

# Opinions

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## Timing is everything

**BY KEVIN R. HARDWICK**  
Erie County Legislator  
4th District

In sports, comedy and life in general, timing is important. Recent events bear witness to this.



County Legislator Kevin Hardwick

A couple weeks ago I was shocked by the shooting of a City of Tonawanda Police Detective. When I learned the wounded officer was Dave Ljiljanich, I was stunned.

Dave coached my granddaughter in soccer and is the salt of the earth. His sense of humor and easy-going temperament were perfect for coaching a group of children and have also served him well as one of Tonawanda's finest. I was relieved that his injuries were not life-threatening and that he was home in a couple days. Still, I was shaken watching my friend Capt. Fred Foels describe the shooting incident on television. Too often I forget how lucky I am to have such fine men and women protecting my family 24/7. The whole episode left me feeling great about the Tonawanda Police and renewed my respect for law enforcement professionals in general. The timing, however, was far from perfect.

Within a couple days, my reverence for the role of police in our society was tested as news hit regarding the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis Police officers. Since then, of course, we have had many peaceful protests, some not so peaceful protests and plenty of examples of bad behavior by both protestors and police officers. Coming in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the timing could not have been worse.

Timing has also been a factor in another COVID-19 related matter. We all knew that the Erie County budget has been adversely impacted by the pandemic. With so many businesses closed, sales tax receipts were bound to be way down. In time, though, the hope is that the federal government will assist state and local governments.

The county comptroller declared a \$206.6 million deficit on May 4. This normally would have given the county executive seven days to submit a plan to address the deficit to the County Legislature. We would then have 21 days to act on the executive's plan or let it go into effect in the absence of any legislative action. Under this schedule, we would have to have acted by June 1 to close the gap.

The calendar was altered, however, when County Executive Mark Poloncarz exercised emergency powers granted him by the state to override the

timetable. Some members of the legislature challenged the executive's power to do this. I led an effort, though, to pass a resolution affirming the executive's power and granting him until June 4 to submit his deficit control plan and us until June 25 to act on it. The resolution passed.

This is a good thing, as it became clear that the comptroller's \$206.6 million estimate was way off. Instead, the county executive estimated that, based on more recent information, the deficit was closer to \$137.8 million. Although his plan to address the budget gap still included layoffs, the number was far fewer than it would have been had we accepted the comptroller's original estimate which would have required almost \$70 million more in cuts. By waiting, we undoubtedly saved many jobs and avoided further service cuts. So sometimes we get the timing right and it works in our favor.

If you have thoughts you would like to share, I would love to hear from you. I can be contacted by phone at 858-8672 or via email at kevin.hardwick@erie.gov.

*Kevin R. Hardwick is chairman of the Erie County Legislature's Government Affairs Committee, the Community Enrichment Committee, and is a member of the Finance and Management Committee that oversees the budget.*

## Response to use of force at protest

**BY BRIAN HIGGINS**  
U.S. House of Representatives



Rep. Brian Higgins

The completely unwarranted use of force by police in front of Buffalo City Hall last night is a call to action for our city and country.

Videos are exposing unchecked bad actors and the painful truth of what has been happening in our

communities for far too long.

George Floyd's murder has led to a nationwide outcry for change. This unacceptable incident right here in our community – and others across the country in the wake of this tragedy – shows how widespread and urgent of a change is needed.

The House of Representatives will soon release a legislative package led by the Congressional Black Caucus addressing equal justice and police brutality. There is clearly much work to do. I am eager to work with my colleagues to advance these measures swiftly.

## Tweet pours gasoline on the fire

**BY ANDREW CUOMO**  
Governor  
State of New York

*On June 9, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo called on President Donald Trump to apologize for a tweet claiming Martin Gugino, a*



N.Y. Gov. Andrew Cuomo

*protester who was shoved to the ground by the Buffalo police, could be a member of antifa and might have staged the fall.*

that surprises me, even after all the tweets he has done. You read his tweets, you get to a point where you say, well, nothing could surprise me. I've seen it all. And then, you get surprised again. You get shocked again. You get disgusted again. President of the United States, supposed to be a responsible position and a responsible person.

He tweeted today that the protester in Buffalo, who was hurt by the Buffalo police, was on a video that went viral, Mr. Gugino, 75-year-old gentleman who was out protesting and is knocked to the ground by police. He's in the hospital in Buffalo, he was in intensive care, he's no longer in intensive care but he is still hospitalized. I spoke to him the day he was brought

into the hospital. The president tweets that this man may have been a member of antifa, and he fell harder than he was pushed. Could be a set up. It's all made up, it's all fabricated, there's no fact to any of it. He accuses this man of being associated with antifa, no proof whatsoever. No fact, just an assertion. He fell harder than he was pushed. In the video, you see him pushed, and you see a 75-year-old man fall backwards and hit his head on the pavement.

What does that even mean, fell harder than he was pushed? What do you think, it was staged? You think the blood coming out of his head was staged? Is that what you're saying? You saw his head hit the pavement, you see blood on the pavement. Maybe he fell harder than he was pushed. How reckless, how irresponsible, how mean, how crude. I mean, if there was ever a reprehensible, dumb comment, and from the president of the United States. At this moment of anguish and anger, what does he do? Puts gasoline on the fire. If there was ever, if he ever feels a moment of decency, he should apologize for that tweet, because it is wholly unacceptable. Not a piece of proof, totally, personally disparaging, and in a moment when the man is still in the hospital, show some decency, show some humanity, show some fairness. You're the president of the United States.

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