

## From the Editor

“Gun-rights rally turns into anti-Cuomo event” was the headline in the Metro section of The Buffalo News on Apr. 2.

I’m pretty sure I uttered a “Duh!” as I leafed through the paper with my morning tea.

The paper’s political reporter, Robert McCarthy, reported “It was billed as a rally for repeal of the SAFE (Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement) Act, New York’s tough new gun-control measure enacted last year.

“But the event that drew thousands of protestors to the Empire State Plaza [in Albany, the state’s capital] on Tuesday quickly morphed into a mass demonstration against the law’s champion—Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who is running for re-election.”

“Duh!” again I muttered into my oolong.

The rally featured a number of speakers who bashed the Democratic incumbent—including Carl Paladino who ran against him four years ago, Donald Trump, who flirted with running against him this year and Rob Astorino, the likely Republican nominee this year.

Would it have been nice if there were some high-profile, pro-gun Democrats on the podium?

Of course! But pro-gun Democrats are pretty thin on the ground of elected politics in New York State—even pro-gun Republicans are pretty rare.

The newspaper’s, and other media’s focus on the “bashing” of Cuomo by the SAFE Act opponents, though, is at best disingenuous, and at worst, another attempt to divide everyone into neatly packaged “thems” and “us’s.”

It’s a lazy kind of journalism, but it usually works—lumping people into broad categories with easy labels. Most of the reporting on the rally mentioned that the crowd skewed Republican, male and from “upstate.”

“All politics is local,” is one of the most famous dictums in modern politics, first uttered by the late Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill.

But it is often one of the most misunderstood, as well.

“Local,” doesn’t just mean potholes and school budgets particular to a specific place. It also means any issue which focuses attention in one place. In the case of the SAFE Act, the issue is gun rights.

Passed literally in the dead of the night in January 2013, it was Cuomo’s attempt to turn the spotlight on New York—and by more than just extension—himself, in the wake of the Sandy Hook school shooting.

Cuomo bragged that he and New York would be the “first” in the nation to enact legislation that would “prevent” another such horrific tragedy.

But the SAFE Act hasn’t prevented any school shootings in much the same way it hasn’t prevented any tiger attacks in New York.

What the law did was make criminals almost overnight of heretofore law-abiding New Yorkers, who had already been abiding by some of the strictest laws in the country.

A year later, some provisions are still not being enforced, because those charged with doing so (county sheriffs and county clerks in most cases but even the State Police with some of the law’s provisions), can’t figure out how to do so.

The first people caught by the SAFE Act were clearly not criminals, and even Cuomo did some throat clearing about “administrative matters,” waving away questions by the media.

New York politics are local, just like everywhere else, but, just as elsewhere, “local” means different things.

Like our fellow citizens in California and Illinois, for example, population wags the dog—and New York City

and its immediate suburbs call most of the legislative shots—just as Chicagoland does in the Prairie State and Los Angeles and San Francisco do in the Golden State.

Cuomo could not have rammed through the S.A.F.E. Act without the firm support of New York City pols, but he also needed some folks from “upstate,” and he got it.

While Cuomo himself, with an enormous war chest that already has been used to run softly-focused “achievement” ads for months, is probably a shoo-in for re-election—at least according to some polls, some of those who supported the SAFE Act, notably some Democrats as well as Republicans, especially from west of the Hudson River, are likely to find local town halls, and candidate meet-and-greets decidedly uncomfortable in the next few months. A few of them will fail to win reelection solely because of their support of the SAFE Act.

A few days before the rally in Albany was held, I talked to a state activist who was heading east for it. He mentioned that afterward, he, and some other grassroots activists were on their way to Connecticut, to meet with activists there.

In Connecticut, the governor and legislature might not be able to brag that they were “first” to pass new laws in direct response to Sandy Hook, but pass them they did. They are almost as unworkable as New York’s.

Of course, gun rights advocates have been going through the same drill since the late 60s, but every once in a while, the “trend” hits the spotlight again.

Should Cuomo win re-election, perhaps he should look closely at a map of “locals” before embarking on his Presidential run.

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