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MY VIEW

Western New Yorkers deserve so much more

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I must confess. If my oldest son had not moved to Georgia, I probably would have retired in Western New York. However, he and my daughter-in-law did move six years ago. They both teach in Forsyth County about 40 miles north of Atlanta. Since that is where our grandchildren live now, my wife and I decided to downsize and move to Cumming. We live about 10 miles from them.

Making the decision to leave Western New York, and especially Hamburg, was not easy. Aside from a four-year stint in the Navy, my wife and I spent the majority of our lives in Western New York. We raised a family, developed wonderful friendships and were close to our extended family.

The memories of growing up in Tonawanda, graduating from Kenmore East and then the University at Buffalo are nothing less than positive. We got married and had our reception at Salvatore's on East Delevan. (I'm dating myself.)

Our move from Kenmore to Hamburg seemed so monumental to us at the time. Our friends would say: "You're moving way out there?" It's hard to describe to my friends down here the sense of community that the people have back home. As a good friend of mine once said: Western New York is like a speakeasy, you really don't know what's inside until you knock and come in!

I've run into people here who have spent some time in Buffalo and every one of them cites how friendly the people are. That is the rub. The people who live in my hometown deserve so much more.

Other than the fact that we are enjoying our grandchildren and living 10 minutes from Lake Lanier (I love to fish), moving to Georgia has had so many advantages. Let me first start with the taxes. Our income, although fixed, was raised about \$6,000 per year just by the move. I'm paying one-fourth of what I paid in property taxes in Hamburg.

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Yes, we did downsize, but my lot is much larger. The kicker is that when I reach 65, I don't have to pay school taxes. My annual property tax assessment after 65 will be less than \$300 per year.

My gas bills are one-third of what I paid up North because we have six companies competing for our business. Yes, competition does work. Our electric bills are lower even though we use the air conditioner quite a bit.

While New York and Erie County struggle against huge deficits, Georgia and Forsyth County had huge surpluses last year. Jobs are plentiful and the business community is vibrant and expanding at an unbelievable rate. The state knows how to attract businesses. Guess what? Businesses employ people.

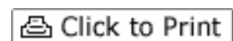
Forsyth County is one of the fastest-growing counties in the country. Just last year, 300 new teachers were hired for an influx of 20,000 new students. Each county is an entire school district, eliminating layers and layers of administrative costs.

The climate is wonderful. Yes, August is *hot*. However, the springs, winters and especially the fall season are beautiful. Why the contrast? I have only one reason. The political climate. The politicians in Erie County are clueless. I'm not castigating the people of Western New York. I grew up there. It's a great place to live. But the people deserve more.

I go online and read articles from The News. They're discussing issues that are 10 and 15 years old. One of the main things we miss is our friends and of course the Bills. But there is a different world out there. Too bad the politicians of Western New York don't get it. And sadly, maybe never will.

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