

## COMMENTS PRESENTED TO THE COUNTY OPERATIONS COMMITTEE OF CATTARAUGUS COUNTY

July 21, 2021

When I look back on my life, I remember growing up a farm kid, riding on the fenders of tractors and in the back of pickup trucks, stacking hay on hot summer days in sweltering hay mows, and stacking wood in the dirt cellar of our old farmhouse. We were a poor. But we were free.

As I consider what our country was then compared to now, I grieve. What has happened to us? What has become of the American Spirit - that pioneer spirit of grit and determination and resilience? When did we stop cherishing liberty? When did we forget that the freedoms endowed by the Creator are the birthright of American citizens?

Franklyn ("Lyn") Nofziger (conservative press secretary and political adviser to President Reagan) said, *"Government should work to ensure the rights of the individual, not plot to take them away. Freedom is our most precious commodity and if we are not eternally vigilant, government will take it all away."* To you, the Cattaraugus County Legislators, I say, we are there. Our liberties no longer ensured by our government but threatened by it. You – as a political body – have experienced what I – as an individual – have: we have both and all experienced being at the mercy of a merciless State.

When the NY State legislature abdicated its responsibilities and powers in March 2020 and the Governor assumed them, I knew we had arrived at the destination to which we had long been traveling: a land of compliant people who had forgotten the precious and fragile nature of freedom and were bowing before an authoritarian, liberty-denying State. The very government tasked with ensuring our liberties became the government smothering them. Every citizen who resides in your county is obligated to interact with the State and its mandates on a daily basis. And every citizen who resides in your county faces potential negative consequences at the hand of that same state should they fail to interact in the prescribed manner. The governed now live at the consent of the government, a government which extends – or denies – permissions to the people. And often, this unconstitutional permission granting power is wielded in an arbitrary and capricious manner. As an example: does the State really have the authority to tell some people their work is essential and some that it is not? When you are feeding your children and paying your bills – you are essential no matter what your job is. It was absolutely evil for the State to tell people they could not pursue their livelihoods. A free society does not do what ours did last year and continues to do this year. Executive Order 202 may have been rescinded by Governor Cuomo on June 23, 2021. But many of the mandates created continue to live via agencies (such as the NYS Department of Health) codifying them into official rules and regulations. This stealth codifying of mandates – without legislative oversight and without public comment - is truly illegal (if the Constitution is the law). Since when have unelected bureaucrats had the Constitutional authority to write and enforce rules and regulations they call "laws"?

You – the duly elected legislative body of Cattaraugus County – are considering a resolution to affirm that this County embraces the liberties expressed in the Constitution of the United States – particularly the Bill of Rights. How odd that a resolution is necessary. But it is necessary. How odd that supporting the Constitution – and desiring to live up to its high ideals – is now considered by academia, the mainstream media, and political elites to be radical. Well, you are in good company, for I would imagine it was radical in the 1700s also. It was just and moral then and it is as just and as moral now to support the Constitution of the United States of America.

This county was supposed to be a country of ordinary citizens living free lives. We were supposed to be a country with limited government, a country in which power flows from the Creator to the People and from the People to the government. The powers granted to the government are to be defined and enumerated by the People and the government itself ought be populated with ordinary citizens educated in true civics and morality. Obviously, this no longer describes our government. The state and federal governments are involved in thousands of issues – not enumerated - they ought not concern themselves with and over which they have no actual Constitutional authority. The state and federal governments each use funding as a tool of control. Funding is a noose killing local sovereignty. County legislatures have become nothing more than extensions of Albany. Governor Cuomo expects you to enforce his lawless executive orders irrespective of the unique circumstances of the citizen of this county. He could care less about the liberties and the livelihoods of the people of Cattaraugus County. And that is why we – the citizens of this County – need you to care and need you to take a stand and do what you can to defend and protect the Constitution of the United States of America and the liberties of the people who elected you.

There is uncertainty right now in knowing exactly what that will look like, but the one thing I do know for sure is that you have to start somewhere. You have to make the decision that the Constitution and the liberties it enshrines matter. Once you make that decision, you have to express it. And you have to purpose in your minds and in your hearts that you will strive to educate people about the green grass and blue skies of liberty and how worthy they are to pursue. And once you express and as you educate, you then have to grit your teeth and bear up under the pressure that may come your way from the handful of those who represent the powerful establishment that will despise your courage.

The other thing I know for sure is that you are not alone. There are many in this County who stand with you. We are not powerful in the eyes of the modern world. But we are the people, and we stand with you.

Thank you.

Brenda Hanson