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## EDITORIAL

# A long trek and a lot of work for an important cause

— A lot of people hereabouts owe a great debt to John Sheehan, and most don't even know who he is.

Sheehan is a former respected newspaper reporter in northern New York, who "turned to the dark side," as journalists like to say. Reporters value dispassionate objectivity above just about all else, and when one of their own leaves the profession to go to work for government or an advocacy group, they often regard it as something of a betrayal.

In Sheehan's case, he left to go to work for the Adirondack Council, a group dedicated to the proposition that the Adirondack Mountains are a unique, irreplaceable gift from nature that deserves our best efforts to preserve them as they are, for, if we don't, we'll never be able to retrieve or restore them. Sheehan, himself, believes this with all his heart.

He is an ideal spokesman for the Adirondack Council's cause. He is not angrily fanatical, as some people who believe fervently in a cause are. Instead, he is reasoned, restrained and willing to listen, though in the end he will not hesitate to tell you where you are wrong and why. It's too bad advocates for every cause don't have a stronger dose of John Sheehan in them.

On Election Day, an amendment appeared on the state ballot asking voters whether they approved of an amendment to the State Constitution allowing a swap of extremely sensitive land for some less valuable parcels to enable construction of an electrical transmission line along a roadside instead of through Forest Preserve land comprising more than 40 wetlands. The line was necessary to give Tupper Lake a reliable source of power to relieve residents, businesses and industries of the heartbreak of frequent power outages. The line would provide essential backup power routing for what has become a very fragile system.

Sheehan and the council saw this project as essential for Tupper Lakers and crucial for the environment, as the alternative would have been disastrous for their — and all of our — interests. It seems strange to contemplate environmentalists pushing for the installation of a power line, but they saw with great clarity what was at stake.

The danger was that New Yorkers — particularly downstate New Yorkers — would not understand the issue and would reject the land swap out of general ignorance. No one had explained to rank-and-file voters what was being asked, and many resent environmentalist issues out of hand.

Sheehan took it upon himself to set out on a statewide mission to explain the issue so that when voters stepped into the booth, they would know what they were deciding. He did so at the Press-

Republican and at newspapers across the state — including New York City, where ignorance could do the most damage.

As it turned out, the amendment passed overwhelmingly. Tupper Lakers may not realize how much they owe to the council and, specifically, to Sheehan. We hope that now they do.