

EDITORIALS

A sense of loss at Notre Dame

The flames that stabbed the Paris sky Monday evening did more than ravage the Notre Dame Cathedral, one of the world's most famous edifices. The frightening glow emanating from a place that has endured more than eight centuries of turmoil pierced our sense of permanence, and left us all utterly unnerved.

Notre Dame's sheer size was meant to inspire, to force one's gaze upward, to foster in its patrons the humility of being confronted with something greater than themselves. It took 100 years to build, beginning in 1160, an icon of Gothic architecture that became a treasure not only for France but also all mankind. And it was so much more than a place of worship. With its soaring grace and peerless beauty, Notre Dame served as a testament to human ingenuity and imagination.

So the world watched helplessly as fire felled the cathedral's steeple. Most of the interior is presumed destroyed. The feeling of loss will linger, whether one remembers the glorious rose windows, the frescoes, the sculptures, the organ, the stone gargoyles, the flying buttresses, the view of Paris from atop the south tower, or the mesmerizing sight of the cathedral bathed in light at night.

Notre Dame has struggled before. Its treasures were damaged, stolen or destroyed before. In the 19th century, the spire was replaced. When Paris was liberated in World War II, the celebratory mass was held in Notre Dame. As it burned Monday, millions around the world mourned as they shared their memories and searched for photos.

The cathedral was in disrepair. That the fire might be linked to ongoing renovation work being done on the spire spoke to human fallibility. That it broke out during Easter Week was cruel irony. This is the most solemn time of the year for Catholics, but the somber events marked by the faithful conclude with a message of rebirth and resurrection.

We wish that now for Notre Dame.

— *The editorial board*

Standing against the loud anti-vax voices

New York State is in a public health crisis.

But a small group of loud voices isn't interested in facts. Instead, protesters who oppose vaccination are using intimidation, ugly phone calls, social media posts and in-person confrontations to go after state lawmakers who are seeking to address the outbreak.

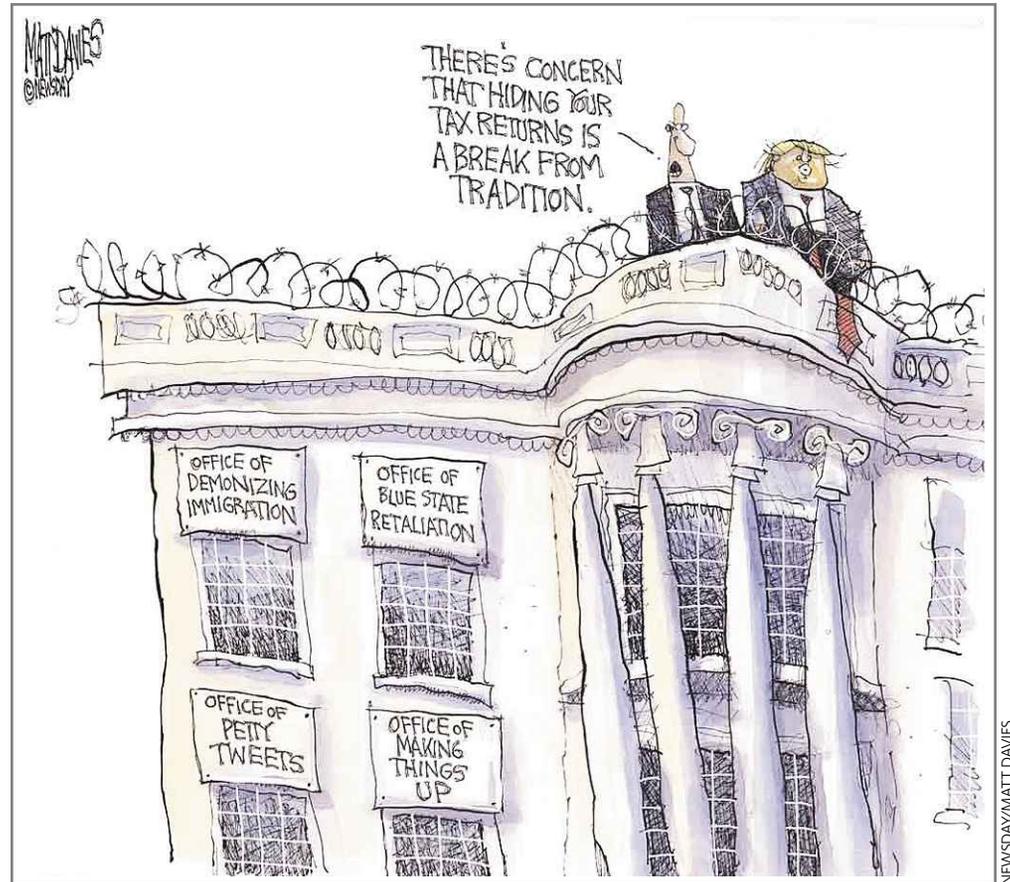
Their vitriol comes as the U.S. measles outbreak has spread to 20 states, with 555 cases confirmed. Contrast that with the situation in Madagascar, where more than 1,200 people have died, and more than 115,000 have been sickened, from a measles epidemic. Mothers are begging people to give their babies a shot but the resources are lacking.

In perhaps the most egregious example closer to home, anti-vax protesters swarmed around State Sens. Kevin Thomas and Jim Gaughran during a recent unrelated news conference, even blocking Thomas' car. Thomas is a co-sponsor of a bill that would end religious exemptions for vaccination, a much-abused loophole. It's one thing to disagree, with integrity, on how to confront public policy issues fraught with competing principles. That requires nuanced debate. It's quite another for protesters with troubling agendas to aggressively and physically target state lawmakers to silence them. For shame.

What these protesters want to do is spread misinformation. This nation has no excuse for the outbreak that shows no sign of abating. Here in New York, lawmakers should not let a few loud voices influence their decision-making. Thomas is commended for standing his ground.

— *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

In '12, Mangano had no plan to reassess

In "Settlements galore" [News, April 4], Newsday reported that as Nassau County executive, Edward Mangano "had hoped to move to a four-year cycle to give the county more time to build a more accurate assessment system. But super-storm Sandy in 2012 damaged thousand of homes and delayed the reassessment."

This is not true. Sandy was simply an excuse used by the Mangano administration so it could delay reassessment and continue receiving huge political donations from entities that would benefit from such delay.

How do we know this? First, because when Sandy hit New York on Oct. 29, 2012, the tentative rolls for 2013-14 had already been

generated. No attempt had been made to reassess by that point, and no attempt was made thereafter to either bring in a consultant to reassess, or to restaff the Department of Assessment so it could do the job. The Department of Assessment continued to operate with an underqualified acting assessor, who had no ability to reassess 350,000 properties.

With appropriate staffing, and a qualified assessor or consultant, reassessment immediately after Sandy would have been far more equitable to those affected, but no attempt was made.

It is worth noting that New York City reassessed after Sandy, saving those in damaged properties millions of dollars.

Jeffrey B. Gold,
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Editor's note: The writer is a former member

of the Nassau County Board of Assessors.

Bring a container for leftovers

The April 11 business-section story "Bracing for straw ban" made me think of my grandmother, who years ago carried a plastic bag to restaurants so she could take home the bread left in the bread basket.

At the time, we were embarrassed, but perhaps she was more progressive than we imagined.

If each of us brought our own reusable containers to restaurants for leftovers, it would be a kindness to the environment as well as help to save money on such containers for restaurant owners. Of course, many of us need to do this, not just a few.

Rosanne Joos,
Commack