

## When politicians battle, citizens bleed



**VINCENT ESPOSITO  
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GUEST ESSAYISTS

Last November, we were honored to be elected as new members of the Monroe County Legislature.

We vowed to make county government more transparent and accountable to you, the citizens and taxpayers we represent.

Since taking office in January, we have focused on that goal by addressing the numerous and important public safety, social well-being, infrastructure and fiscal challenges facing our community. Though there have been brief glimmers of bipartisanship and collaboration, far too often we have experienced firsthand the dysfunction of the County Legislature.

In the past few months, the business of the county has been marred by heightened acrimony and partisanship. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in

the manner with which the Republican majority runs the County Legislature. The backdoor passage of the now-illegal and forever-costly F.A.I.R. Plan, the disturbing and embarrassing process that surrounded the appointment of our new public defender and the partisan-charged atmosphere surrounding the failed Monroe Community College presidential search displayed the worst in governing, further undermining the public's faith that they are being served above political interests. People of our county deserve better.

In an effort to improve the workings of the Legislature, we have joined with our fellow Democratic legislators to propose a few simple, commonsense reforms that will restore deliberation and civility to the County Legislature:

- Require three-fifths of the full legislature to deem a proposal "urgent" to prevent the unilateral abuse by the president, as we saw when the F.A.I.R. Plan was rushed to passage in just under four hours.

- Eliminate the president's ability to deny the introduction of a proposal without consideration by any committee. Denial of legislation by an individual elected official violates the core principles of democracy. It sti-

fling collaboration and the type of debate that our country is founded upon.

- Allow proposals to be considered more than once within a two-year period. Current rules allow the president, and the president alone, to disallow legislation if he determines it to be "similar" to a proposal previously introduced — even if circumstances have changed in the community that might warrant additional action.

- Televising the legislative proceedings. For years, Democrats attempted to broadcast meetings only to be denied on the grounds it was "too costly." Rather than give up, we decided to do it ourselves. With the use of a personal, handheld video recorder and our local public access stations, as well as a free YouTube Web site, we are now successfully delivering your government to you.

We believe strongly that how we operate greatly affects what we produce. Failure to come together to solve these problems and get past the past prevents us from focusing on our collective future. Until we work together to pull ourselves out of the past partisan battles, our region will continue the downward spiral that is literally pushing people away. Instead, we need to concentrate our energy on deliver-

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ing services more efficiently, growing our economy, reducing our tax burden and restoring pride to our community.

We look forward to the challenges ahead and encourage you to contact us with any idea or opinion that can help us better serve you and our community. □

*Esposito, D-Irondequoit, represents the 16th District in the Monroe County Legislature; Gumina, D-Webster, represents the 8th District.*