

HELLO?

Careless capitalism meets coronavirus

Pandemics, it turns out, expose national weakness and strength.

Strength? How about those unprotected front line health care workers, some draped in garbage bags — here in the world's sole superpower — sacrificing their lives to save ours?

Weakness? This virus has unmasked the deeply embedded economic dysfunction and disparity that bedevils our society.

Yes, our president's bottomless incompetence has proved deadly. But it's the last four decades of slavish servitude to a rapacious, anti-government capitalism that turned a semi-manageable pandemic (see Germany) into a full-blown public health and economic catastrophe.

Suddenly, the grave consequences of a 40-year-old right-wing strategy to "starve the beast" of tax funds needed to properly govern is glaringly apparent.

The United States lost its way after the 1980s Reagan Revolution against the Democrats' inclusive, equitable vision of government. Ever since, the United

States has been weakened by unsound fiscal policies that hollowed out government's ability to carry out its core responsibilities, such as maintaining a robust and ready public health system and bio-medical research programs capable of protecting the nation.



Solveig Torvik

As part of the "reform" package, the government of We the People turned a blind eye to widespread abuse of the nation's work force, whose economic lives grow ever more perilous thanks to capitalism's 19th Century-like effort to disempower labor. "Essential" workers even now too often are expected to labor without employer-provided safeguards against the virus.

What's going to happen to the 22 million laid-off American workers who don't have the wage-replacement programs that worker-friendly nations rapidly — rapidly! — deploy to keep financial meltdowns from devastating their economies?

Millions of American workers lost their health insurance

along with their jobs. That didn't happen to laid-off workers in other developed nations because their workers aren't dependent on employers for health insurance.

Balancing the scales

Only government can balance the scales of justice to protect all citizens from the inequities inherent in a capitalist system. Yet Congress and the Supreme Court routinely put the weight of government's thumb on the side of the wealthy, disenfranchising workers and consumers.

Conservatives who espouse careless capitalism are perhaps blind, or indifferent, to how it threatens our national security.

Most of our essential medical supplies are made in China, some by American firms. It was China itself that showed the United States the folly of depriving ourselves of a domestic manufacturing base for essential goods.

China refused to let U.S. firms ship critical emergency medical equipment to the United States because China itself needed it. We don't depend on China to make our missiles. Why do we depend on China to make our masks? Hello?

Though Donald Trump showcases the danger of letting incompetent anti-government ideologues govern, he didn't set this table. Trump is the dystopian end product of a long-nurtured, profoundly unwise right-wing vision of nationhood.

The last time capitalism failed big time was 1929.

Lauded for bringing food aid to starving Europe after World War I, Republican President Herbert Hoover refused to assist destitute Americans when the Great Depression (not his doing) unfolded in his own country early on his watch.

It would undermine American self-reliance and threaten capitalism if the government helped its citizens, Hoover argued.

Hoover's refusal deepened the depression.

Roosevelt's response

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat, had a different solution for capitalism's failures. His New Deal meant lots of federal spending on public works, including a huge dam down the road from us.

FDR went further, restructuring government to impose regulations on the finance and banking systems and establish-

ing fair labor practices and the Social Security system. His goal wasn't to destroy the unregulated capitalist system that had wrecked the country. It was to make capitalism work for everyone.

That meant striking a more equitable balance of economic and political power between rich and poor. FDR seemed to grasp that the American experiment in democracy would fail unless that balance were struck.

Because FDR made good on the premise that government has a fundamental duty to fairly balance the interests of rich and poor, he's counted among presidents who've had the most impact on history.

The other is Democrat Lyndon Baines Johnson. We've been living in his Great Society since the mid-1960s.

Though widely despised for his Vietnam War policies, he improved the lives of millions of Americans by passing 1,000 progressive laws, including civil rights, voting rights, poverty, education, science and Medicare and Medicaid measures.

But LBJ's reforms were the last straw for anti-government conservatives. Their effort to emasculate government by low-

ering taxes on the rich began in earnest with the election of Republican Ronald "The government is the problem" Reagan in 1980, and it continues to this day.

Just a short 12 years ago, Henry M. Paulson Jr., the Bush administration treasury secretary, reportedly lost his lunch into a wastebasket while trying to prevent the collapse of the global banking system.

Taxpayers ultimately saved the banks. But nobody saved the millions of taxpaying homeowners bankrupted by the banking system's predatory mortgages. Still, Paulson recently wrote: "History has proved that capitalism is by far the best economic system in the world."

For whom? Capitalism, it seems fair to say, has yet to fully achieve its potential as a nation-strengthening instrument.

Paulson wrote his defense of capitalism shortly after Senate Republicans, in the CARES Act, gave a \$170 billion tax forgiveness gift to wealthy investors who had suffered personal mishaps in the capitalist marketplace.

Hospitals got \$100 billion.

Solveig Torvik lives near Winthrop.

LETTERS

From Page A4

Thanks from Room One

Dear Editor:

We leave our work each day filled with gratitude. Gratitude for the generosity of so many neighbors, community members, small businesses, and supporters near and far. Gratitude for our robust network of emergency response teams (thank you, Ann McCreary for your feature story last week on the Methow Valley Long Term Recovery Organization). We are in such a uniquely

strong position in our valley.

And especially, we are grateful for each of you who have called or stopped by and accepted support during this time. We know it is so hard to ask for help, and it can feel like there is often someone else experiencing greater need. And yet, we see the far-reaching effects on so many during such times of stress, when there are concerns about having enough food, making rent, or keeping utility bills manageable. We're so grateful to be able to have support to offer to our community right now, and we want to help.

Whether you need bridge funds before public benefits kick in, extra support because public benefits are not there for you, or you are just getting by but it isn't easy, give us a call. Let us get your groceries this week. Thanks to the generosity of many, we can. You are the best Methow Valley! We appreciate you, and we're here for you (Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.).

Room One staff  
Twisp

Fly swatting

Dear Editor:

Offering a short poem for our times:

The planet has taken a fly swatter out of her cupboard.

We are the flies.

There is no animosity when swatting a fly. Nothing is personal. Let this be not personal.

Love your neighbors.

Don't fly too close to humans ...

Tim Anderson  
Winthrop

RECYCLING RETURNS



Photos by Shelley Smith Jones and Marcy Stamper  
A record number of recyclers — 220 — descended on Methow Recycles last week. The previous record was 175, at the height of the summer, Executive Director Betsy Cushman said. People brought in a ton of cardboard and filled multiple bins with plastics, paper, metal and glass. For now, Methow Recycles will be open on Thursdays only, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**PARDNERS MINI MARKET**

**HERE WHEN YOU NEED US.**

**OPEN LATE!**

Call ahead for larger take home hot food orders!  
Egg rolls, crispos, pizza pockets, fish and chips, burritos, chicken/bacon/swiss, etc.

**Store Open 6am to midnight!**

**with 24 HOUR BRANDED FUEL**

**Chevron**

**Winthrop 996-2005**

**FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS**  
WHOLE PERSON HEALTH

**WE HAVE PHONE & VIDEO VISITS**  
WHAT CAN BE DONE FROM HOME?

- ☀ Medication Refills
- ☀ Medicare Wellness Exams
- ☀ Diabetes Follow Up

IN PERSON VISITS STILL HAPPENING AS NEEDED

**(800) 660-2129**

**It's a great time to get excited about your fair project!**

Anything you can produce you can register!

**Okanogan County Fair and Rodeo**  
www.okfair.org • fair@co.okanogan.wa.us  
509-422-1624  
175 Okanogan Trail Road, Okanogan

**Find us on Facebook**

The Methow Valley News:



# Opinion

## NO BAD DAYS

### Many happy returns

Man, I have been going about this tax thing all wrong. Reading the extensive, compelling and revelatory coverage of President Trump's tax returns in the New York Times last weekend, I realized that I've been a real Pollyanna about paying the taxes I owe and trying to stay out of trouble with the IRS.



Don Nelson

Turns out one of Trump's key strategies is to *always* be in trouble with the IRS. He's dragged out a potentially devastating audit for a decade, and as long as it's pending, he's not on the hook for a substantial and possibly ruinous repayment. I don't think the IRS would give most of us 10 minutes

to settle a dispute over a refund. We don't owe enough money to make trouble.

Trump's tax bill was reported as \$750 the year he ran for president, and \$750 his first year in office. One imagines the president looking under White House couch cushions for enough loose change to keep the feds at bay. For 10 of the previous 15 years, his tax bill was zero. He paid more taxes overseas, in places where he has wrangled business deals.

The New York Times' coverage laid bare a lot of Trump's business and tax machinations that, while not necessarily illegal, belie the image he has projected for decades: that of an enormously successful business titan.

Much of the outrage has been about how little he paid in taxes. For me (longtime business reporter and editor), the fascination is how much his business ventures lost.

Trump is all about losing money. Lots of money. Being a world-class loser (one of his favorite slurs) has sustained him like a billionaire superstar instead of the pauper he may well be. Losing is how Trump stays afloat, plunging into one huge, speculative, doomed deal after another. But The Stable Genius has racked up failure after grandiose failure despite his snake oil salesmanship.

How does he do it? When you start with some money (his father's, inherited and according to some accounts finagled away from the rest of the family), and can convince others to lend you even more money, you can afford to lose a lot. You just have to be really brazen about it. Trump has relentlessly failed his way to the top. There's probably a business adage in there somewhere.

As the New York Times story put it, he "racks up extensive losses that he aggressively employs to evade taxes." Trump writes off everything, large and small. He supports his extravagant lifestyle by claiming most business expenses as deductible.

"And he has previously bragged that his ability to get by without paying taxes 'makes me smart,' as he said in 2016," the Times story notes. "But the returns, by his own account, undercut his claims of financial acumen, showing that he is simply pouring more money into many businesses than he is taking out."

It's a perversely appealing strategy, but I just don't see how that would work for me. As I sometimes lamely joke to friends, the Methow Valley News is not a nonprofit—at least, not on purpose.

Trump once was quoted as saying something to effect that if you owe a bank \$1 million, you're in trouble—but if you owe a bank \$1 billion, they're in trouble. Especially if the debtor is The Donald himself, who notoriously stiffly pretty much everyone he owes money. He owes so much to lenders (\$421 million, by the Times account) that his hollow empire could crumple like a wet paper cup if they press him for repayment. The massive indebtedness, and likely obedience, to those lenders has led some people to speculate whether the people Trump owes money to are really running the country.

On a smaller scale, there's the \$70,000 a year deduction for hair styling while he starred in "The Apprentice." That's not going to work for me either. I can't remember the last time I saw \$70,000 in a year, and my hair has retreated so dramatically that even Trump's hair sculptor could not whip it into something frothy.

Trump mostly sails along on bluster and bluff. I'm not sure whether that says more about Trump or our tax code, which the president has made work to his advantage—even as he demonstrates a spectacular lack of business acumen.

"Ultimately, Mr. Trump has been more successful playing a business mogul than being one in real life," the Times concludes." That being the case, you have to give Trump credit for fully exploiting the role of a lifetime while casting us minor characters as suckers.

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

Send to: Methow Valley News, P.O. Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856, fax to (509) 997-3277, email editor@methowvalleynews.com or drop by 502 S. Glover St., Twisp

## Methow Valley News

PUBLISHED WEEKLY SINCE 1903

502 S. Glover Street • P.O. Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856  
(509) 997-7011 • FAX (509) 997-3277

editor@methowvalleynews.com • www.methowvalleynews.com

Don Nelson, PUBLISHER/EDITOR  
Marcy Stamper, REPORTER  
Malcolm Griffes, REPORTER  
Ashley Ahearn, REPORTER  
Ryan Edwards, DESIGN  
Dean Hussey, ONLINE MEDIA  
Sheila Ward, SALES ASSOCIATE  
Tera Evans, OFFICE MANAGER  
Paige Wolfe, DISTRIBUTION

CONTRIBUTORS:  
Joanna Bastian  
Shelley Smith Jones  
Ashley Lodato  
Sarah Schrock  
Ann McCreary  
Erik Brooks  
Len Baublitz  
Rosalie Hutson  
Solveig Torvik  
Dave Ward

Display advertising deadline for this newspaper is on the Thursday previous to publication at 5 p.m. Classified advertising deadline is Monday at noon. The deadline for news items is Monday at noon.

THE METHOW VALLEY NEWS (USPS Publication No. 343480) is published weekly by MVN Publishing, LLC, 502 S. Glover St., Twisp, WA 98856. Subscription rates: \$39 inside Okanogan County, \$50 outside of Okanogan County and \$65 outside of Washington state per year (in advance). Periodical class postage paid at Twisp, Washington, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE METHOW VALLEY NEWS, P.O. Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856.

THE METHOW VALLEY NEWS does not refund subscription payments except to the extent that the newspaper might fail to meet its obligation to publish each week of the individual subscription period, in which case the prorated cost of those issues missed would be refunded.

Member of the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association

Front page banner photo by Jim Pigott

## Box 97: Letters to the editor

### Finding your sunlight

Dear Editor:

Strange times are upon us like uncharted land, raw and natural. Like wandering out into the mountains on paths that are non-existent, seeing a corner ahead and not knowing what lies around the bend. No footprints to follow, only game tracks that switch back and forth in untraceable patterns, giving us subtle clues on somewhere we may be going. Much like the times that are upon us this year. There are no answers to be had on what our future will look like, not just with the pandemic but with politics, environment, economics, wildlife, access to justice, education, global health, humans rights, and so much more. Only whispers are hinting us to how our lives are changing. Some for the good and some for the bad. The universe is throwing us curveballs and we, as humanity, must adapt.

Peace must be found. I am confident we all can find this sense of peacefulness in different ways. It may be for a minute or may be for a lifetime. Even if the dark somber grey cloud lingers over our heads, we need to find the sun's rays of light and hope. We all need to take a moment to breathe in ... breathe ... slow our pace, wane our minds and find what truly lights up our lives and makes us internally smile. Take one moment and think ... who, what or where could you put yourself to release stress, anxiety, worry or tension? It does not have to be grandiose just a minuscule thing. Then go and do it.

Mine is simply Mazama, where you can hear the river flow unbothered around the rocks, the Ponderosa pines swishing willingly in the wind and the tall sunburnt grass swaying without tension in the cascade breeze.

Go find your ray sunlight, help the world relieve tension. We all will benefit.

Caryn Darmer  
Mazama

### Re-elect Branch

Dear Editor:

In the upcoming local elections, let's not risk losing Chris Branch as county commissioner for District 1. Having taken notes at commissioners' meetings since 2014, I can confirm the complexity of a commissioner's job. It includes: land use; economic planning; writing and repealing laws; coordinating over 20 departments governing such activities as public works, the court system, emergency management; responsibility for an approximately \$70 million budget—and more.



By Len Baublitz

Once a heavy duty mechanic and logger, Branch later became a planner by profession and education, working for 27 years with towns and cities in Okanogan County in community development. His past affiliations have been as president of Community Action Council and the Economic Development Board. At the multi-county level, he serves Washington State Association of Counties on its board and legislative steering committee, focusing on health care, the elderly and work force development.

Branch's extensive experience with the diverse land and people of our large county, together with four years of learning the intricacies of this job, makes him a leader we can trust during challenging times ahead. Be aware that his challenger for the office does not have close to this type of experience or perspective.

In addition, Branch identified the failings of the county's microphone and PA system as citizen complaints mounted. After County Watch note taker Katie Haven (now a candidate for commissioner in District 2) introduced YouTube videos into county proceedings and identified resources for the county to do their own, Branch convinced the commission to invest. This big step in open government allows the public to view meetings at any time and reduces staff workload.

Branch owes allegiance to no political party, only the United States and Washington State Constitutions and the commissioners' oath of office. He clarified this publicly on June 1 during an open commissioners' meeting that followed a distressing Facebook post by Commissioner Jim DeTro. Taking leadership by opening a productive discussion among commissioners, he addressed each commissioner's responsibility to represent all the people of Okanogan County rather than solely a personal perspective or that of a political party.

Vote experience and integrity. Vote Branch.  
Isabelle Spohn  
Twisp

### We need water plans

Dear Editor:

This summer I have heard about more and more people in the valley whose wells have run dry. My 87-year-old neighbor is among them. See also My Turn—Know your Methow Water rights (Sept. 23) for more examples. At the same time, new houses are being built at a fierce pace. Many established contractors are backed up for a year or more with new house orders.

Many of the new houses are going up on existing lots. But at the same time, the county is allowing new subdivisions dependent on a limited supply of water designated for single houses, with only token regard to state laws and regulations prohibiting this.

The county still doesn't have any real plan in place to deal with the water shortage we already have and which is likely to worsen in the future. When it does, will we tear down the new houses that should never have been built because there was no legal source of water? Of course not. But those owners may have to find other sources than their illegal wells.

I have looked at the positions taken by Katie Haven (a rancher herself) and Andy Hover. Katie lists planning for future water needs as her number one issue. This is crucial to the future of all of us. Andy features support from the Farm Bureau as his top attribute on his Facebook page. Ironic, since any farmers with interruptible junior water rights have been cut off in most recent years. Andy's lack of good planning will only make it worse.

If you are concerned with the future of the valley and think we need real planning for water needs, increasing fire risks, and other important issues, vote for Katie.

Randy Brook  
Twisp

## HELLO?

### Baked

We have passed the point of no return in altering the climate, achieving an unprecedented milestone in human history on Earth.

We've succeeded—as long predicted—in sending enough greenhouse emissions aloft that ever more-extreme wildfires, floods, hurricanes, droughts and rising seas are “now irretrievably baked in,” a group of climate scientists told the New York Times in what has to be the most underplayed news story in millennia.

The scientists acknowledged defeat. “Decades of growing crisis are already locked into the global ecosystem and cannot be reversed,” they confirmed. What we're seeing today by way of bad weather behavior will at least double in intensity over time, they warned. “Gone is the climate of yesteryear, and there's no going back”—even if serious efforts to curb fossil fuels began tomorrow, they added.

Yet this isn't “game over,” they cautioned. We still can decide how much hotter, and disheveled, a planet we wish to inhabit. The focus, though, will no longer be on preventing climate change but on slowing its pace.

In a summer that saw Seattle among West Coast cities with the world's worst air pollution from forest fires; the highest temperature ever recorded on Earth—130 degrees Fahrenheit in Death Valley, California; massive Antarctic ice shelves teetering dangerously on their moorings, and a record 32,727 fire-fighting personnel battling U.S. blazes—the scientists offered hints for coping.

For example: Don't think of California's 2020 August as the hottest in this century. “Think of it as one of the coolest months of August in the next century.”

### The economic impact

There was other landmark climate news this month.

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) isn't the first place we usually look for news we can use. However, the CFTC just concluded the first in-depth government study ever undertaken to ascertain the effect of climate change on Wall Street and our economy.

“A world wracked by frequent and devastating shocks from climate change cannot sustain the fundamental conditions supporting our financial system,” the commission starkly concluded. Duh.

The commission's tardy effort comes 37 years after scientists first informed Congress that climate change was well under way and 170 years after researchers first grasped that greenhouse gases trap heat on Earth.

Even if you only eat, not raise or sell food; own a house or mortgage, pay insurance premiums, borrow money, receive a pension, live off a retirement fund or invest in the stock market, the CFTC's warning should ring alarm bells. The astounding costs of the unruly weather we have brought upon ourselves cannot be sustained by our financial system.

Our president calls climate change a “hoax.” He's eviscerated some 100 environmental regulations, including those that curb greenhouse gas emissions. He wants to free us from the nettlesome demands of the Paris Agreement, which wanly strives to save us from catastrophe even at this manifestly late hour.

Yet it was a Republican-dominated CFTC that warned of the dire impacts on the nation's financial system of this supposed “hoax.” The Climate Change Denier-in-Chief appointed all five members of this commission, including two Democrats. All five unanimously approved the report.

It was written with input from analysts from investment firms such as Morgan Stanley, oil companies such as BPO and Conoco Phillips, the behemoth agricultural trader Cargill and representatives from environmental groups and the academe.

The financial losses caused by climate change will hit various regions and different markets at varying times, the report says. Home insurers may withdraw from California and elsewhere in the wake of wildfires, and home values may plummet along coastlines and in floodplains. Banks in the Midwest may limit farm loans due to extended droughts that reduce crop yields. And so on.



Solveig Torvik

### Assessing risk

“Climate change is one of the top three risks to our fund,” says Divya Mankikar, an author of the report and investment manager for the two-million member California Public Employees Retirement System, the country's biggest public pension fund.

Yet the Trump administration's Labor Department has proposed a rule that forbids retirement investment managers such as Mankikar from considering environmental consequences when giving investment advice to clients.

“If there's any class of investors that should be thinking about the long run, its retirement funds and pension funds,” says report author Nathaniel Keohane, an economist with the Environmental Defense Fund.

Home prices already are falling and mortgage defaults rising in regions decimated by wildfires and floods, the report states.

“If in your town, your house is devalued, that makes it harder for your local government to raise money,” noted report author Jesse Keenan, a professor of real estate at Tulane University. Repeated, this scenario can lead to a contagion of instability across financial markets, he added.

The financial system breaks down when risks remain invisible and thus are not accurately reflected in stock prices, as happened in the 2008 financial crash triggered by overvalued mortgage-backed securities, analysts warn. Today companies face climate change liabilities that aren't disclosed to their investors.

Unhelpfully, the U.S. Geological Survey recently put limits on scientific investigations that might reveal impacts of climate change beyond 2040.

Meanwhile the European banking system is preparing to tackle climate change with such tools as climate change stress tests on banks. European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde says she's aware this is unprecedented. “I'm also aware of the danger of doing nothing.”

As, at last, is the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. So now what, people? Hello?

Solveig Torvik first reported on climate change 40 years ago. She lives near Winthrop.

# Opinion

## NO BAD DAYS

### What's your story?

Is it too soon to ask you to vote again?

No, not that election. It's over, and Biden won.

Moving on then, to another voting opportunity, one we are offering once again: to help us select the Methow Valley's top local news stories of the year.



Don Nelson

No candidates to assess, no issues to contemplate, no conflicting information to sort out, no debates to endure, no Russians or QAnon lunatics trying to corrupt your vote. But we do need your opinion, and we've made it easy for you to opine.

For the past several years, we've offered an end-of-the-year ballot listing a couple of dozen of the year's most noteworthy local stories, and solicited readers' input to rank

them by their impact. We winnowed the choices down from a long list of possibilities, and we may have omitted something you believe was important. If so, you can comment when you vote.

The first ballot for the top stories of 2020 appears in this week's issue, on page A5. Over there to your right. We will continue to print the ballot for the next several weeks, so you can vote at your leisure after proper consideration of the choices.

Clearly it's arrogant and disingenuous to think you can predict, promise or dictate the outcome of balloting (see 2020, the year itself). That said, of all the local stories that appear on this year's Methow Valley News ballot, one stands out not only as the likely top story of the year, but also as one of the biggest stories in this nation's history.

While the coronavirus pandemic is a global phenomenon, its affects and long-term implications are distinctly local as well. Coverage of the state and local impacts dominated our headlines throughout the year.

We included all things coronavirus-related under one heading: "COVID pandemic, all local affects." That includes public health issues. The economy, including all sectors. Schools. Government services. Community events. The political divide over counter-measures.

It's a wide range of story topics that could arguably deserve their own separate ballot spots. But that would crowd out some of the other important happenings of the past year, all of which have relevance for life in the valley.

There are several ways to vote (see the ballot for directions) and we hope you will take a few minutes to add your thoughts. The more participation we have, the more broadly representative the results will be as to what the valley's residents and friends think is important to this community.

We will publish the ballot for the next several weeks (please limit yourself to one — ballot stuffing is discouraged).

We promise a rigorously honest vote-counting process. No sirree, we are not going to let a dead South American dictator steal or alter your vote.

Results will be included in the Dec. 30, 2020, "Year in Review" issue of the Methow Valley News. In that issue, we will also be looking at noteworthy business and sports stories, and will include the annual list of births, deaths and letter-to-the-editor writers.

Of course, this being 2020, there is still plenty of time for other things to happen. New events may still supercede the ones we have already are aware of. Not much to be done about that except acknowledge them as they occur.

Thanks in advance for your help. It's always interesting to see how readers prioritize the issues and events that we all followed during the year.

### Winter reading

This year has been disruptive in a lot of ways, for everyone who lives, works or plays in the valley. The constant uncertainty, and the impact of a substantial loss of advertising revenue, have affected how the Methow Valley News operated most of the year. The papers are smaller, and our resources are stretched.

Still, we have continued to find a way to produce our annual special publications, if a bit later than usual. Such is the case with the Methow Valley Winter 2020-21 magazine, which is included in this week's paper — a few weeks later than it would appear in most years.

Because we wanted to make sure the magazine was available for Thanksgiving week and the usual influx of visitors, we have already started distributing Methow Valley Winter around the valley rather than waiting for it to appear in the newspaper, and will continue distribution this week. If you would like copies for your establishment and we haven't gotten to you yet, let us know and we will respond as quickly as possible.

Have a safe and happy holiday, and remember to be thankful for all the things that are good about this valley, this life, this planet.

## Box 97: Letters to the editor

### Wrong, wrong, wrong

Dear Editor:

Chrystal Perrow's letter published Nov. 18 ("Dig deep") has it exactly wrong. She has been shocked by the mess and corruption of our country's voting system. While I'm sure it can be greatly improved (hours long lines anyone?), the only corruption exposed so far is that of the president and his silent enablers. Ms. Perrow must be listening to Sean Hannity and the Trump Campaign too much.

Let's look at the facts. Not one state's election board has complained of large-scale voter fraud. Not one, Republican or Democrat! Only the Trump Campaign and absurd surrogates they dig up to dubiously complain of a handful of misdirected votes. Joe Biden won Pennsylvania by 60,000 votes last time I looked, Michigan by 150,000, Georgia by 14,000, etc., etc. He in fact won the Electoral College by the same margin as Trump four years ago, which Trump called a "landslide." Moreover, Trump lost by 3,000,000 popular votes in the previous election, and a pet Republican Congressional committee set up to investigate voter fraud couldn't find any. Biden has won by about 5,500,000 votes — certainly a decisive victory.

And yet. Yet the Republican falsehood machine continues to pretend that the outcome is in doubt. It's not. What's in doubt is the survival of our democracy. Democracy works when the loser recognizes the people's will and allows a smooth transition. If every possible trick is employed to throw doubt on the election and disenfranchise voters who didn't vote their way, then we risk losing our democracy to Orange-hair inspired chaos.

We all have heard of third world countries thrown into upheaval because of endlessly disputed elections and voter fraud. There wasn't fraud in this one, just a manufactured dispute. They got MAGA wrong. The Trump campaign is trying to make the U.S. a third world pretend democracy. MATW: Make America Third World. Not even Republicans will enjoy the result.

Peter Bauer  
Winthrop

### Where's the evidence?

Dear Editor:

In her letter to the Methow Valley News last week, Chrystal Perrow expressed concern that the voting process nationwide is filled with corruption. I worked in our county's elections office during this last elec-



By Len Baublitz

tion and I can assure her that the process in Okanogan County is squeaky clean. If every state adopted the exact same election procedures as Washington state, I'd be very happy and I hope Perrow would be, too.

As far as her assumption that the process is filled with corruption, I think we should look at the numerous lawsuits filed by President Trump and his allies. Statements alleging fraud and corruption made at press conferences or in tweets are easy to make, and Trump has made plenty of them, but there's no penalty for falsehoods. The President has filed 22 lawsuits trying to overturn the results in states where he lost and he's won none of them. He's lost or withdrawn 18 cases, with four cases still pending. If corruption is so widespread, I wonder why the president can't make a better showing in court. Perhaps it's because he needs evidence — not just assertions — to win a lawsuit, and in court, lawyers and witnesses are required to tell the truth. They put themselves in legal jeopardy if they lie.

Finally, Perrow says it's too early to be calling winners. We need to wait until each state validates its results. This is a brand new standard and I wonder how far it applies. I, along with most of the voters in the valley, have accepted the fact that Dan Newhouse won reelection. Is Perrow still wondering who will be representing her in Congress next year?

Emily Sisson  
Winthrop

### Biden won, deal with it

Dear Editor:

This should have been so simple and obvious. Joe Biden won the popular vote by over 6 million votes. With 306 Electoral College votes to Trump's 232, Biden won and Trump lost the election.

Every other losing candidate would have long ago made a dignified statement conceding defeat. Instead, Trump has just lied about the outcome. Even worse, virtually the entire Republican Party leadership has followed him down that delusional rabbit hole. They're not thinking at all about the good of the country.

More than 20 Republican lawsuits have not produced a shred of credible evidence to support Trump's claim of widespread election fraud. Indeed, the top election security official in the federal government, a Trump appointee named Chris Krebs, called the 2020 election "the most secure in American history." Krebs was (until a few days ago) director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, a part of Homeland Security.

The agency's official report also said: "There is no evidence that any voting system deleted 'or lost votes, changed votes, or was in any way compromised.'" When the report came out, Trump quickly fired Chris Krebs. If there is one thing Trump hates, it's anyone who contradicts his lies with actual, concrete facts.

Speaking of delusions, with the U.S. COVID-19 rate skyrocketing, Vice President Pence just said that the country was in fine shape: "America has never been more prepared to combat this virus than we are today." Ironically, that's probably accurate. The federal government was unprepared when the pandemic started and it is still unprepared. By blocking the usual transition preparations, Trump has made it crystal clear that he doesn't want Joe Biden to be able to deal with the virus, either.

Let's say it one more time: Biden won and Trump lost, in a fair election. End of story. Time to move ahead.

Randy Brook  
Twisp

## HELLO?

### Give thanks for Donald Trump

Well, then, people. We've given ourselves quite a little scare these last four years, haven't we?

This week we're in the business of being thankful. And this year — despite an horrific, tragically preventable COVID-19 toll — we have more to be thankful for than we, as citizens of the world's pre-eminent democracy, ever expected.

First, we owe heartfelt thanks to voters who wisely removed a disastrous president from office.

I propose we also give silent thanks for Donald John Trump. A pathetic creature who willfully inflicted immense harm on thousands of people, on our government and economy, he's admittedly a perverse choice for gratitude. Nonetheless, he's inadvertently done the Republic a singular service.

Trump deployed his malevolence, incompetence and greed to school us. He showed how easily an inattentive, careless, decaying democracy can be consumed by the vultures that always hover over the body politic, primed to pounce whenever there's a rising stench of rot.

He's clarified how vulnerable to hijacking by bad actors the machinery of our government really is and how much work remains undone to assure that the U.S. Constitution isn't shrugged off as merely "a gentlemen's agreement."

Political vultures require helpers to set the table for their feasts. Aside from the usual opportunists who enter politics to advance personal, not public, interests — looking at you, Mitch McConnell — in this country we also are accursed with millions of in absentia enablers of misuse.

This year 257 million citizens of the United States were age-entitled to vote, though only 239.2 million of them were legally permitted to do so, according to the U.S. Elections Project. Of those, roughly 160 million voted. This 67% voter turnout was the best we've done in 120 years.

Often 100 million eligible American voters are no-shows on election day. We're ranked among the top of democracies whose

citizens care least about preserving their right to self-governance. How are we, here in this self-congratulatory cradle of modern democracy, to explain such widespread dereliction of our most cherished civic duty?



Solveig Torvik

### Grass-roots effort

The backstory of this election's increased voter turnout (7% higher than 2016) is grass-roots volunteers determined to register, and turn out, voters.

Volunteers are the backbone of our political system. It's not hyperbole to say that in 2020, they saved our democracy. So raise your glass to them this Thanksgiving Day. No one deserves our gratitude more than they.

The most impressive success among voter registration/turnout efforts was the result in Georgia: a red state elected a blue president, Joe Biden.

This happened because more than one million voters have been registered since 2016 by volunteers led by the former Democratic leader of Georgia's House of Representatives, Stacey Abrams. She began this voter-expansion effort in 2013, when the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the 1965 Voting Rights Act and Georgia began suppressing Black voter turnout by eliminating polling places and purging voter rolls.

Abrams is a Black woman who in 2018 lost her bid for governor under highly irregular circumstances. The white man who beat her, Republican Brian P. Kemp, was not only running for governor but refused to resign as Georgia's Secretary of State. This meant Kemp officially oversaw the conduct of his own campaign against Abrams — a brazen conflict of interest.

Many Republicans, particularly in Southern states, seem to fear that voting by non-whites poses a danger to Republican rule. Kemp has the earmarks of being among them. Abrams plausibly accused him of massive non-white voter suppression.

As a nation, we have every reason to be thankful that Stacey Abrams understands that revenge is a dish not only best served cold, but

well-considered and tastefully executed.

It used to be slave-holding Southern Democrats who feared Black voters showing up at the ballot-box while Republicans tried to enfranchise Blacks.

As Civil War historian Heather Cox Richardson reminds us, in 1858 a South Carolina slave-holder, Democratic Sen. James Henry Hammond, candidly warned Northerners — in words that resonate today — against allowing Blacks access to the fearsome power of the ballot-box.

"If they [naïve Northerners] knew the tremendous secret, that the ballot-box is stronger than 'an army with banners' and could combine, where would you be? ... Your society would be reconstructed, your government overthrown, your property divided ... by the quiet process of the ballot-box."

### Made for the moment

Finally, we must give thanks that we happened to have a Joe Biden at hand to right this dangerously listing ship of state. Improbably enough, he's a man made for this moment.

He brings decades of suddenly invaluable governing experience, personal decency and a temperament that leans to bi-partisanship. He's been around long enough for all of us — including him — to recognize his past mistakes, and he's mature enough to own them.

But what about the astonishing fact that more people voted for the manifestly unfit Trump than last time?

On Nov. 3, many Americans discovered that they live in a different country, and among different people, than they thought they did. It seems that we as a nation may not be quite who we've claimed to be, who we've told ourselves we are.

Perhaps we're not that "exceptional" after all? Hello?

This disturbing dichotomy between national myth and ground-truth promises to enliven our politics for some time.

Meanwhile, let's be thankful this Thanksgiving Day that we've been given another chance to get this democracy thing right. We've surely seen what wants fixing.

*Solveig Torvik lives near Winthrop.*

## Methow Valley News

PUBLISHED WEEKLY SINCE 1903

502 S. Glover Street • P.O. Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856  
(509) 997-7011 • FAX (509) 997-3277

editor@methowvalleynews.com • www.methowvalleynews.com

Don Nelson, PUBLISHER/EDITOR  
Marcy Stampler, REPORTER  
Malcolm Griffes, REPORTER  
Ashley Ahearn, REPORTER  
Ryan Edwards, DESIGN  
Dean Hussey, ONLINE MEDIA  
Sheila Ward, SALES ASSOCIATE  
Tera Evans, OFFICE MANAGER  
Paige Wolfe, DISTRIBUTION

CONTRIBUTORS:  
Joanna Bastian  
Shelley Smith Jones  
Ashley Lodato  
Sarah Schrock  
Ann McCreary  
Erik Brooks  
Len Baublitz  
Rosalie Hutson  
Solveig Torvik  
Dave Ward

Display advertising deadline for this newspaper is on the Thursday previous to publication at 5 p.m. Classified advertising deadline is Monday at noon. The deadline for news items is Monday at noon.

THE METHOW VALLEY NEWS (USPS Publication No. 343480) is published weekly by MVN Publishing, LLC, 502 S. Glover St., Twisp, WA 98856. Subscription rates: \$39 inside Okanogan County, \$50 outside of Okanogan County and \$65 outside of Washington state per year (in advance). Periodical class postage paid at Twisp, Washington, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE METHOW VALLEY NEWS, P.O. Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856.

THE METHOW VALLEY NEWS does not refund subscription payments except to the extent that the newspaper might fail to meet its obligation to publish each week of the individual subscription period, in which case the prorated cost of those issues missed would be refunded.

Member of the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association

Front page banner photo by Marcy Stampler: upper Twisp River.