. Proof will be in the results, but at first glance, Paterson seems like the right guy at the right time to help get the state moving forward.

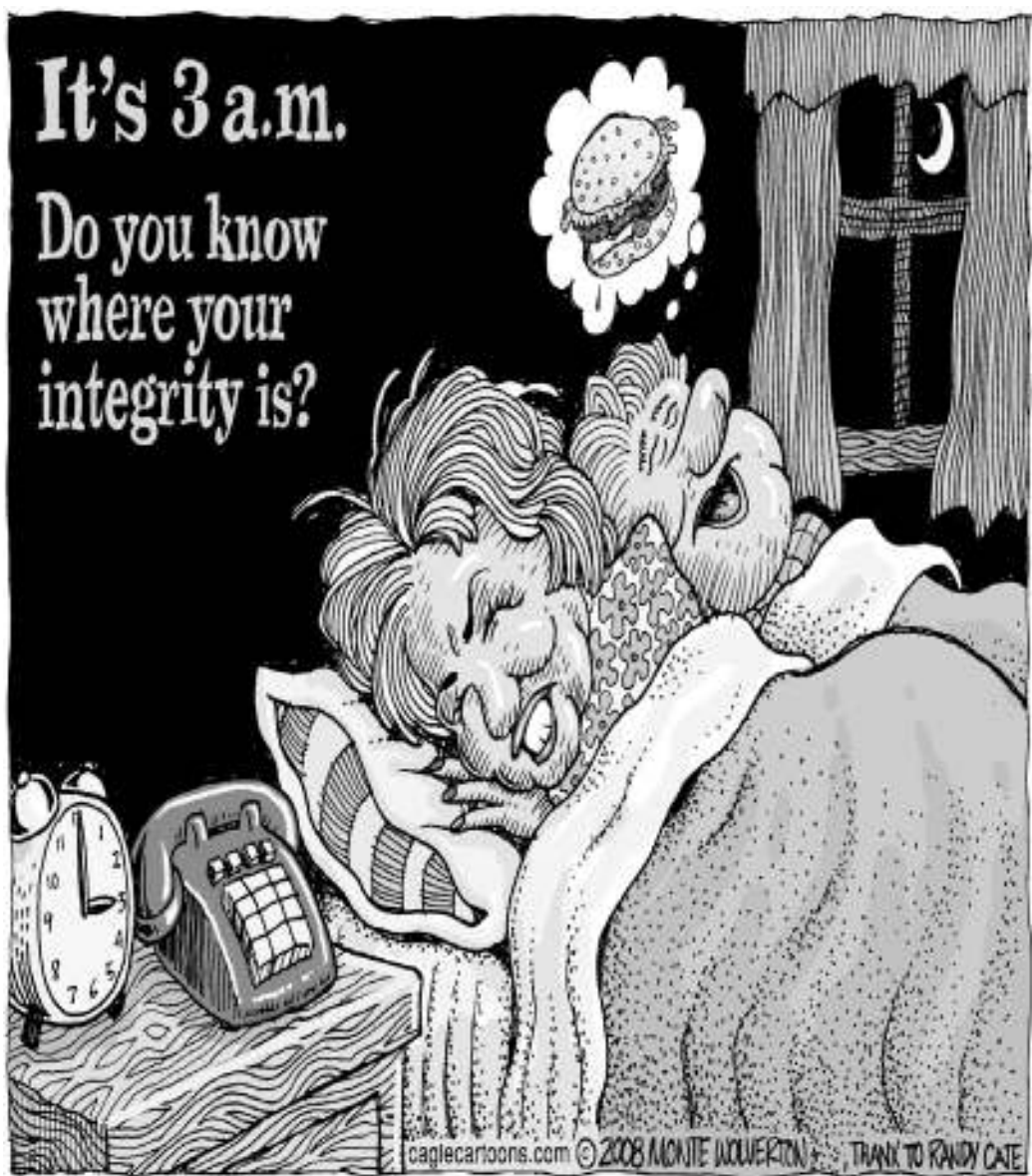
NATIONAL VIEW | GATEHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

The \$3 trillion war

Five years into the Iraq War, many Americans seem to have stopped paying attention. American casualties are down, at least compared to a year ago, and the media has for months been caught up in the presidential campaign.
Voters now say the economy, not the war, is their foremost concern, and it's understandable. Prices are skyrocketing while the dollar plummets. Thousands of jobs have been lost since the first of the year. Bankruptcies and foreclosures are up and the stock market is down.
But the Iraq war has a place in discussions of the economy as well. First, there's the current direct costs, now estimated at \$12.5 billion a month. War costs have been added to the federal deficit from the beginning, and that borrowing must have an impact on an economy where a shortage of credit is a growing problem.
There are also indirect costs. Five years ago, oil futures were trading at \$25 a barrel. Today, they are trading at over \$100. Several factors contributed to that increase, but Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz estimates that the Iraq war added from \$5 to \$10 to the price of oil.
In a new book, Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, an expert at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, attempt to pin down the long-term cost of the Iraq. Their best guess: \$3 trillion.
A trillion is a difficult number for most people to absorb, so let's spell it out: \$1,000,000,000,000. Call it a

thousand billion, or a million times a million.
Author David M. Schwartz explains it in several ways. A million seconds, he says, add up to 11.5 days. A billion seconds equals 32 years. But it takes 32,000 years for a trillion seconds to click off the clock.
Or you can think of a stack of dollar bills, 100 of which stand a half-inch tall. Make them \$100 bills and start stacking. By the time you've stacked \$1 trillion, your pile will be 789 miles high. A trillion barrels of oil, Schwartz says, would fuel the world at current consumption rates for about 33 years.
A lot of the money for the Iraq War hasn't been spent yet, but it has been committed. Military equipment damaged in Iraq will have to be replaced, and much will end up left behind. The cost of caring for injured soldiers will continue for decades. Then there's the interest on all that borrowed money.
The human tragedies caused by this war and the damage to America's image abroad can never be calculated in dollars, but that doesn't mean the dollars aren't important. As the nation marks the fifth anniversary of the invasion this week, we can expect to hear again the wildly inaccurate predictions of the Bush Administration officials who brought us this war.
Among them may be former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's 2003 estimate of what the Iraq War would cost: "something under \$50 billion," he said.

ARTIST'S VIEW



POLITICS | U.S. REP. JOHN R. KUHL JR.

What would you do with \$3,658?

This week the House will consider the monstrosity that is the Democrats' FY 2009 federal budget, which was introduced last Wednesday. And not to be outdone by any previous Congress, their budget proposal is historic for all the wrong reasons. Among other things, it:
1. Includes the largest tax increase in American history.
2. Increases federal spending by hundreds of billions of dollars to expand government programs.
3. Abandons reform efforts to fix the broken and abusive earmark system.
4. Raises taxes on children by slashing the \$1,000 per child tax credit in half.
5. Refuses to rein in entitlement spending in order to save Medicare for future generations.
When you break it down, the financial implications of their budget totals an enormous, broad-based, job killing, \$683 billion tax increase that will be placed on working families and small business entrepreneurs. Nationally, under the Democratic tax hike plan, 116 million taxpayers will be burdened with an

average tax hike of \$1,833. But in the state of New York, the average taxpayer will be paying \$3,658 on an annual basis under this budget so the Democratic leadership can finance wasteful new Washington spending.
At a time when Americans are experiencing skyrocketing gasoline prices, escalating health care costs, and a potential recession, the Democrats are being fiscally irresponsible with your hard-earned money. The tax and spend policies of the past do not work, and demanding that the residents of New York State pay \$3,658 annually is absurd and preventable. We owe the American people tax relief, not a tax increase.
This budget is another example of how out of touch the Democratic leadership is with the American people. As a Member of Congress, our sworn duty is to better the lives of our constituents and prevent the government from becoming a burden to its citizens. Americans across the country are being forced to tighten their budgets to cope with the rising costs of living and it is time that Congress fol-

lows their example. Democrats are attempting to squander hard-earned American money on more unnecessary government programs. Before House Democrats take this budget under further consideration, I invite them to walk down the streets in Corning, Wellsville, or Rochester, and ask any of my constituents one question: Who do you trust more to spend your \$3,658 – the government or yourself? Regardless of political affiliation, we all know the answer to this question. American taxpayers do not want the government to take more of their hard-earned dollars and further drive our country into debt.
This Democratic budget is misguided and fiscally irresponsible. I don't know what you were planning on doing with your \$3,658 but I would imagine the last thing you want to do is give it to your government. In this time of economic turmoil, my constituents do not want, need, or deserve higher taxes.

■ **U.S. Rep. John R. Kuhl Jr., R-Hammondsport, represents the 29th congressional district.**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We need SROs in our schools

TO THE EDITOR | There is an absolutely primal relationship in our lives here on earth. For better or worse each mother is in a position to set an example for her child. The way she treats her offspring establishes a pattern that the infant will carry forward to undergird an entire lifetime. However brief, this first nurturing time may create a baseline for all that comes later. There is more than just a physical resemblance between generations.
How we respond to the new experiences of our daily lives has been to some degree shaped by the matrix of our youth. As we move on to the larger world with all its confusion, we still need examples set before us to help us choose our way in life. Most of us who have advanced beyond formal

schooling into the more demanding realities of adult life can still remember a favorite teacher or two. For me the teacher who seemed to care about her students, was teaching by example a most important lesson. It is a matter of trust. The director of human resources in the largest corporation would do well to grasp the significance of that lesson.
I think that when the pot is boiling over it is better to turn down the heat than to clamp down the lid. We can do little about the extreme violence of our times "out there" but we can have some effect upon the climate of our own communities. And the use of force is not the best answer.
As I read about the state trooper filling the position of school resource officer at Campbell-Savona Junior-Senior High School, I couldn't help but see the difference between the

value of his work there and what he would be able to accomplish elsewhere. Not to say we don't need law and order. Only to say we do need to position our assets where they will do the most good.
With a little help from our friends, there is some possibility we'll be heard. If we respond to newspaper reporting, get in touch with Sen. George Winner and Assemblyman Jim Bacalles, we might retain our SROs.
We Americans are caught up in a political turmoil seeking to find ways to change things for the better. To retain and support the SRO in the small community is to be actively involved in making change for the better. It is something we can do for ourselves no matter how the politics may turn out. It does take a community to teach a child.

Bill Wheeler
Canisteo

Rolfe returns with common street smarts

There's a theory that if Eliot Spitzer hadn't had such an upscale, privileged background, he would probably still be in office today.
I'm inclined to believe it. But first, where has The Insider been for the past three months?
Unfortunately, the answer is dealing with cancer. I spent a very forgettable Christmas in Corning Hospital for intestinal surgery and left a section of said intestine behind as somebody's souvenir. But there was other involvement

THE INSIDER



Bob Rolfe

so I'm now spending considerable chunks of time at the Guthrie Cancer Center on Columbia Street.
The staff there is first rate and come with The Insider's highest recommendation. But said staff is absolutely correct when they say they need more space.
Anyway, that explains my absence and hopefully, will also cover any treatment-related occasional days off in the future, as I'm doing chemotherapy.
Otherwise, I hope we can resume our regular Monday and Friday visits right here on the right hand side of Page A-4.

...

As for our immediate past governor, there was a guy on CNN the other day who proposed an interesting theory: Spitzer lost his job because of a basic lack of street smarts, the individuals said.
A native New York City resident, brought up on the streets, can buy himself a machine gun on a corner in Queens if he has the cash and the contacts and no one will ever be the wiser, he said.
There we have the heart of Spitzer's downfall.
Many a politician has survived an infidelity scandal but Spitzer ventured into the criminality realm by apparent disregard for laws under which he, as attorney general, had prosecuted many defendants. That my friends, is sheer stupidity.
Yet he left a series of bank transfers and even checks that led the feds directly to his Ivy League doorstep. A privileged upbringing and stellar Harvard legal training had apparently prepared him for trying to get around the law in the real world. So, with federal prosecutors on his heels, he had no choice but to quit.
Fortunately, David Paterson, who succeeds him as governor today, has a vastly different background and a reputation for being able to compromise. That's something Spitzer, despite his initial good ideas, seemed incapable of doing.

And so New York state prepares for a new era – one that hopefully is led by someone who not only possesses political savvy, but the street smarts to avoid situations that very well should have landed him in prison.

Bob Rolfe is a retired Leader reporter/ editor (1965-2002). He can be reached by writing The Leader, P.O.Box 1017, Corning, N.Y., 14830. He is also a periodic co-host of the "Coleman & Co." public affairs TV program, which airs at 10a.m. and 10p.m. Sundays on WETM-2.



Jbe Dunning
City Beat | Sunday