

EDITORIALS

Rally around a rebuilt U.S.

Under President Donald Trump, the United States has added another spring ritual to accompany blooming flowers and the return of baseball: the fresh promise of a grand plan to rebuild the nation's infrastructure.

Tuesday, Trump and his advisers met with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. There were similar meetings and similar brandings of "infrastructure week" in early 2017 and 2018, too. But this time, Democrats Pelosi and Schumer sounded optimistic about the conversation, and about a potential bipartisan plan to spend \$2 trillion to repair the nation's crumbling roads, bridges and tunnels, improve the power grid and expand broadband service.

A vital nation must have high-quality infrastructure. Rebuilding ours would provide good-paying jobs, a better business environment and a safer and more comfortable nation. There is little opposition in either party, so it's vexing that a bipartisan deal hasn't already been done.

But it always comes down to funding and priorities. To spend \$2 trillion, that money must be raised via public or private sources, whether it's borrowed, assessed in gasoline taxes or other levies or captured via tolls and fees. And then it must be parceled out fairly and wisely.

The tri-state area needs major improvements. One is the Gateway project, a \$30 billion effort to build a rail tunnel under the Hudson River. We need more workaday improvements, too, like safe roads and bridges. We need to be able to easily move products and people about. And we need to be able to move important legislation, too.

Trump and congressional leaders plan to meet again on the topic in three weeks. This time, they need to reach the framework of a deal. Because if failing to do so becomes an annual tradition, the decline of our nation will become a foregone conclusion. — *The editorial board*

Akihito spoke for peace in a turbulent world

Japanese Emperor Akihito abdicated the Chrysanthemum Throne on Tuesday. It was a simple and spiritual ceremony that belied his importance as a champion of global harmony.

He was the son of Emperor Hirohito, who approved the bombing of Pearl Harbor and helped lead the world into the chaos and destruction of World War II. Akihito inherited a new monarchy as victorious Allied Forces demanded that the institution become totally symbolic, a world of distance from his predecessors' godlike status. In that new era, he was an unshakable pacifist.

Akihito became a leading moral voice who traveled the world marking the impact of Japan's aggression. He honored his country's own dead without excusing the deaths they caused. Educated by an American Quaker, he quickly came to understand the necessity of peace.

This has stood in contrast to recent moves by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has pushed for a more unshackled military that has been constrained since the end of the war.

And Japan has not been alone in militaristic moods. The United States and Russia spend billions on their armed forces and eye Cold War-style aggression. Parts of the Middle East remain a battle zone. Terrorists the world over murder innocent civilians, and Western nations become more comfortable using drones as weapons as they argue over the principles of a just war. More leaders like Akihito are needed to stand for peace and acknowledge the terrible alternative.

"I pray, with all my heart, for peace and happiness for all the people in Japan and around the world," Akihito, 85, said in a farewell address. We couldn't agree more. — *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

In defense of group homes and residents

In a letter about a proposed group home for four people, a reader raises safety concerns for students at neighboring Commack High School, as well as for young children on his block who play outside ["Concern about plan for group home," Letters, April 25].

This may come as a shock to the writer, but there are students with special needs at Commack High School. Does he believe other students are in danger because some of their peers have special needs? What characteristics does he think people with special needs possess? They often are people with disabilities who work hard every day to maximize their potential and fit into a society that often doesn't understand or misinterprets their needs.

When I read about school shootings, violent crimes and other heinous acts, the suspects usually are typical individuals who have misguided hatred. I think those are the people we need to fear.

As the parent of a 32-year-old daughter with autism, I am thankful that my friends and neighbors do not share this writer's ideas. We have lived two houses away from an elementary school for 30 years, and no one has ever feared for their safety because of my child.

Gayle V. Fremed,
North Woodmere

When a neighbor sold his house several years ago, nearby homeowners found out it was going to a non-profit organization. We had questions and suspicions about who would live there. The organization was Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, the same organiza-

tion that intends to establish a group home for four adults in Commack.

We couldn't be more happy with the three to five residents. We welcomed them to our neighborhood. No noise comes from the home, the yard is kept up. The residents go to work and mind their own business. Don't make harsh decisions.

Camille Morselli,
Islip Terrace

I find it troubling that Newsday would publish "Concern about plan for group home," a letter that stokes fear of people with developmental disabilities in neighborhoods.

The ironic part is that April was Autism Awareness Month. Throughout history, people with developmental disabilities are the ones who have been subjected to prejudice and intolerance. They have disabilities that require