

LETTERS**Work toward goal to reunify the families**

Northern Rivers Family of Services applauds Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Attorney General Barbara Underwood and the many elected officials who have provided support, resources and defense for children and families under the federal policy of separating families. When I wrote this letter, there were 321 children in New York state-licensed foster agencies that were separated from their parents at the border.

It is inhumane, unconscionable and illegal to keep these children separated from their families. The real stories of children separated from their families and early childhood research strongly proves and documents the irreparable trauma being caused to these children by the federal policy. Despite dedicated care and support to these children in their current settings, there are legitimate concerns about protecting health, safety and well-being.

It is critical to continue to use public outrage, media coverage and legal resources to reunite the many children with their families in an expeditious way. We also must use this public discussion of children's growth and development to remember there are more than 16,000 children in foster care across the state who have been separated from their parents due to abuse, neglect or delinquency reasons. We must mobilize our political and budget resources to support the

dedicated professional staff and foster families that care for these children. We urge the elected officials and public to speak out for all children and call for investments in the treatment and support of children in our foster care system toward the goal of reunification, permanency and independent living.

Regardless of how children are removed from their families, we need to ensure safety, well-being and a bright future.

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Democrats need change in leadership

The midterm elections are four months away.

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi must let someone else be the face of leadership for Democrats. The midterms will be a war for the soul of this country and their skill sets are ill-equipped for the fight.

President Donald Trump's message of "strong borders, no crime," while proclaiming that Democrats want "weak borders, unlimited crime," uses fear and immigration to set the context for the mid-terms.

He tells his base how truly smart they are and convinces them that only he can keep America safe as long as his Republicans keep control of the Congress.

Democrats need to ask voters, "Is Trump's

America what we want?" and thus shift the narrative from fear to hope. This skips over the myriad Trump transgressions and really asks, "What does the future look like?" His base won't care, but the question resonates with some Republicans, all Democrats and the independents, so crucial for victory.

Schumer and Pelosi can't match his ability to shape a message. Although legislatively skilled, outside of their home districts they have all of the appeal of cold mashed potatoes on the day after Thanksgiving.

Democrats need someone else to be the face of the future. Schumer and Pelosi could "lead from behind," if their intellect could convince their egos to step aside. Trump won the Electoral College because Hillary Clinton couldn't project a message. Schumer and Pelosi suffer from the same malady and their inability to see that could mean doom for us all.

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