

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

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OPINION



NORTH EAST
INDEPENDENT

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EDITORIAL

Lyme report will address a critical public health issue

A resolution passed by the state Senate earlier this summer requires health officials to author a comprehensive report on Lyme disease in Rhode Island by January. It marks a significant step in the fight against a public health threat that has the potential to affect hundreds of thousands of people who live in and visit the Ocean State.

The resolution (S 1030), which passed the Senate June 25, asks the state Department of Health for an overview on the current levels of Lyme disease in Rhode Island; the response of the medical community in treating the disease; and an analysis of best practices in its treatment.

It also asks the department to identify any gaps in coverage or insurance protocols that affect access to "comprehensive and adequate treatment," and seeks current and long-term goals and strategies to address the high incidence of the disease in Rhode Island.

The resolution was sponsored by Sen. James Sheehan (D-Dist. 36) of North Kingstown and Narragansett, and co-sponsored by Sens. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37) of South Kingstown and New Shoreham and Dennis Algieri (R-Dist. 38) of Westerly, Charlestown and South Kingstown.

"Lyme disease is a major concern among Rhode Islanders, who are six to eight times more likely to contract the disease compared to the national average," the resolution reads.

"Due to the lack of predators, there is an overpopulation of deer in Rhode Island, which are host species for ticks ... Children between the ages of 5 to 9 are the most likely to get Lyme disease in Rhode Island [and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] has recently estimated that for every known case of Lyme disease, there are about nine unreported cases."

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria that spreads through the bite of an infected tick. Initial symptoms can range from a "bull's eye" skin rash and a fever to Bell's palsy – paralysis or weakened muscle control on one side of the face. Left undiagnosed for weeks or months, symptoms can worsen to include headaches, joint swelling and stiffness, shooting pains, severe fatigue and cognitive impairment, among other issues.

"The chronic health conditions diagnosed as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue and autoimmune diseases share many similar symptoms with Lyme disease," the resolution notes.

"The correct diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease is essential to help a patient recover without a lifetime of medications and suffering."

For too long, physicians across the state had access to Lyme reporting forms to help document cases, but didn't always use them because there was no mandate requiring those forms to be completed and returned to the health department. Fortunately, that has changed and Lyme reporting is now required by state health officials.

And while South County is a known "hot zone" for Lyme disease, its treatment continues to divide the medical community. Some physicians refuse to prescribe antibiotics for more than two or three weeks to patients who exhibit symptoms, while others do not believe the disease can cause long-term illness – and attribute chronic symptoms to other health conditions.

We won't debate treatment methods here, but we urge readers to explore the well-documented controversy.

Ultimately, preventing tick bites is the best way to avoid Lyme disease. The health department urges residents to take the following steps to protect themselves:

- Wear light-colored, long pants and long-sleeve shirts when outdoors. (Light-colored fabrics make it easier to spot ticks.) Tuck your pants into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl under clothing.
- Use bug spray that contains at least 20 percent DEET on skin and use Permethrin, an insecticide, on clothing. Follow manufacturers' safety precautions, especially for children.
- Avoid areas with high grass and lots of leaves.

If you hike or walk through the woods, walk in the center of a trail.

• Protect your pets. Sprays and tick-control products for dogs and cats help prevent tick bites and can kill ticks on contact. Groom or brush pets after they come indoors.

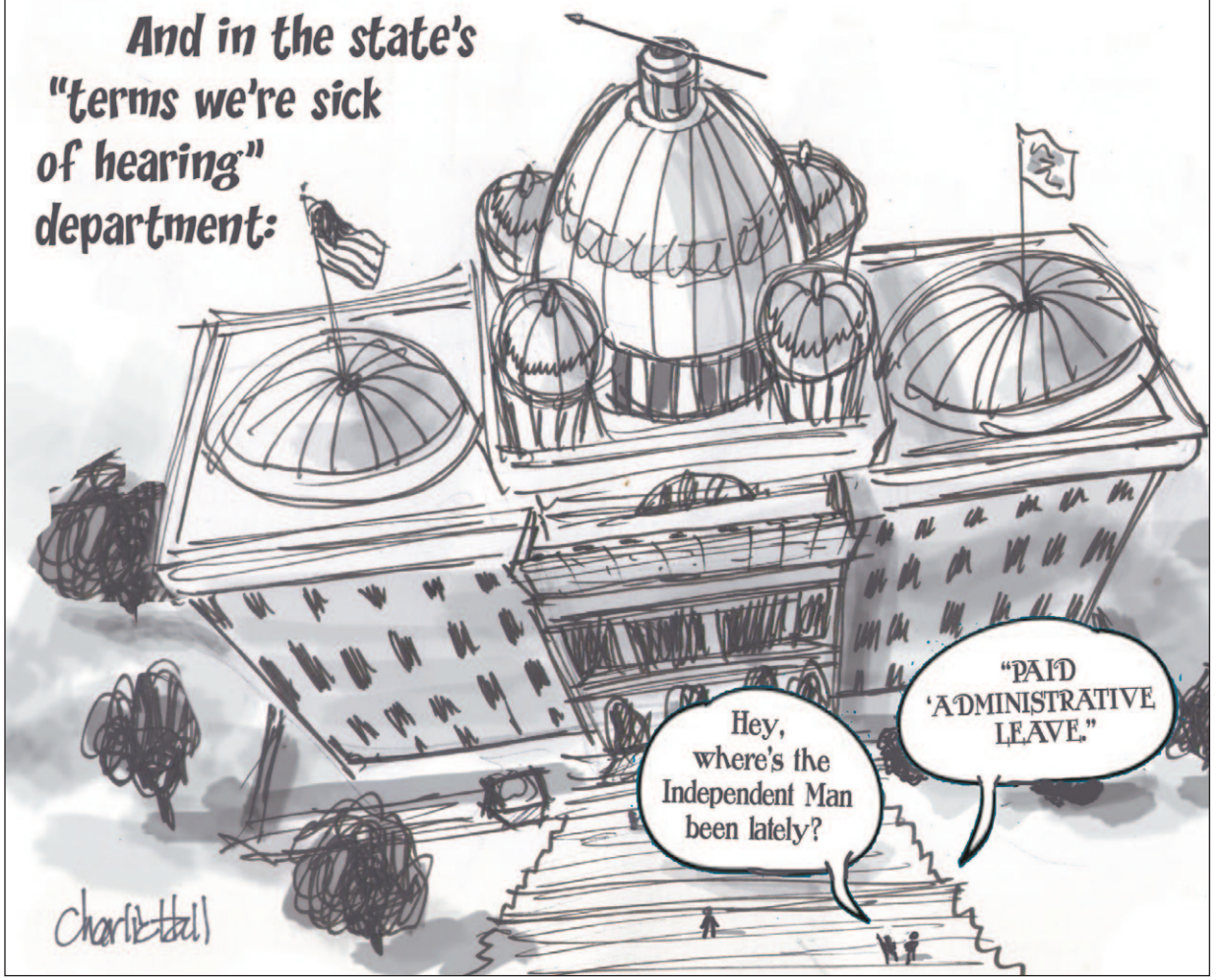
• Remove ticks properly and immediately. Use fine, pointed tweezers and get as close to the skin as possible. Grab the tick's head, or directly above the head, and pull up slowly and steadily. Never use petroleum jelly or lotions, and do not try to burn the tick off.

• Mow lawns frequently and keep leaves raked. Stack wood neatly in a dry area to discourage rodents that ticks feed on.

• Keep children's play equipment away from woods and trees. Put them in a sunny location, if possible, because it's more difficult for ticks to survive in the sun.

For more information on how to identify Lyme disease-carrying ticks, testing questions and additional tips, visit the University of Rhode Island's TickEncounter Resource Center at tickencounter.org.

And in the state's "terms we're sick of hearing" department:



Charlie Hall

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Help save the Quonset Air Museum

A piece of Rhode Island's aviation history may disappear forever. The Quonset Air Museum is in danger of being permanently dismantled if its present home cannot be repaired or if a new location cannot be found.

Founded in 1992, the air museum has been educating the public about our state's rich aviation history, and is the home of 28 aircraft including civilian, military and prototype aircraft dating back

more than 70 years – from 1944 all the way through to 1983. It boasts the inclusion of a one-of-a-kind Twin Tail Navy transport in its collection. The museum has been a favorite destination as part of the Quonset Air Show.

The Quonset Air Museum has been housed on 3 acres, in an original Naval Air Station Quonset Point hangar that was built in 1945. During the past winter, the building sustained significant damage

and the volunteers who have lovingly crafted this museum have been told they need to vacate the space by Sept. 30 of this year. If a new space cannot be found, the possibility exists that all of the aircraft may be destroyed.

I am asking our citizens to save the Quonset Air Museum, its aircraft and exhibits from possible destruction. It would be a shame to see such an important part of Rhode Island history disappear.

Please visit my MoveOn.org online petition (petitions.moveon.org/sign/save-the-quonset-air?source=c.em&r_by=7093210) so that you can let your legislators know you want to preserve history.

Doreen M. Costa
North Kingstown

The author is the state representative for District 31 (North Kingstown and Exeter).

Are our Congressional leaders afraid to lead?

Do North East Independent readers have any idea of what is happening in the Middle East? Have you heard one peep from Congressman Jim Langevin or U.S. Sens. Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse on the Middle East turmoil and U.S. policy?

Why are we supporting the incessant Saudi bombing of Yemen by supplying the Saudis with the weapons, bombs

and intelligence, which have killed thousands of innocents and destroyed their entire infrastructure?

Why are we now cozying up to al-Qaeda in Syria and supporting groups who were formerly labeled as "terrorist" groups? I am sure most readers do not have a clue as to what we are doing and why we are doing it. Once again, I call upon our so called "leaders" to

enlighten us.

Where are our elected leaders in Congress on these issues? Nothing but silence from them, and I find their silence deafening. Shouldn't "leaders" be holding town meetings with voters to explain the happenings, and to answer the many questions voters may have? I call upon our Congressional delegation to be "leaders" and come to us in town meetings

with an explanation. Don't be afraid; we won't bite. Show us some leadership and courage, for a change.

Joseph Clifford
Jamestown

Editor's note: Congressman Langevin will hold a Town Hall Meeting Aug. 13 at 6 p.m. at Swift Community Center, 121 Peirce St., East Greenwich.

Thanks for making Wickford Art Festival a success

We all know the saying "it takes a village," but after two years of directing the Wickford Art Festival, this has never been more apparent to me!

The Wickford Art Festival is Wickford Art Association's biggest fundraiser of the year, and with an event this large, we depend on many sponsors, businesses, community organizations, volunteers and artists who all pitch in for a weekend of fine art in coastal Wickford village. Over two sunny days, almost 200 artists exhibited their gorgeous art to tens of thousands of art lovers. Since 2014, Rhode Island is the only state in the country that does not collect sales tax on original art; the savings encourage more purchases at the festival as well as in our local economy. The Wickford Art Association

would like to thank our many partners that help us produce the number-one fine art festival in New England. We are grateful to our title sponsor Centreville Bank, whose team is committed to the arts in our town and our state, and also to Gooseneck Vineyards, which has proved that fine art and wine really are the perfect pairing.

We would also like to thank the town of North Kingstown, including the Police Department, which annually receives glowing reviews from our artists for their helpfulness and courtesy, the town clerk's office, the recreation department, the public works department, the fire department and the town manager. These departments help us negotiate the many twists and turns

all year long as we prepare to welcome crowds of 50,000 to our village.

Many thanks to the Wickford merchants and residents who help us welcome artists from across the country. Numerous businesses support our festival with a program advertisement (available on our website). Many community organizations pitch in as well. Of course, thank you to Independent Newspapers for publicizing the festival.

Finally, I depend on the most fabulous, hard-working group of volunteers: I love their enthusiasm, selflessness (who wants to spend a hot July weekend working?!) and dedication to this event, the arts and our community. Special thanks to Marie Martone, Bob Cazzani, Marianne Guarnieri,

Sandi King, Bob Lavoie, John Pitocco, Dana Salvadore and Sandra Salvadore, who generously gave me their time all year. A full list of volunteers is on the festival Facebook page.

Proceeds from the 53rd Wickford Art Festival provide annual scholarships to three artistic R.I. public school seniors attending college, and also support our mission to promote fine art through gallery exhibitions, classes, open studios, community events and more. Mark your calendars for July 9-10, 2016 – see you then!

Judy Salvadore
Wickford

The author is the festival director for the Wickford Art Association.

Restaurants should be more aware of food allergies

My letter today is regarding restaurants and customers with allergies.

My husband has celiac disease and my daughter has a dairy allergy. Both of them literally get sick if they eat anything with allergens in them or if they have touched anything with allergens in it. It's very distressing to go to restaurants that don't have a clue about food allergies.

When ordering meals, the waitstaff is specifically told about the food allergy, and most of the time, meals come out with allergens in it or on it.

It would be nice if restaurant management would train their entire staff on allergies. If someone tells their server that they

can't have a certain food, I think the server should automatically ask if they have an allergy and make note of it to the kitchen staff.

Many people don't eat certain foods by their own choice and it won't be detrimental to them if the food they order comes in contact with what they're trying to avoid. That can't be said for anyone with a food allergy.

Restaurants need to be more accommodating to their customers. They can learn a thing or two from T's restaurants. Everyone at T's goes above and beyond when their customers have a food allergy.

Something else that may be helpful to anyone with a gluten

allergy would be when restaurants place ads in print that specify if they have gluten-free options. Customers may be avoiding a restaurant because

they're not aware of their gluten-free menu.

Mariann Papineau
South Kingstown

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

We welcome our readers' views. Our letters policy follows:

- Each letter must bear the writer's full name, full address and telephone number (for verification purposes only). We will not publish a letter unless a phone number is provided.

- We correct errors of spelling and punctuation, and edit letters to conform to Independent style. We may condense letters for brevity.

- Letters should be no more than 450 words. Proposed guest view columns should be no more than 750 words.