

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Opinion

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Too many fiefdoms spoil the economy

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Kevin Gaughan's focus on our region's bloated government illustrates another issue that contributes to our stagnant economy - home rule. As he pointed out, we have 45 local governments, all holding elections, all with control of their turf.

For New York State's agrarian economy of the 19th century, this local control worked well. But the world has changed. As a region, we must compete with other metropolitan areas not handcuffed by parochial concerns.

Noted urban planner David Rusk has analyzed this disadvantage and found that the communities with the least governmental fragmentation are the ones that are succeeding. He suggests that choosing the right "home" as the ruler is key.

His recommendation for New York State is the county. By giving Erie County authority for regional planning, land use, tax collection and distribution, we would be able to leverage our value at a level that is competitive with comparable regions with metropolitan governments such as Memphis, Indianapolis, Jacksonville and Columbus.

Until we are willing to give up our little fiefdoms of power, Western New York is not likely to see the economic progress being enjoyed elsewhere.

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