

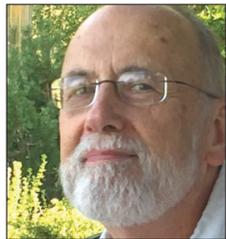
Opinion

NO BAD DAYS

Everyone's essential

Are you essential?

I am, according to the governor's office. News media workers are exempt from Gov. Jay Inslee's executive order last week directing most state residents to stay at home and away from work. In fact, dozens of job categories including health care, hazardous materials and chemicals, financial services, military support industries, emergency services, food and agriculture, energy, public utilities, transportation, communications and vital local government functions are deemed essential and not subject to the "stay at home" directive.



Don Nelson

The list created some initial confusion, which the governor's office is trying to sort out. However it's defined, the state is taking the restrictions seriously. While

some businesses that could stay open have chosen not to, others that should be closed are not complying. Earlier this week, Inslee said that "Unfortunately, we've had thousands of calls coming from many places in the state ... with reports that some individuals and some businesses are not complying" with the stay-at-home order. The governor said the state will start by asking nicely, but could ultimately impose penalties or even revoke licenses.

Many of the people who are still on the job, and we pretty much know who they are in our community, are making it possible for the rest of the populace to stay home and have most of their everyday needs met. That may be small solace to the sequestered millions who are not bringing in any income, for who knows how long. If you are cooped up and verging on stir-crazy, take a moment to be grateful for the "essential" people who may not have the option of removing themselves from COVID-19's relentless advance.

Buried deep in the long list of exemptions is the news media's "get out of the house free" card. Specifically: "Workers who support radio, television, newspapers and media service, including, but not limited to front line news reporters, studio, and technicians for newsgathering and reporting, and workers involved in the printing and distribution of newspapers." Meaning, we "get" to keep doing our jobs, which we have always done anyway whenever our communities face crises.

Somehow, it doesn't feel special. Maybe because it doesn't cite "editors," although those of who make assignments and edit stories may be presumed to "support" the news staff, a characterization that many veteran journalists would snort at. Mostly it's that we always expect to keep doing our work, as long as we can with whatever it takes to continue delivering important information to our communities.

That has become more challenging in just the past few weeks. Across the United States, as ad revenues plummet thanks to the COVID-19 general lockdown of the economy, hundreds of journalists are being laid off just when their work is needed most. Some newspapers have ceased publishing — temporarily, or perhaps forever. There are huge swaths of the country that have no local newspaper coverage, daily or weekly. We've made some operational and production adjustments at the Methow Valley News, and are glad we're able to keep putting out a weekly paper. I can look down the road and see how that may become increasingly difficult. But that's a column for another day.

The governor's stay-at-home order will likely be extended in some form past the original two-week period that Inslee imposed. That will put more pressure on the "essentials" to keep doing their jobs, and will result in more built-up tension among the stay-at-homers. We don't have any experience with this kind of threat to society as we know it, and are all playing it day-to-day. Which means that all of us, whether we're on the job or staring out the living room window, are "essential" for the eventual repair and healing of our economy and communities. If you are feeling a bit left out right now, don't worry — your time to make a difference will come.

You can do something in the mean time, though. A reader bought a tiny ad in this week's paper with just two words of copy: "Be nice." The more I hear about the siege mentality of a few valley residents, and a torches-and-pitchforks attitude toward people diagnosed with COVID-19, the more I think we should take that suggestion to heart. Informed awareness, concern for each other, conscientious actions and determined preparedness will get us through this. I feel essentially certain of that.

CORRECTION: The name of Okanogan County Sheriff's Deputy Jodie Barcus was misspelled in a March 25 article about an officer-involved shooting. The News regrets the error.

EXERCISE YOUR FREEDOM. Letters must be fewer than 350 words and may be edited for libel, grammar and taste.

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Box 97: Letters to the editor

Support the station

Dear Editor:

When I first heard about Winthrop needing a new fire station, I was very against it. I didn't think that they needed it. But last year I made the decision to join Okanogan County Fire District 6 in Winthrop. The first call I went on, I could see that the space was not big enough for everything that has to happen. Firemen trying to get dressed only a foot away from a fire truck that is trying to pull out of its parking space. Others having to keep an eye out that said truck doesn't hit the truck that is right next to it. After that first call, I knew for sure that we needed to do something because there just isn't the room to expand anymore at the current location.

That is why I am asking that this valley come together and help us get a new station. Since I have joined the fire department, I have learned so much. I have found both a passion to help others that I didn't know I had before, and a group of people that have made me want to learn and grow. I hope to someday get my certifications and be able to get paid for being a firefighter. But right now, if I want to do that, I have to leave this wonderful valley to go to an academy for training. If we get the new station, I have the opportunity to learn and grow, and receive those certifications here in the valley. I know it looks like we are asking for a lot, but we really aren't. I hope that you will all join me and my fellow firefighters this April 28 and vote yes on the levy lid lift for the new fire station.

Justin Funkhouser
Winthrop

Financial distancing

Dear Editor:

I hate to be a burden. I will make sure I practice correct social distancing while working on my house in the valley this week. I will fill up in Pateros and grab groceries in Wenatchee. As a resident part-time of the valley for over 20 years who has kicked in for libraries, pools, trail easements and fire recovery, I will take to heart the Winthrop mayor's stance this week. I will practice financial distancing going forward. Good luck. We are all in this together. Until we aren't.

Pete Dapper
Shoreline/Mazama

Simple solution

Dear Editor:

Stay home, stay healthy. Seems like a fairly simple statement to understand, and even if you are a little slow to understand, guidelines have been given to those that can't seem to figure out those four simple words.

Yes, there are exceptions for those that own/operate or are employed by essential businesses that have been identified by state and federal government officials, but locally it seems as though some feel that their business is essential to maintaining good health, and survival, despite the fact that they could be exposing themselves, families or customers to a disease of unprecedented communicability.

Yes, it can get boring to stay home, but to break up the boredom get back to the basics: family board games, solitaire or other card games by either electronic means or old-fashion plastic cards and, wow, maybe even read a book (also available electronically), paperback or even hard cover. Heck, call a neighbor and see how they are doing.

Well, I think it is time to ask yourself this question: Do I isolate now or quarantine later, providing I don't get fatally sick? The choice is yours, and ask yourself, am I a part of the solution or a part of the problem?

Vern Herrst
Winthrop

Wrong levy, wrong time

Dear Editor:

Okanogan County Fire District 6's choice of levy is not good. They chose a permanent levy that never ends. When the fire station is paid off, and they haven't told us how long that will be, approximately \$216,000 will start going into their general fund to be used as they see fit with no voter approval. This amount will increase their current tax revenues by a hefty increase of 25%. If the fire district needs an increase when the building is paid for, why don't they just come to the voter and tell them what they need it for and let the voter decide? The school district does this and it works quite well and their levies have been successful. The voters want to build a fire station and nothing more. Two means of financing the fire station building are available: a general obligation bond for 20 years similar to the levy Fire District J15 is using; or a levy lift for up to nine years during which the building is paid off and the levy is done. Neither of these continue to pour money into the district once the building is paid for.

The streets of Winthrop and Twisp are deserted, businesses closed and people are



By Len Baublitz

out of work. These people are taxpayers and trying to just pay current bills. The taxpayer doesn't need an additional levy at this time. Neither do retirees who have just seen their pensions, 401K, IRAs and investments lose value by 25% to 50%. Run the correct levy at a better time and it will pass.

Please read the rebuttals to these comments carefully and fact check them as you would mine.

Ross Darling
Twisp

Stay at home!

Dear Editor:

It is well known that our valley is home to a large number of heroes. From Olympians to wilderness protectors, from educators to poverty eradicators, and from growers and ranchers to whatever's-broken fixers, the people in our community go above and beyond to be extraordinary in their devotion to serve their neighbors. As recent disasters have shown us, we have an abundance of community members who, in times of crisis, choose to run towards the flames.

The crisis we are facing with coronavirus is a new threat and demands from us a new definition of heroism. This pandemic comes silently, is invisible and evades detection, and may infect us all but is catastrophic to our most vulnerable. The solution, more effective than hand-washing and cough etiquette, is the intentional and aggressive disruption of the very activities that make our community thrive.

The true heroes emerging in this crisis are those who have embraced physical distancing, cancelled the season's biggest events, closed businesses and shut down their means of livelihood to protect our community's health. As our clinics redesign operations, our little community hospitals prepare for acuity seen only in tertiary care centers, and our emergency management systems lead unprecedented collaboration across the county, they need the help of each and every one of us.

Please be heroes in this time of crisis. Stay at home. Act as if you have it and commit to protecting your neighbors. And for those who will work the front lines of this fire, please do not fan the flames.

Jim Wallace, MD, MPH
Family Health Centers
Three Rivers Hospital
Mid-Valley Hospital

Strong together

Dear Editor:

These past few weeks have been difficult and emotional for people across our state. Our strength is being tested as we face the biggest public health crisis in more than a century.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the health and economic impacts caused by the spread of COVID-19, but we are inspired by the united show of resiliency and responsibility by our fellow Washingtonians.

That resilience is seen in our state's doctors, nurses, public health officials, first responders and scientists working around the clock to keep us safe. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the people who work in grocery stores, sanitation, truck drivers and other Washingtonians doing their best to help our state maintain access to essential goods and services.

We also grieve with the families that have lost loved ones and stand alongside Washingtonians battling this virus.

All of us must do our part to protect the health of our neighbors, coworkers and friends. The most effective thing that can be done to avoid spreading the virus is something each of us has within our power: do not congregate, stay 6 feet from anyone nearby and wash our hands often. What we do in the coming days and weeks could save our lives and the lives of others. Following these guidelines and other local, state and federal orders is critical and will help flatten the curve of infections.

We are strongly encouraged that from the legislative to the executive branch, there has been unity in purpose that knows no partisan bounds. We are grateful for the initiative to keep us safe taken by the governor, the Department of Health and the Emergency Management Division.

We are proud of the bipartisan steps the Legislature has taken to address this outbreak.

There is no way to overstate the health and economic challenges facing our state and our nation. The weeks and months to come will test our will, our values and our courage. But we can do this.

Washingtonians are smart, kind and tough. We will emerge from this challenge more united than ever, prepared to build an even stronger Washington.

Majority Leader Andy Billig (D-Spokane), Speaker Laurie Jinkins (D-Tacoma), Senate Republican Leader Mark Schoesler (R-Ritzville), House Republican Leader JT Wilcox (R-Yelm)

Hello, goodbye?

Dear Editor:

Ms. Torvik's last column was so far over the top that I've been moved to say something. Her first three paragraphs in March 18 edition screamed "FIRE!" With no exit doors to pile up at, we just had to sit here and grit our teeth.

Grinding her well-worn political axe at a time many people in our valley are already fearful, our elders especially, was wrong.

Pointing her finger at every target out there does no good.

Not to doubt the few drops of dopamine secreted by the "screw Trump conditioned response" gave her flock some form of satisfaction.

How about a discussion of the importance of a strong immune system? What can we do that's positive about improving our own?

Then, we will be more prepared for the next bad bug that comes along.

Kip Roberts
Winthrop

Do-it-yourself obit

Dear Editor:

Here's something fun to do during these days of self-isolation: Write your own obituary.

This should be a positive activity. It should make you reflect on your life so far and give you a chance to say how you felt about this human journey you've been on.

Just pick an hour on any given day, get out a piece of paper and a pen. Write down the relevant statistics (when and where you were born). Think about your life, its high points and low points. Think about your story. Write how you want people to remember you.

Consider it a rough draft. Let it sit a few days, then read it again. Cross out and add to your heart's content. This is not supposed to be a long, well-polished essay. It is a work sheet that you can revise again and again.

Your loved ones will be most grateful that you've done this for them, saved them innumerable hours of hassle and second-guessing about whether or not they should say this or that about you. Just tell your loved ones where this draft is so they won't have to go searching for it.

Remember that newspapers who run the obituary charge money. Some papers charge quite a lot. The Methow Valley News, on the other hand, is reasonable. It charges just \$25 for a 350-word piece with picture, 10 cents a word thereafter.

There is nothing morbid about writing your own obituary. It's creative, even fun, and will have you experiencing your past, your inner life, in a fresh way.

Diana Hottell
Twisp

Keep washing

Dear Editor:

About one person drowns in a tub per day in America. Usually intoxicants are involved. No one dies from soap and water, as far as I can tell. So I guess washing my hands won't kill me. Today's message of the day is quite the reverse, failing to often wash my hands free of virus particles might kill me. Lucky we live when we do. Liquid hand soap has been around for 50 years. Inexpensive glycerin bar soap has been available for 200 years. Before that a harsher soap was made from fats and oils and was hard to come by. Frodo the Hobbit was in the right of it when he sang: "Sing hey! for the bath at close of day that washes the weary mud away!"

See **LETTERS**, A5

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LETTERS

From Page A4

A loon is he that will not sing: O! Water Hot is a noble thing!" For me hand washing is nicest with hot water and fruity liquid soap. To keep the suds on for the full germicidal 20 seconds is my hurdle. The angel on my shoulder is helping with that. The devil on my other shoulder however keeps reminding me that all this hand washing is leaving my skin chapped. May we all be safe and wash hands often.

Dan Aspenwall
Winthrop

Ross for co-op board

Dear Editor:

Regarding the Electric Co-op board of directors, I am delighted to see that Tracy Ross is willing to serve on this volunteer board. I have been a co-director with Tracy on more than one board; his lengthy business experience has given him clear awareness of economic realities and cost benefit analyses. Given the increasing complexity of power generation and distribution, I'd be happy to know that Tracy will be looking after my electricity needs and usage. He is a hard worker, a dedicated, intelligent board member, and he has a sense of humor to liven some of the difficult decisions which must be made.

Midge Cross
Mazama

Support firefighters

Dear Editor:

If we have learned anything during this pandemic it is that we must ensure that our emergency services are ready for the challenges of today and the

future. With heightened risk of wildfires due to climate change, increased home building and growth in property values, our Okanogan County Fire District 6 needs a facility that will support increased staffing, training in the latest firefighting techniques, and provide for storage and maintenance of equipment. Let's help them protect each and every one of us, our properties, as well as themselves. We owe passage of Proposition 6 to the many neighbors and friends who as volunteers put their lives on the line for us every fire call. Support our firefighters. Vote yes for Proposition 6.

Linda and Dalton Du Lac
Winthrop

Be counted

Dear Editor:

The 2020 U.S. Census starts April 1. This count is important because it is the proportional basis for funding community needs, a key resource for community planning data, and it determines our representation in government. Some community needs are improved rural hospitals, highway maintenance, and school nutrition programs, services where the entire county benefits.

In early March, a public call was made to county officials to attend Okanogan's census planning process. Surprisingly and disappointingly, no county officials attended — no county commissioners. One of my friends did go, and there were only six interested residents there. The coordinator was frustrated by the lack of county involvement since other counties have been integral outreach partners to ensure a full count.

Okanogan County ranks low

on many quality-of-life indicators that census funding and planning address. We rank 38 out of 39 counties for lowest median income. We rank 37 out of 39 in positive health outcomes. We have 17% of our population in poverty and the state's percentage is 10%. An early 2020 unemployment report showed Okanogan County at 9.4% and the state's average was 4.4%. You don't have to be in these categories to know they need improvement.

We need county leaders who work for everybody's progress and quality of life.

Since we are one of Washington state's largest counties by size and smallest by population, it is essential that we are fully counted. You can do your part online (2020census.gov), by phone or mail or in person.

Sharon Sumpter
Winthrop

No need for harshness

Dear Editor:

"Close the valley." "Stay away." Harsh words from the Methow Valley. I am seeing these in the recent Methow Valley News Opinion pages. Just because my wife and I have a cabin northwest of Winthrop, does not mean that we are stupid enough to travel to the valley during this pandemic. I feel that those who do have part-time residences are being thought of as second-class valley residences. This is what I am reading into many of the comments in the March 25 Methow Valley News. Similar comments coming from an acquaintance living the valley. Our acquaintance did not even bother to find out what are

plans were for visiting our cabin.

My message is to do not assume anything until you find out the true story. My wife and I are in our 70s and I have what is being called underlying medical problems: diabetes and heart troubles. We are staying put in our Seattle home, ordering groceries to be delivered to our home. Staying out of the general population and not driving! We know that resources are precious no matter where you are during this crisis. We do understand that rural areas can be hit the hardest. To those who may be contemplating traveling, don't. You are not helping the situation if you do. To those criticizing second home folks, remember these are the neighbors you will be living next to when this crisis is over. Mob mentality is quite easy to get into and terribly difficult to get out of. Prayers, and be nice to each other

Patrick and Marion Johnson.
Upper Rendezvous

Yes on Prop. 6

Dear Editor:

The current viral epidemic shows us how vital it is for first responders to be well situated to deal with emergencies. Proposition 6, on the April special election ballot, will support Okanogan County Fire District 6 by improving its facilities, enhancing training opportunities, and establishing a new grant-funded training program. The health and growth of our valley's residents depends on growth in our infrastructure. Please support your local firefighters by voting yes on Proposition 6.

Agnes Almquist
Winthrop

MY TURN

Some tough conversations we all should be having

BY JUSTIN PORTER

The most important conversation we should be having in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic is one about our individual wishes if we become ill. From 17 years old to 97 years old, we need to be having this conversation with those around us and expressing our wishes. Make it clear to your loved ones what they should do in a scenario where you cannot make decisions for yourself. Picture yourself in a hospital room and unable to speak for yourself. What efforts should be made to keep you alive? Is it important to you that every last intervention be attempted before allowing you to die?

All this is not intended to scare you about the COVID pandemic. In fact, I'm quite optimistic about all this. We will get through this and learn a lot from it. My point is to implore you to have these conversations because it's the responsible thing to do. Failing to have these conversations is akin to not washing your hands these days: at best you might be making a mess for the rest of us and at worst you might be causing harm. Worst case scenarios portray more patients than hospital beds and ventilators. Being clear

with our wishes is what's best for you, your family, and the healthcare system at large.

Know your preferences

My wife knows my motto (obviously said with tongue in cheek): if in doubt, snuff me out. I am 35 years old and I know that it is not important to me to have every last resort exhausted before allowing me to die. I'd prefer to die with dignity and comfort rather than risk months of agony on a ventilator supine in a hospital bed. I'd rather die than be an undue burden to my family and the health care system. I've come to find that there are times in life when death is not the worst option. Picturing those scenarios can help you understand your own feelings and wishes.

Obviously I've thought about these questions a lot. My work as a paramedic at Aero Methow Rescue Service and as a registered nurse working in palliative care have given me the opportunity to see so many ways to live and die. It is possible and quite common to die with well-being. To do so, one must have the emotional work and difficult discussions done in advance.

Have a conversation

These conversations are admittedly not easy to have. I

find that the best way to enter these conversations is to explore what's important to your life or your loved one's life. What elements make life rich? Simply start the conversation by asking, what's a good day to you? When we explore what's important to us from a positive perspective it opens us to see how the loss of those elements could make death a less worse option.

For me it's important to help other people, to have stimulating conversations and to be a loving father and husband. If I couldn't engage in these things, I'd rather not live.

Write down your wishes

For young families these conversations are even more challenging to have. If we die, who will take care of the kids? Better yet, who watches the kids while we just have this conversation! Don't worry about doing the legal paperwork and finding a notary, just have the conversation, write your thoughts down and make them clear to those who would be at your bedside. Legal papers are helpful when there's disagreement within a family about how to proceed or when no one is at your bedside.

If everyone knows your wishes, they are likely to be respected even without the

paperwork. Whenever these conversations get really hard just remind yourself and your loved ones that this only applies when we can't speak for ourselves, and no one expects you to be able to speak for yourself anytime soon. None of this is set in stone, you can continue to develop these ideas and articulate them as you explore this subject.

This pandemic makes it abundantly clear that we are all in this together. Not just as a valley of people, but more simply as human beings. The conditions in a seafood market where people initially became ill in Wuhan, China, matter to our lives here.

Likewise, these conversations have an impact on the lives of everyone around us. They help create a culture that cares for our sick in the most caring and enlightened way. These conversations also empower patients to drive their health care instead of reflexively plunging through interventions.

If you need help with these conversations our team is here for you. People of any age or health status can email us for advanced care planning at okanogan.palliative.care@gmail.com.

Justin Porter is a registered nurse and paramedic at Aero Methow Rescue Service in Twisp.

STUDENT ESSAY

Students growing old too soon

Editor's note: This essay was written in response to a call for submissions as part of Cheyenne Fonda's senior project for Liberty Bell High School. Fonda asked Liberty Bell and Independent Learning Center students to share their thoughts about the Methow Valley on a variety of possible topics.

BY CYMONE VAN MARTER

I think that the gap between the life of teenagers and adults' expectations is often wide, yet small. What I mean by this is as follows: Children are often

scrunched for time by participating in many activities. They don't have time to attend school and do homework, sports and work, and also then go outside and play, or hang out with friends, or sleep. This clustering of activities also prevents them from spending quality time with their parents and/or siblings, and therefore are not developing critical and lifelong relationships that are essential for healthiness and happiness.

I also feel like many students, educators and adults will agree with us on this topic, and yet still do nothing as we struggle

to attend all of the activities that we want to engage in. It is nearly impossible to keep up on sleep when sports are a huge part of your high school life. On top of that, you have hours of homework that must be completed. The stress that comes with these tasks certainly grows some grey hairs and is not allowing children to be children.

As young adults, we need to have time to be immature, therefore allowing us to have fun and grow into capable adults. I fully believe that this problem can be fixed with more in-class projects instead of hours of homework

(in college, students only take three to four classes while LBHS students may be taking four AP classes and three honors classes at the same time. This overload of work is more than enough and often leads to stress and wrinkles).

It is critical that children be given the time to go outside and play, and I fully believe that this will enhance their learning capability as well as their drive to sit indoors in a classroom all day.

Cymone Van Marter is a junior at Liberty Bell High School.

Opinion

Editorial

A brief moment

Our 4th District Congressman, Dan Newhouse, is drawing outraged criticism from many of his constituents. In this instance, he unnecessarily brought it on himself.

Newhouse was one of 126 Republican politicians who endorsed an amicus brief supporting the Texas Attorney General's election lawsuit against the election outcome in four states. The congressman might just as well have declared support for a lawless coup, which defeated candidate Trump still seems intent on achieving with his relentless perversion of democracy.

This was avoidable. The inane suit was going nowhere with the U.S. Supreme Court. The congressman could have just kept silent, as did 3rd District Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler, also a Republican (5th District Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers endorsed the lawsuit). Or he could have done the honest and honorable thing and acknowledged Biden's victory. Instead, he aligned himself with secessionists, radical white supremacists, Proud Boy domestic terrorists, political toadies and opportunists, unhinged conspiracy theorists and delusional Trump cult zombies who seem to be in the grip of some mass hysteria about the presidential election outcome.

Newhouse's position was especially puzzling given that, fresh off a huge re-election victory, he doesn't need to do anything else to bolster his support among conservative voters. And while Newhouse has taken admirable positions on some important issues — positions this newspaper applauded him for, and would do so again — when it comes to Trump he seems to default to vapid fealty. We expect better of Newhouse. Maybe something along these lines:

• "Don't let anyone tell you for a second that signing an Amicus brief is no big deal. It is a monumental event. It is a declaration of repudiation. A repudiation of American democracy and our birthright to pick our leaders. They are attempting to impose the fired President on the people who fired him." *Steve Schmidt, campaign strategist*

• "It is unacceptable for political candidates to treat our election system as though we are a third-world nation and incite distrust of something so basic as the sanctity of our vote... As elected members of Congress, we take an oath to 'support and defend the Constitution of the United States,' not to preserve and protect the political interests of any individual, be it the president or anyone else, to the detriment of our cherished nation." *Michigan Congressman Paul Mitchell*

• "I can't fathom risking our norms, traditions and institutions to pass a resolution retroactively changing the electors for Trump, simply because some think there may have been enough widespread fraud to give him the win... I fear we'd lose our country forever. This truly would bring mutually assured destruction for every future election in regards to the Electoral College. And I can't stand for that. I won't." *Michigan state legislator Lee Chatfield*

• "Michigan's Democratic slate of electors should be able to proceed with their duty, free from threats of violence and intimidation. President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris won Michigan's presidential election. It our responsibility as leaders to follow the law..." *Michigan state legislator Mike Shirkey*

• "Based on what I've read in their filings, when Trump campaign lawyers have stood before courts under oath, they have repeatedly refused to actually allege grand fraud — because there are legal consequences for lying to judges. ...Rudy [Giuliani] and his buddies should not pressure electors to ignore their certification obligations under the statute. We are a nation of laws, not tweets." *U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse*

• "This is embarrassing us. It is an affront to our democratic process, and it's diminishing the presidency. It's bad for our party, bad for the country and weakens our position in the world." *Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan*

• "The biggest concern that I have is that people here genuinely believe that somehow this election was stolen, and there's no evidence of that. ... We have a process. We count the votes. That's the way it is." *U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney*

• "The spectacle of so many House Republicans endorsing the Texas suit is depressing, and they aren't profiles in courage." *Wall Street Journal editorial board*

Here's what those statements have in common: They are all by Republicans.

Could there be any redemption in publicly acknowledging that Biden won, as many Republicans have done? Perhaps. But Newhouse may have damaged his credibility too much for that to be meaningful. Here's part of his response to constituents: "Joining this amicus brief is not about trying to overturn the results of an election, but is simply about ensuring the American people have faith in our elections and our Constitution." Disingenuous, off point and inaccurate. It seems Newhouse is the one who lacks faith. If anyone should understand our electoral system, support the Constitution and disavow insurrection, it ought to be our congressman.

Box 97: Letters to the editor

Shame on Newhouse

Dear Editor:

I am appalled at U.S. Representative Dan Newhouse's signature on an amicus brief supporting Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's suit to the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to overturn the presidential election in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Paxton's suit is based on President Trump's false claims that voting by mail is rife with fraud, and seeks to throw out the victories for President-elect Biden in those states where, because of the pandemic, many voters used mail-in ballots.

If Rep. Newhouse had any respect for democracy, the Constitution or the rule of law, or even any idea of consistent behavior, he should feel deeply ashamed of himself. He was last month elected by mail-in ballots, as was his colleague Cathy McMorris Rodgers, another amicus signatory. Paxton's lawsuit is, in the words of the brief filed in opposition, "legally indefensible and is an affront to principles of constitutional democracy [...] seditious abuse of legal process."

By the time this letter is printed, I am confident that the Supreme Court will have thrown out Paxton's lawsuit. However, the stain on all those who supported this craven attempt to curry favor with a bully lame duck president will last forever. History will judge Dan Newhouse, the other Republican members of Congress and state Attorney Generals who rallied behind this "seditious use of legal process." History will not be as kind to him as the mail-in voters in the last election.

Marian Exall
Winthrop/Bellingham

Positive response

Dear Editor:

Last week a mentally disturbed person forced his way into the offices of the Spokane County Democrats claiming he had a bomb. He then proceeded to pour gasoline around the office and set it on fire. Fortunately the two women in the office escaped safely.

Two days later, newly re-elected Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson hosted a Zoom meeting/fundraiser aiming to assist in repairing the damage. His goal was to raise \$1,000. Joining Bob on line was Lt. Gov. elect Denny Heck and 75 other folks including our newly elected Okanogan County Chair, Katie Haven.

The Spokane chair described the scene of near total destruction: melted phone banks and computers, tables and desks burned, election memorabilia dating back decades gone for good. After about 30 minutes of supportive messages from the attendees, the mood turned cheerful when we all reflected on the fact that no one was seriously injured and that they would be able to rebuild.

Totaling up the pledges received in the joyful half hour that followed, the AG was astounded to learn that just under \$20,000 had been raised. It was truly moving for all of us to turn that scene of destruction into the positive resolve to rally together and move forward. That is how we "build back better."

Michael Sarratt
Twisp

Recall Newhouse

Dear Editor:

Has Rep. Newhouse no decency? His decision to be a signer of the absurd Texas lawsuit asking the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the election of Biden to the presidency demands an answer to this question.

The most generous explanation for why Rep. Newhouse did so is because he is afraid of Trump. The other, more disturbing explanation is that he's drunk the lemonade and actually believes the hallucinations Trump is spinning.

So Rep. Newhouse is either a coward or he is extraordinarily gullible. Either way, he should not be representing us in Washington. Recall him.

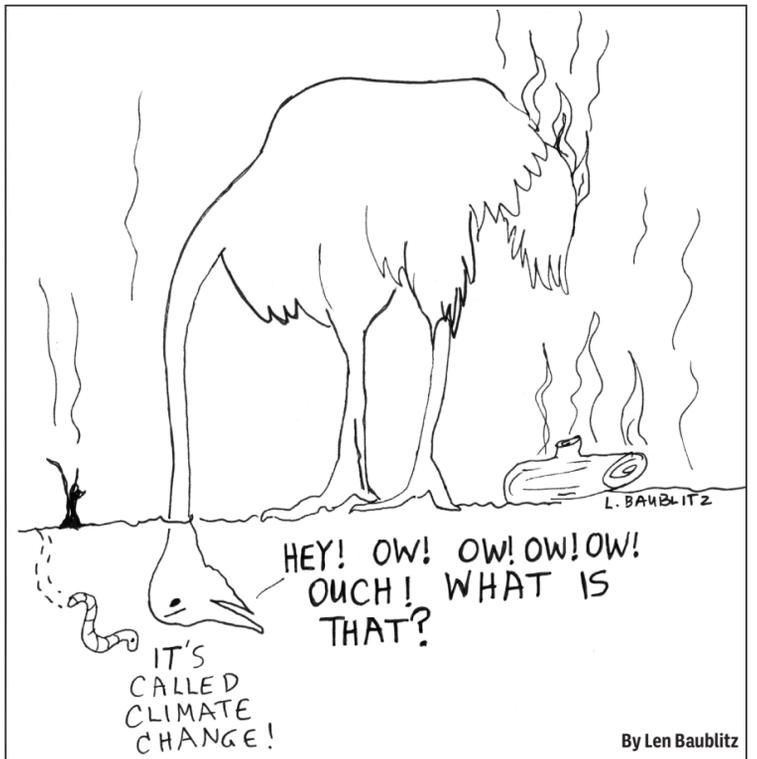
Betsy Gross
Mazama

So long, Donald

Dear Editor:

Dear Donald Trump — It's time I break up with you. This has been a dysfunctional relationship that I have learned a lot from. I have been trauma bonded and held hostage by your self-centered antics. But I am liberty and justice for all. This includes myself for I am the spirit of democracy and the mother of a country that needs me healthy and whole.

I know that healthy relationships can seem boring at first compared to the drama of trauma. But, in time I'm hoping my children will see that a functional relationship provides mutual cooperation, creative ingenuity and a steady path forward. Over time,



By Len Baublitz

I hope to mend my relationship with this country and heal the abuse I have taken. It will take time, but I am strong and I have the support of many to endure.

And so Donald, I tell you that now and forever I am breaking up with you. Do not bother contacting me again. I am not available to you and I wish to have nothing more to do with you. I need to move on with a greater vision to support the next generations of this country. May God bless you, heal you and enlighten your tiny withered soul. Never yours again, Miss Liberty And Justice For All.

Melissa Raye-Hovee
Twisp

Time to resign?

Dear Editor:

If your family member or loved one is employed by Okanogan County, I would be seriously concerned due to the attitude of County Commissioner Jim DeTro, chairman of the Board of Commissioners and Board of Health, related to the recent positive COVID tests of 11 inmates and four staff, along with 23 exposures at the county jail (not to mention 16 recently confirmed COVID-related deaths at North Valley Extended Care.)

On Dec. 7, 2:21 p.m., the County Planning Department supervisor expressed her employees' distress due to a recent unidentified positive test in the building. Other concerns included people inside the building walking around visiting while at least one employee has a compromised immune system. She came to the commissioners for guidance but received little support from the chairman.

When Commissioner Branch recommended abiding by COVID rules also in the commissioners' meeting room, DeTro's response was, "You're not gonna get me to turn into an Inslee, I'll tell you that." When Branch stated he was just doing a reality check, DeTro responded: "Well, one reality check is that a little over 1 million people died of COVID worldwide, but over 8 million people starve to death each year, and nobody says nothing." Branch's suggestion went unaddressed by the other commissioners, who changed the subject.

My message to Jim DeTro is this: You are obviously unaware of the nonprofit organizations fighting tragic hunger worldwide and in the United States. You were also not elected to solve problems of world hunger, but you did sign the oath to "diligently and impartially perform the duties of County Commissioner." If you can't leave your personal politics and uninformed opinion out of public health issues, you should resign.

For videos of commissioners' meetings, including mask wearing and social distancing (especially Nov. 2), see <http://okanogan-county.org> or <http://countywatch.org>.

Isabelle Spohn
Twisp

Shocking and inexcusable

Dear Editor:

Last week, we were dismayed to learn that Congressman Newhouse was one of the 126 Republican House members who signed an amicus brief supporting the Texas Attorney General's election lawsuit against the states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Georgia.

The four states responded to the lawsuit asserting that Texas sought to disenfranchise millions of voters for political gain, based on discredited allegations and conspiracy theories that had no factual basis. The Pennsylvania Attorney General argued that the Texas lawsuit was a "seditious abuse of the judicial process."

The states' counsel also asserted that the Texas Attorney General made these allegations during the elections in each state had been certified, and after U.S. Attorney General William Barr concluded that he had "not

seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election."

On Friday, the U.S. Supreme Court denied the Texas request to sue the four states over how they conducted their elections. "Texas has not demonstrated a judicially cognizable interest in the manner in which another State conducts its elections," the Court stated in its order.

The fact that Congressman Newhouse would be willing to sign on to an attempt to throw out millions of legally cast votes and shift the selection of electors to the states' legislatures is shocking, appalling and inexcusable. The last state legislature to choose presidential electors was Colorado in 1876! His defense to constituents? He was simply "ensuring the American people have faith in our elections and our Constitution."

But his words ring hollow as his actions actually undermine American's faith in our constitutional right to free and fair elections. It is imperative that voters in Washington's 4th Congressional District from Winthrop to Walla Walla — regardless of party affiliation — demand accountability for Congressman Newhouse's decision to sell out the integrity of our elections in exchange for political currency.

Please make your voice heard at this important moment for democracy in our nation. Congressman Newhouse's phone number is (202) 225-5816.

Tom Jones, Board Chair
Methow Valley Citizens Council Action Fund

Seditious act

Dear Editor:

What do you do about a fella like Dan Newhouse? find that I've misjudged him all these years: Whereas I'd always considered him to be a sort of replacement-level coward and lickspittle who could be relied on to change with the weather, he's apparently developed into a full-fledged fire-breathing goofball, committing himself irrevocably, and, yes, I said "irrevocably," to the Trumpist wing of the Republican Party, and, well, committing what all the real lawyers call "sedition."

That would be an "oops," Dan. See, you just told all your constituents and everybody else that, not only do you wholeheartedly support an elderly orange loser with more brain damage than a bucketful of sweetbreads, you consider the ultimate democratic principle to be "because I told you so." Even Dick Cheney's daughter, a colleague of yours who truly would make Attila look like a liberal, recognizes that, ultimately, her power comes from a combination of "the people" (sorry, that would be all of us) and a system of government that, at least on alternate Thursdays, operates more or less according to majority rule.

Did Q tell you to do it or is this just one more attempt to leverage a few bucks out of the poor folks who can't seem to help voting for people like you? After all, that's what Trump's doing. And, well, the way you've managed to greatly increase your net worth over the past couple years while theoretically working a day job that doesn't pay all that much would seem to indicate that you're wired the same way.

But I kind of think you won't get away with it, at least not for long. To be honest, I think it would be only appropriate for you to resign, given that you have made it abundantly clear that you don't believe in the system that elected you. But you won't, and that's fine, because it will be a lot of fun watching you try to wiggle out of this little act of sedition, and possibly even more fun exposing you as the wart on the body politic that you truly are.

Alan Fahnstock
Mazama

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Left: A vault toilet is one of the amenities at the new Silver Star Sno-Park on Highway 20 west of Mazama. Right: Craig Stahl, president of the Methow Valley Snowmobile Association, shows off a sign that determines if your rescue beeper is working.

MY TURN

New Sno-Park took years of collaborative effort

BY DON FITZPATRICK

On Dec. 1, a new Sno-Park opened on Highway 20 at the Silver Star Bridge. It will serve a multitude of users, including both motorized and non-motorized. Snowmobilers, back country skiers, cross country skiers, snowshoe hikers, mushers, fat tire bikes and heli-skiers will all be beneficiaries of this project.

But what is amazing is the number of people, organizations and the amount of effort required over five years to get this project complete.

The project started over six years ago when James DeSalvo, executive director of Methow Trails, recognized that the Early Winters parking was becoming swamped by the huge number of recreation vehicles parked there, especially when that was where the highway closed. It affected not only the users but also residents who gain access to their homes there. DeSalvo started working on the project to enlarge parking, make access better and include some sanitary facilities.

When the Methow Valley Trails Collaborative was formed, their first project approved was

the establishment of a Sno-Park farther up Highway 20 to relieve the stress at Early Winters and enlarge the ability to service more users. After significant research of potential sites, the Silver Star chain-up area was decided as the best area to use.

The project itself was relatively simple: improvement of the existing chain-up areas along both sides of Highway 20 at the Silver Star gate, with an enlarged turnaround area for snow removal equipment, slight widening and fill along one side, signage, and sanitary facilities. It also included adding sanitary facilities at the existing Early Winters Site.

Completing the project was not so simple.

Many groups met, including the U.S. Forest Service (Mike Liu and later Rosemary Siefried and Chris Furr); Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT, Don Becker and Bill Gould); Methow Valley Snowmobile Association (Don Fitzpatrick); Mountain Grooming Association (Adam Osin); North Cascades Mountain Guides (Josh Cole and Larry Goldie); North Cascade Heli (Paul Butler); Methow Trails (James DeSalvo);

Washington Parks and Recreation Commission (Jason Goldstein and Pam McConkey); Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (Joe Brown) and many more.

Others that became involved as the permit work was pursued were the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (Brandon Troyer); Andy Hover (Okanogan County commissioner); and NEPA inspectors for the project. There was also a cultural survey; a hydraulic analysis; the county engineer and county planner for the vault toilets; Federal Highway Administration involvement; survey work and preliminary engineering by Larry Zimmerlund; bids by Palm Construction; followed by final drawings and bid solicitation by WSDOT including highway traffic management for construction, signage design and, of course, an avenue for public comment.

The Federal Highway Administration provided a FLAP (Federal Lands Access Program) Match Agreement Grant. Users had to provide 13.5% in matching funds to receive the grant. It was issued June of 2015 and administered by the Forest Ser-

vice. A large contribution was made by Methow Trails. The Washington State Winter Recreation Commission (which gets its funds from snowmobile registrations) made a grant, and the Methow Valley Snowmobile Association contributed.

The Snowmobile Association also took the lead in putting up a solar-powered sign ("beeper sign"). It electronically determines if your avalanche beacon is working. Back country skiers, snowmobilers, heli-skiers and other users routinely carry and avalanche beacon in case of avalanche. Parts were donated by the North Cascades Mountain Guides, the Methow Valley Snowmobile Association, and Back Country Access. The sign was constructed by Methow Valley Industrial (Mark and Leone Edson) and painted by Donna Keyser of D*Signs.

Dozens of trips were made to the site by various people prior to the actual construction. We are so glad to have it open now. The success of this huge collaborative effort was due to the work of all these people and more that were not mentioned.

Don Fitzpatrick lives near Mazama.

LETTERS

From Page A4

What were they thinking?

Dear Editor:

Dan and Cathy, what were you thinking?

Over the many years that our U.S. Representatives to Congress Dan Newhouse and Cathy McMorris Rodgers have served our rural region here in eastern Washington, I have come to respect and appreciate their dedication and hard work. Both have often set aside partisan politics for the greater good of the people who live here. Her work to support our farmers, small business owners and veterans, and his work to advocate for adequate water supplies, support for the welfare of Native tribal members, and advocacy for sustainable energy resources are well-known.

Then, what I hope was completely out of character, they, along with 124 other House Representatives signed on to the recent Texas lawsuit aimed at overturning the election results of four of our United States. What if Washington was part of that lawsuit — would they have signed on to it then? Are the election workers in Wisconsin any less dedicated than our own county workers to ensure an accurate count of the votes? Do they disagree with the Constitution when it comes down to right of states to carry out their own elections?

Over the last four years, our country has become more divided than ever. Our current

President's insistence, at any cost, to retain power and ignore the 200-year tradition in our country for a peaceful transfer of power, challenges the very core of our hard-won democracy. My wife and I raised our children to be honest, caring, respectful and as athletes be a bit humble in victory and gracious in defeat. A U.S. President should do no less. Representatives McMorris Rodgers and Newhouse, please be unifiers, and now focus on what is good for our country. Together we can move forward to deal with the pandemic and the other great challenges ahead.

Andy Jones
 Tonasket

COVID needs our attention

Dear Editor:

These are trying times, for sure. Between the continued spike of COVID cases across our nation and the unwillingness of some to accept the outcome of the recent presidential election, so much uncertainty has taken a toll on our collective well-being. We're all exhausted, no matter our political ties.

Full attention to addressing COVID — controlling the spread of the virus, the logistics of distributing the newly approved vaccines — seems to be stuck in a tug-of-war about the validity of the outcome of the election. The current administration has actively sought to overturn the will of the voters and has engaged in numerous frivolous lawsuits — actively threatening those (both Republicans and Democrats) who are champions of the democratic process.

Last week, the situation reached a new level of craziness when the state of Texas sued to challenge the election results in Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin. Even more bizarre, 126 Republicans in Congress, several states, and (for good measure) the Trump administration joined the lawsuit. Not surprisingly, the lawsuit made its way to the Supreme Court and, rightly, the justices chose not to take the case.

One of the 126 Republican members of Congress who signed on for this end run was our own Dan Newhouse. In a recent piece in The Wenatchee World, Mr. Newhouse went to great lengths to defend his position. Newhouse said, "It was an entity outside of the Legislature that chose the electors." And, as a friend of ours, an attorney who lives in Wisconsin, opined, "Yes, you dufus: it was the voters." Our attorney friend continued, "...Texas has no standing to complain how other states run their elections. 'Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors...US Constitution, Article II, Section 1.'"

Elected officials who agreed with Texas's argument were attempting to overthrow the very basis of our system of government. Our representative, Mr. Newhouse, should go down in infamy for his blatant (and opportunistic) attempt to undermine our democracy. One cannot imagine Mr. Newhouse taking kindly to other states questioning the authenticity of the recent results of his re-election to Congress.

It's time to give all of our

attention to addressing the pandemic and its effects on our citizens' livelihood.

Patti and Nick Ahlfs
 Winthrop

Too much logging

Dear Editor:

I am writing to bring attention to the proposed Twisp River Restoration Project. As we grapple with the impacts of climate change on our community, it is more important than ever to maintain healthy forests. I recognize the importance of understory thinning and prescribed burning for forest health. Though it includes some provisions for these things, the Forest Service's proposal to log 22,000 acres west of Twisp and Winthrop is a gross overreach.

The proposal includes opening the Twisp River watershed to ATVs, helicopter logging on slopes up to 80 degrees, and building miles of roads in designated roadless areas. It directly contradicts the Forest Service's own management guidelines by suggesting the removal of trees up to 30 inches in diameter, a full 10 inches over the recommended maximum. The project would be a detriment to the community and the landscape, a boon only to the pockets of the logging industry. This is a timber sale, not a restoration project.

The Forest Service has rushed this project, slated to take three decades, with no public meetings. The public comment period ends on Dec. 18. To learn more about this project and for information on submitting a comment, visit <http://methowcitizens.org/twisp-river-restoration-project>.

Lazo Gitchos
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