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SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Pushing the *Profit Creators* Off the Fiscal Cliff

As I am writing this, hope is quickly dimming that Congress and President Obama will step back from pushing the nation—and our slowly recovering economy—off the fiscal cliff. By the time you may be reading this however, we may already be in free fall. Regardless, while a county legislator has absolutely *zero* impact on the last minute budget negotiating process—if *Starbucks can offer advice via caffeinated graffiti*—I think all elected officials, regardless of their level of office or party affiliation, should state where they stand on the federal stand-off. If for no other reason than because state and local governments will have to pick up the shattered pieces of our economy after the effects of the impact are felt.

Being a Democrat and not a part of what I like to call the “Washington think” I believe both sides are missing a major point of this debate. A word first to my fellow Democrats, simply seeking to raise taxes on the wealthy out of fairness is noble—but that argument lacks sufficient substance to be meaningful public policy. To my Republican friends, refusing any tax increase in order to protect the job creators is short-sighted. Simply put, both sides are wrong to either praise or demonize the ethics and efficacy of protecting the “Job Creators”. I believe the focus of any discussion on the economy and the fiscal cliff should concentrate on what I like to call the *Profit Creators*.

What, who? Why hasn't anyone championed the cause of this group of Americans thus far in the national debate? Both are good and valid questions. But, before I go on I am compelled to describe who these seemingly elusive and overlooked species of Americana are.

—MORE, MORE, MORE—

To paraphrase the cartoonist Walt Kelly, we have met the profit creators and they are us, the vast majority of us actually.

If you are an American, working eight-plus hour days to provide profits for a larger business or multi-national corporation, then you too are a profit creator. None of us make even the slightest percentage of the money earned by the CEO's and assorted corporate officers of our parent companies. Indeed, we are making a shrinking percentage of those profits to provide for the families we parent. The statistics don't lie, over the past thirty years wealthy Americans have grown richer while middle and lower income earners have seen their wages fall or stay stagnant.

Ask Wal-Mart CEO Mike Duke (2011 pay package \$18.1 million) if his company would be hugely profitable if it were not for his army of blue-vested minimum wage cashiers, greeters and shelf-stockers (average take home pay of under \$250 a week).

So every time a Republican Congressman touts the economic necessity of propping up tax cuts for the job creators I want – and expect – a Democratic Congressman to stand up and meaningfully argue for the profit creators. And to do so by reminding their GOP counterparts that no successful or profitable company has ever existed without the profit creators, who are for customers, the faces of the corporations they represent. And until Kurt Vonnegut's dystopian reality of *Player Piano* takes place and mechanization completely takes over capitalism, we must protect the flesh and blood profit creators.

But being at the brink of this cliff is not necessarily a bad place to be. Like Vonnegut writes in *Player Piano*, "I want to stand as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center."

And if you are reading this after we have already gone over the cliff, all hope is not necessarily lost either. Vonnegut's words from *Piano* still offer some hope, "a step backward, after making a wrong turn, is a step in the right direction."

Sincerely yours,

DuWayne Gregory
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