

Resisting technology's pull keeps county in rut

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GUEST ESSAYIST

WiFi in Rochester? Not according to Monroe County Republicans.

I hear a lot of talk about job creation and economic development these days. Discussions about how to revitalize downtown, how to attract new businesses and keep the ones we have, and how to keep young people here. These are vitally important issues.

And once in a while I hear a good idea that may help. And yet, despite all the rhetoric about fostering economic development, one such idea has been shot down by Republicans.

A Democratic proposal, submitted last month to a Monroe County Legislature committee, called for a task force to be created to study the idea of municipal broadband wireless access, WiFi. The proposal didn't even suggest implementing the idea, just studying it. But the GOP majority on the Planning and Economic Development Committee said "no."

Republicans questioned the cost and whether providing WiFi was an appropriate role for government. However, is it not government's role to foster economic development? Don't we want to be a community on the cutting edge of technology?

How are we supposed to attract new businesses if we don't give them a reason to come? How are we to retain young people and create good jobs if we don't try to keep up, or better yet, stay ahead of the rest of the country?

If we're talking about being a part of the 21st century, we need to have 21st-century technology.

Leading cities across the county are bringing WiFi to their residents. Seattle, Philadelphia and San Mateo, Calif., to name a few. And, closer to home, even Canandaigua is doing it.

New ideas need support and fostering to get off the ground.

Certainly it appears that the Republicans in the County Legislature lack the ability to look toward tomorrow and are more focused on staying put.

If we reject thinking about ways to move our city forward, we will fail to advance.

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What is WiFi?

WiFi, short for wireless fidelity, radiates a high-speed Internet connection that many appropriately equipped computers can share.