

## EDITORIALS

# Democracy gets a workout

As every gym rat knows, muscles must be exercised or they lose their power.

So we were encouraged to see the U.S. Senate lock arms with its House colleagues Thursday by voting to overturn President Donald Trump's emergency declaration of a crisis on the Southern border.

It's been a while since both houses of Congress have flexed that muscle, called the separation of powers and defined in the Constitution. More exercising likely is on the way. The Senate vote followed by one day another rebuke of Trump when the chamber voted to end U.S. support for the Saudi-led military action in Yemen, which has spawned an epic humanitarian crisis. The House is virtually certain to follow suit.

If they keep it up, they might even develop some muscle memory.

The issue with Trump's declaration wasn't so much whether there is a crisis, but what he wanted to do with it — divert \$3.6 billion Congress allocated to military construction projects to build his wall. But spending money is the province of Congress. So is declaring war.

It was heartening to see 12 GOP senators reject Trump's power grab. It was dismaying, but hardly surprising, that more Republicans who call themselves constitutionalists did not join them. With its 59-41 vote, the Senate rejected both Trump's false contention that a yes vote would be a vote for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, as well as the hypocrisy epitomized by his administration's promise to Arizona Sen. Martha McSally that wall money would not be taken from any projects in her state if she supported the president in the vote.

With Trump promising a veto, the dispute eventually seems bound for the Supreme Court, where his own picks, based on their rulings and writings, might also defy him.

That, too, would be the democratic process at work. And the more it works, the stronger it gets.

— *The editorial board*

## Don't rush a new law on prevailing wage

Talk about unintended consequences.

On the surface, it might seem like a great idea for the next state budget to require all construction projects that receive state money or incentives to pay workers prevailing wage — essentially the hourly pay received by local union workers. But neither a proposal to do so nor the effort to cram it into the state budget is a great idea.

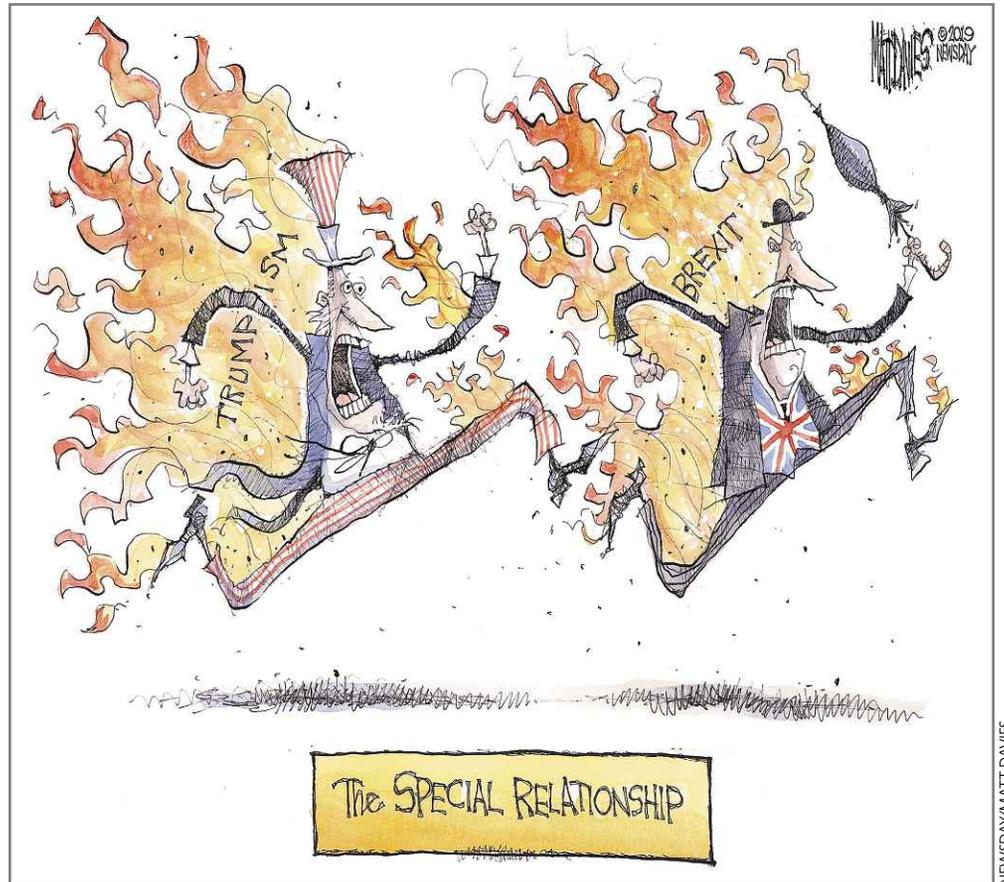
While the legislation could make union labor more competitive with nonunion shops that offer lower wages, it also could increase business, construction and housing costs by an estimated 25 percent. If done poorly, requiring prevailing wages could deal an economic blow, potentially making the construction of affordable housing, multifamily developments and big projects like the Nassau Hub more difficult. Especially after Amazon's withdrawal from Long Island City, the region can't afford another big misstep. Yet four Long Island state senators — John Brooks, James Gaughran, Anna Kaplan and Monica Martinez — co-sponsored the legislation.

Perhaps state lawmakers didn't consider the potential implications when they signed on to the bill, which they likely saw as a benefit for organized labor. But now they must find a way forward, starting by arranging conversations between labor and business leaders to find middle ground that doesn't damage regional economic development.

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, who has supported a prevailing wage measure, and state lawmakers should give this issue more time and attention. That likely means waiting until after the April 1 budget deadline. Albany is always full of last-minute, hurried hubbub. But on this issue, everyone should slow down.

— *The editorial board*

## MATT DAVIES



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## LETTERS

### House did too little to rebuke Rep. Omar

Shame on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, shame on Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.), and shame on the House of Representatives for minimizing the impact of hateful words spoken by a fellow member of Congress.

Their watered-down resolution says nothing, explains nothing, demands nothing ["House vote condemns hate," *News*, March 8]. The anti-Semitic statements of Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) should have compelled Congress to respond with loud, direct and clear condemnation.

Clyburn defended Omar by talking about her experience in a refugee camp in Kenya after escaping from her native Somalia. My message to Clyburn is this: Personal suffering is not an excuse for ignorance and insensitivity to

the plight and pain of others. It would behoove you and Omar to educate yourselves more thoroughly on the history of the Holocaust and its repercussions.

The path ahead is a tenuous one. Scapegoating provides a convenient yet dangerous route toward a past that must not be repeated. Statements by Omar and her supporters teeter on the edge of evil. We have a right to expect better from the people who represent us in Congress.

*Eva Zimmerman,  
Jamaica*

### Cross-endorsements draw an abstention

As a voter, I refuse to vote for any candidate who runs on multiple party lines if I believe those parties' philosophies run counter to one another ["Restore integrity to the ballot," *Editorial*, March 10].

How can I, a registered Democrat, vote for a candidate endorsed by the Democratic Party, if that candidate is also endorsed by the Republican or Conservative party (or combinations of them)? Each party has a particular platform, and those platforms often run counter to each other.

So, there are times I don't vote for any candidate if that candidate is cross-endorsed. Can I trust someone who is running as a Democrat and is supported by more conservative parties? I think not.

*Melody S. Jacobs,  
Smithtown*

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