

OPINION

WESTERN FRONT

Check the internet for the scoop on Hillary Clinton

This is addressed to all the incensed voters who feel we are going to hell immediately with President Trump as our leader. First of all, even if you don't respect the individual, respect the office of the presidency. Do everything you can to influence our government to move in the right directions. You would be amazed by how many elected officials want to hear a rational idea, thought out and presented to them well.

The idea of only complaining about things that have not yet happened, and not presenting any ideas to be considered is totally counterproductive and a waste of time for everyone involved. Let your congressmen and senators know what you would like to see happen. It needs to at least be feasible under the constitution of our country and our state to have any merit.

Do you know the contact information for your elected officials? It's readily available in phone books (for the non-techies), and on the internet. They do listen to their constituents and want to know rational thoughts about the country and state.

I too was hesitant to vote for President Trump, but the sleaze that seemed to follow the other major candidate was more than I could support. I intend to stay involved in the happenings of our country. If you don't like things now, go to work, get involved, and try to get your views represented through the next election.

Newspaper headlines from all our history have pronounced that America would cease to function because of a certain president being elected. Guess what, we're still here boogieing along pretty well, and we will survive this presidency just like we have all 44 of the previous ones. Some were better than others but we functioned OK through all of them. Faith, people, have faith and be involved.

Also for faithful Hillary supporters and haters, I went to the internet and to Google and Wikipedia and typed in "Clinton Foundation Donations since Election." Try it: it's very easy. I learned a lot in a little while of reading. After satisfying myself in that area I typed in "Clinton Foundation Donations Favors Bought." Again, very interesting. Especially the one about the high-speed energy trader

donating to the foundation heavily and then being appointed to the government's "nuclear advisory committee" by the state department even though he had no qualifications other than his donation to the foundation. When it was questioned as to why he was appointed, he resigned two days later. Or maybe the one where with large donations to the foundation by executives of a nuclear mining enterprise, and by the Russian Government, the sale of about twenty percent control of all the nuclear fusion material in the north American continent was approved, even when the same deal was disallowed to the Chinese. (They didn't donate). Do your own research: it's easy and readily available. I know because I am no computer guru.

RON HARMS
Dodge City

The downfall of Sweden

A long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away there was a beautiful land filled with beautiful people. These people shone like the sun and were at peace with mankind. From the midst of this magnificent people a sinister group who called themselves "progressives" rose to power.

With lies that were twisted to sound like the truth, these progressives opened the gates to the peaceful kingdom so that predators could roam freely among the lambs.

Women and children could no longer walk hand-in-hand down once-safe streets, and darkness fell over a place that had been full of the sun. This once-peaceful land, which was betrayed by the progressives, is called Sweden, and thanks to them, it is now the rape capital of Europe.

GREGORY H. BONTRAGER
Hutchinson

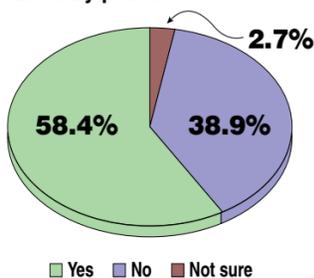
Food for thought

When we have a society that measures its power and importance by the size of its military and the size of its bank accounts rather than the size of its heart; when we have a society that is ruled by fear, hate, indifference and self-interests rather than one that is ruled by trust, love, compassion and concern for the needs of all; then we have a society that is doomed, and destined to travel down the road to self-destruction.

ROBERT RITTER
Hutchinson

NEWS POLL

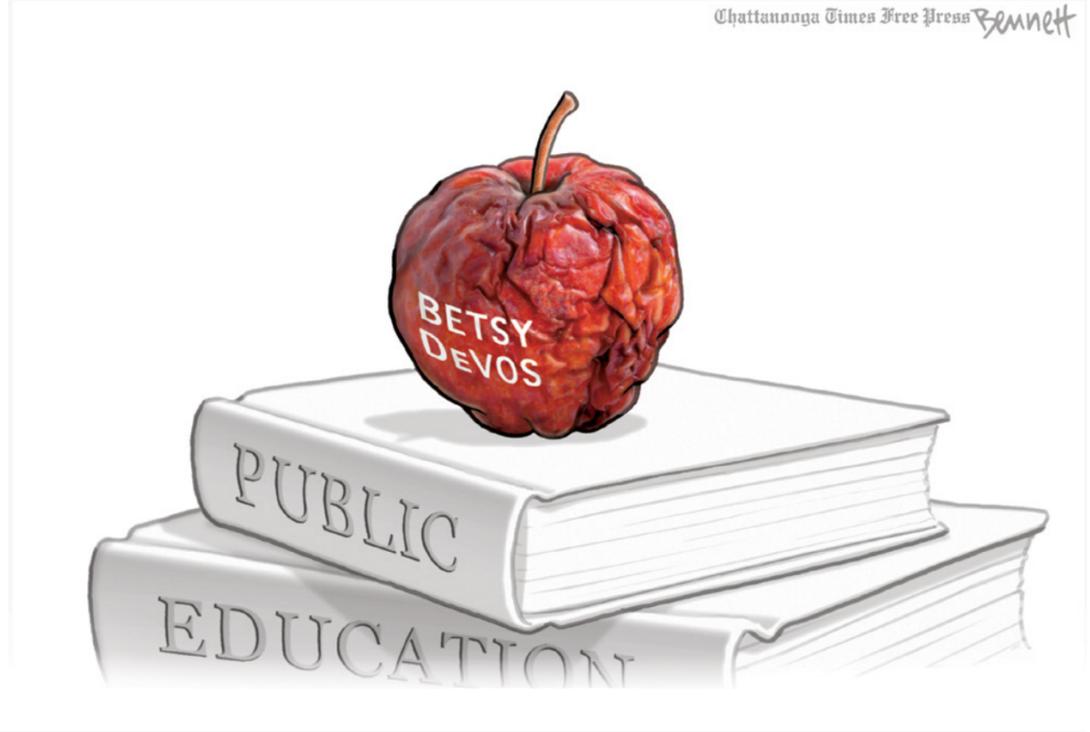
Do you support recent executive orders threatening to withhold federal funding from communities with immigrant sanctuary policies?



This is an unscientific poll conducted on hutchnews.com

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COMMUNITY COLUMNIST

Action and reaction

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"Why," I have asked myself repeatedly, "does the president feel compelled to pounce on every perceived slight or challenge to his decisions? Does he realize the potential for harm in hastily tweeted or poorly thought-through directives?"

Observers of human nature have suggested that the traits that we find most irksome in others are often a reflection of our own faults and character flaws. As one who is given to frequently voicing misgivings concerning our president, that concept is of some concern, as it would seem I share that compulsion to communicate my own reactions to current events. The difference is that the reach or significance of remarks from a community columnist pales in comparison to the influence of pronouncements from the Oval Office.

For those unfamiliar with the guiding principles of then-entrepreneur and showman Donald Trump's way of thinking, a passage from his successful 1987 book "The Art of the Deal" offers some insight.

"People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. That's why a little hyperbole never hurts. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular."

For the duration of the Republican primaries, his over-the-top comments were seen by supporters as forthright, honest and refreshingly

unique compared to the customary fare offered by politicians. Detractors were more inclined to dismiss them as attempts to steal the spotlight and dominate headlines. To be sure, the antics were somewhat entertaining, even amusing, but largely dismissed as publicity-seeking ploys.

After securing the nomination, one assumed the hijinks would be toned down. Then it became apparent that the tone was becoming even more strident, more combative and, at times, less rational. Following the unexpected outcome in November, again it seemed likely that the weighty responsibilities of the office and the reality of the limitations imposed on even America's chief executive would bring about a sense of order and self-restraint.

Watching financiers and corporate leaders engaging with the president in a series of exclusive meetings, and afterward happily sharing their delight at the prospect of tax cuts and freedom from the restraint of regulations, the contrast with the uncertainty and angst being generated across much of the country is jarring.

Far-reaching executive orders mount up daily. While the

controversial call for changes to immigration policies dominates news coverage, others affecting a broader swath of the population have gone largely unnoticed. Seeking to ease requirements to minimize the dumping of mining waste into waterways; to dispense with obligations for financial advisers to consider what is in the "best interest" of clients; and to block monitoring the purchase of firearms by those with mental deficiencies, will require further legislative action. The whirlwind of proposals creates a sense of uncertainty among many and begs the question as to how they will help the plight of the "neglected middle class."

Recollections of the anxiety the country experienced caused by events that unfolded during the Nixon and Clinton presidencies come to mind. Conflicts between the current administration and Congress, the press, the judiciary and numerous groups representing a variety of causes grow ever more contentious and divisive.

Barring a change of heart or an intervention by those with cooler heads, there is apparently little hope that President Trump will abandon this frenetic pace of imprudent ploys and provocative comments. Likewise, there is little chance that I will be able to resist venturing an opinion on the same.

Kathie Moore, rural Hutchinson, is a freelance artist retired from the U.S. Postal Service.

COLUMNIST

Be careful what you wish for

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At the National Prayer Breakfast last week, President Trump promised to "totally destroy" the so-called "Johnson Amendment," a law that prohibits churches from endorsing or opposing political candidates at the risk of losing their tax-exempt status.

Politifact.com gives the background on how the amendment became law: "The restriction was championed by (Lyndon Johnson) in 1954 when Johnson was a U.S. senator running for re-election. A conservative nonprofit group that wanted to limit the treaty-making ability of the president produced material that called for electing his primary opponent, millionaire rancher-oilman Dudley Dougherty, and defeating Johnson. There was no church involved.

"Johnson, then Democratic minority leader, responded by introducing an amendment to Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code dealing with tax-exempt charitable organizations, including groups organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literacy and educational purposes, or to prevent cruelty to children or animals. It said, in effect, that if you want to be absolved from paying taxes, you couldn't be involved in partisan politics."

Conservatives have argued that the Johnson Amendment limits the free speech of pastors and ignores the history of the nation. They also claim the law is applied unevenly, especially when it comes to African-American churches, which have a long history of inviting mostly Democratic political candidates to speak in their churches and on occasion endorsing them without having their tax-exempt status challenged by the IRS.

Opponents of the amendment have a point, but there is a larger one. From the founding of the nation, through the Civil War when fiery pro- and anti-slavery sermons were heard from pulpits, to Prohibition, to contemporary examples, the

ordained have played active roles in the nation's political and social life. Pastors should be as free as anyone to speak their minds on political issues, but should they do so from the pulpit? By focusing more on the temporal than the eternal there is the risk of diluting the power in their primary message.

The subtle temptation for evangelicals to engage in partisan politics dilutes their primary message. If I go to a political rally, I expect to hear political speeches. When I go to church, I am expecting soul food.

There are legitimate concerns that government is not sufficiently protecting people whose consciences forbid them from participating in activities they consider immoral. Recent examples include lawsuits against Christian bakers and photographers who have refused service to people whose lifestyles offend their beliefs. The Obama administration ordered The Little Sisters of the Poor to provide contraceptives to staff members as part of their health insurance in contravention of Catholic teaching.

The subtle temptation for evangelicals to engage in partisan politics

dilutes their primary message. If I go to a political rally, I expect to hear political speeches. When I go to church, I am expecting soul food.

Many political views are represented in my church. If the pastor began preaching on politics, he would find people, including me, headed for the exits. There is also the presumption that people are uninformed, needing a pastor to tell them what to think. This is as silly as the notion that conservatives listen to Rush Limbaugh in order to know what to believe.

Yes, Congress should repeal the law prohibiting preachers from talking about politics from the pulpit while passing a new law protecting the consciences of believers. The larger question is: Should preachers preach on politics, and to what end?

Muslims would have to be included. How comfortable would those conservatives now campaigning for repeal of the Johnson law be if some imams began preaching death to America and endorsing Muslim candidates for political office? Would the repeal lead to activist mosques supporting terrorist groups? It's already happened in the Holy Land Foundation case where the government alleged that money passed through the charity to support Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Whether the Johnson law is repealed or not, evangelicals have a more powerful message than partisan politics. Senate Chaplain Barry Black referenced that power by quoting from an old hymn at last Thursday's prayer breakfast: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." He said that includes government institutions.

Isn't that a better message for conservative Christians to preach than the sinking sand of partisan politics? *Cal Thomas is a columnist for the Tribune Content Agency.*