



(Onondaga Historical Association, 1960s)

INTERSTATE 81 DEBATE

Rubin's elitist criticism doesn't help discussion

By **Matt Driscoll**
Former Syracuse mayor

To the Editor:
I read David Rubin's opinion titled "Old Believers" and was quite amused at yet another example in which he distorts the facts to support his agenda, masquerading as opinion. And once again, the professor denigrates and besmirches the hard work of many good and decent people along the way. I guess I should be "flattered" to be included in a long line of public and community servants who have had their accomplishments belittled by David Rubin, to somehow justify his position. These articles offered, as "journalistic opinions" are despicable and underhanded.

I am proud of the many action plans that my administration put into place and would like to thank the countless individuals, institutions and neighborhood stakeholders who worked with us to better our city, county and region.

As former mayor (2001-2009) I had several years of opportunity to associate with community, business and academic leaders who collaborated in helping to contemplate, analyze, address and implement solutions to the many challenges that our community faced. Many of these professionals, business owners and everyday citizens gave not only their time, but expertise and financial sup-

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port, and in fact, accomplished a long list of projects, improvements and good-government changes that are still being used today.

David Rubin was never in that category.

What is most remarkable is that Rubin's professional career has been spent largely in "theory" not practice; as such he never had any hands-on experience in dealing with a multitude of municipal challenges and views that any community faces. His "Ivory Tower" mentality only adds to the divide and negativity that we constantly experience in our community. In addition, ignoring or chastising those members of our community and businesses who may have a differing view is not only outrageous; it is counter-productive in getting anything done. This elitist mentality does nothing to help promote thoughtful debate,

or take into account opinions that come from others; rather it serves as a choke point to meaningful discussions and true community dialogue.

One thing that David Rubin and I agree on is that the discussion regarding the future of the I-81 viaduct could be a "game-changer" for not only the city, but the county as well. From my experience as mayor, what I know is that there are incredible minds in our community. Given the opportunity to come to the table together, and leave parochialism at the door, people could craft a new design for I-81 that would benefit existing businesses and neighborhoods, while looking to the future to reinvent Syracuse and Onondaga County, all of which is within our grasp.

Let us not squander this opportunity with short views, small minds and divisive language.