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EDITORIAL

Agreed: The Adirondack Park is Special

New York State Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward accepts the existence of the Adirondack Park. Since the legislature created the Park in 1892, you could rejoin, “well, she’d better,” as Thomas Carlyle retorted when New England Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller said, “I accept the universe.” But it’s not as simple as that. For years, local politicians made it a practice to refrain from referring to the Park, preferring appellations such as “the North County.” By refusing, at least publicly, to acknowledge the reality of the Park, they signaled to their supporters that they would never accept the legitimacy of the rules and regulations created to protect the Park and maintain it as a place apart. At April’s Adirondack Caucus meeting in Chestertown, however, Sayward, State Senator Betty Little and other local elected officials spoke repeatedly about the uniqueness of the Adirondack Park. To be sure, they were not asking for increased regulations to protect the Park’s wild character. Rather, they argued that because the Park is subject to more land use regulations than most other parts of the state, its residents deserve special consideration. Ironically, Governor Cuomo’s Adirondack Commission more or less concluded the same thing in the late 1980s, and made recommendations which, had they been adopted, would have led to better health care, job opportunities, infrastructure and schools than we now have. The Adirondack Caucus’ first legislative goal, Sayward said, is to create a special Adirondack economic zone, an idea similar to one proposed by Cuomo’s Commission and akin to the proposal of the Common Ground Alliance, a coalition in which environmental organizations like the Adirondack Council have played a prominent role. While Sayward, Little and other elected officials may never concede that the Adirondack Park deserves protection because it is the last great wilderness in the east, their recognition that it is unlike every other part of the state is, at the very least, a conversation-starter. New York State may one day be in position to invest heavily in the Adirondacks’ economic and social infrastructure. But in return, elected officials must cease their efforts to undermine the foundations of the Park’s special character.