

THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL represents the view of The Joplin Globe's editorial board. Members of the editorial board are: Dale Brendel, publisher, publisher@joplinglobe.com; Andy Ostmeyer, editor, aostmeyer@joplinglobe.com; Emily Younker, managing editor, eyounker@joplinglobe.com; and Jerry Willis, page designer, jwillis@joplinglobe.com.

OUR VIEW

Prepare for severe weather

It's never too early to think about spring severe weather and how best to be prepared for it.

Case in point: the line of severe storms, several of which spawned tornadoes, that moved through Oklahoma and Kansas last weekend.

It was the evening of Feb. 26, near the end of a month in which this area of the country is more likely to get snow and ice than tornadoes. But tornadoes there were — nearly a dozen total that hit the suburbs of Chicago, the towns of Cheyenne and Norman in Oklahoma, the town of Liberal in Kansas and elsewhere across the Plains, according to the National Weather Service.

Injuries were reported in Cheyenne, Norman and Liberal, with one person killed. Dozens of homes and businesses were damaged from wind gusts that reach 90 mph in places in Oklahoma and 114 mph in places in Texas.

Spring doesn't officially start until March 20, but as last weekend's weather demonstrates, you can't be too prepared when it comes to spring-like severe weather. And we're not just talking about tornadoes, although those are certainly a significant threat. Residents here can also expect flooding, severe lightning, hail and nontornadic strong winds, all of which can damage property and injure or even kill people.

"Flooding — particularly flash flooding — is the deadliest severe weather hazard in Missouri and can happen year-round," said Jim Remillard, State Emergency Management Agency director, in a statement earlier this week. "Tornadoes and severe storms also pose deadly threats each year, which is why it's so important to prepare. Its best to learn about the risks and have an emergency plan in place before severe weather strikes."

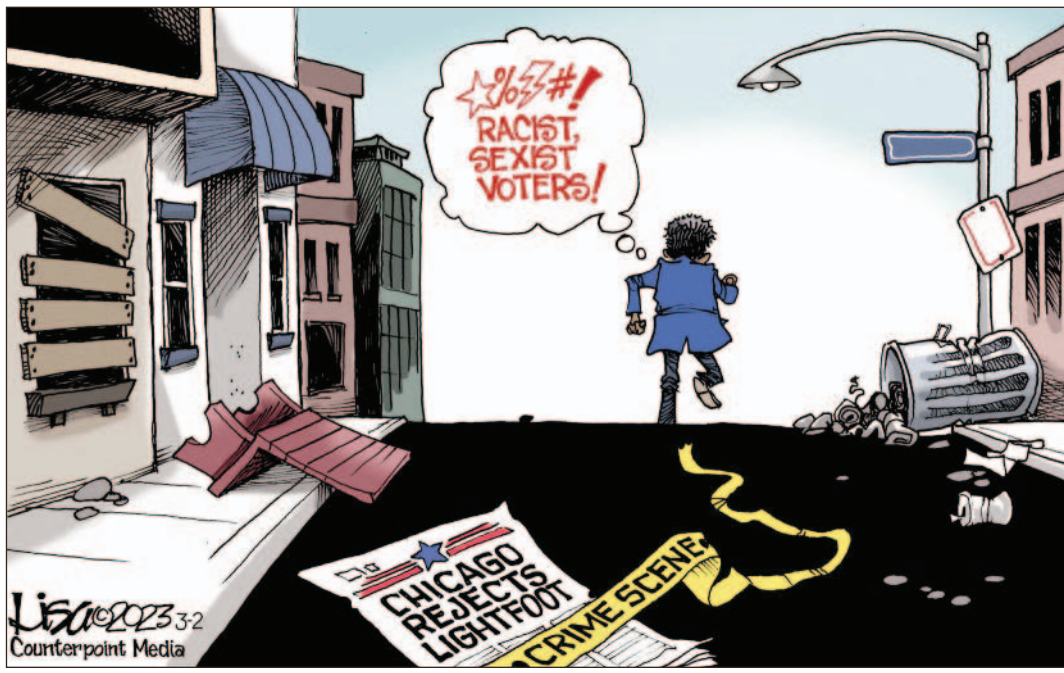
Severe Weather Preparedness Week will be observed in Missouri and Kansas next week, and it's the perfect opportunity to make sure you're ready when any of these weather events strike.

Be sure to participate in the statewide tornado drill at 10 a.m. Tuesday so that you know where to go and what to do in the case of a real tornado warning. Register for one of three free webinars offered this month by the National Weather Service to learn about identifying and reporting severe weather, safety and preparedness, severe weather climatology in Missouri and Kansas, thunderstorm structure and threats, and more.

Check your NOAA Weather Radio to ensure it's functioning properly. Make sure your family has an emergency meeting place and a way to communicate with one another, and sign up for CPR training so you can help if someone is hurt during severe weather.

For more tips and information, be sure to check out the Globe's story today on Severe Weather Preparedness Week, or go to sema.dps.mo.gov.

And take severe weather seriously by getting ready for it now. You never know when it might strike.



Keep partisan politics out of school board races

In a month, we will be electing three members to our Joplin Board of Education, who will then elect the board president.

Our community is also currently looking for a suitable replacement for Dr. Stephen Gilbreth, as he retires from his position as Joplin High School principal.

If you are a person who feels like a portion of your personal well-being is absolutely tied to the fate of this community's well-being, then this is the time to make a statement about what you want your public schools to look like.

Having taught for 15 years — nine of them here at JHS — I will take the liberty of making a statement that I feel represents a view shared by many of my colleagues: We do not want partisan political inquisitors in our schools, or on our board of education. Of either kind.

I can assure you that Joplin teachers, regardless of their politics, have the best interests of their students at the forefront of their thoughts every day. The truth is that both conservative and liberal viewpoints exist in this school. They exist in every school. That's not a problem. That's ideal. Reaching the age of 18 having never heard a dissenting opinion cannot properly be called an education. What sort of individuals are we looking to produce through our schools? Do we want young people who have been made to be able to think for themselves, or are we simply looking to produce people who follow rules?

Any worthy debate teacher, any worthy government or law teacher, any teacher who is set on preparing this



BRENDAN COONEY

Guest columnist

or even spiritual leanings on a given topic. To this day, I can still recall some of the dialog I had with my own high school teachers. They helped me to form my views and to achieve my sense of self apart from what my parents had told me about the world, which is not to say that I wholly adopted my teachers' viewpoints either. We define ourselves as much by what we are not as what we are. I cherish the memory of those lessons and conversations. I don't entirely know who I would be today if not for those interactions.

That being said, no one here is teaching "CRT" (critical race theory) — whatever that is. Similarly, no one is taking books away from students. Those who would seek a position of influence on a platform of national partisan politics are bringing the national division into our own community, promoting themselves by way of hurting the rest of us. It's aping the national theater of media horrors because one isn't sufficiently interested in, or knowledgeable about, what is taking place here in our own community.

Such a platform would reveal a candidate's ignorance of the problems that are real

and are afflicting the people who live in this town and attend these schools every day. My colleague, Will Keczemethy, has written here recently about the need for improved attendance, and we have both written about how thoroughly our common enterprise of education is defeated by students' addiction to their cellphones. Those who are seeking to make our schools stronger can begin by helping us with the needs we have actually voiced.

There is broad appeal in the aphorism, "That government is best which governs least," or the Gadsden flag, which says "Don't tread on me," but what would a partisan inquisition into our schools be if not a violation of those values? It's true that small, grassroots government is best. It's also true that Joplin school teachers are part of our local government: Your property taxes pay our salaries. Our community and our elected officials must trust that we are working as hard as we know how for this community in which we are raising our own children.

New hyperpartisan oversight isn't only just unwanted, it's an affront that exacerbates the already rampant problem of plummeting teacher retention.

At some point we have to restore some level of public trust in government institutions. The very best way to achieve that is to come to the aid of those who are providing the education in our community rather than putting them on the defense.

BRENDAN COONEY lives in Joplin. He teaches English composition at Joplin High School.

YOUR VIEW

Put newfound bounty toward trolley service

Great news for Joplin! Millions of dollars in state and federal grant money.

Will this newfound bounty go to renewing trolley service?

Will city officials finally come to their senses and offer competitive pay for CDL drivers? \$14.86 won't do. Not when a CDL can bring \$20 and onward — maybe with a sign-on bonus ... elsewhere.

Get real. With grants coming, there's no excuse.

Pay up and serve the residents.

Michael Lively
Joplin

We must solve issue of mass shootings

No matter our age, zip code or color of our skin, we all want our loved ones to live a full and happy life. So why are we encouraging mass shootings in the USA?

We are No. 1 in mass shootings in the world and we have five times the number of mass shootings as the No. 2 country, so this is a problem the USA has created.

What if the media started discussing this fact and asking this question instead of dwelling on the motive after every mass shooting? Do you think more people would be lobbying to save the lives of our citizens? Do you think our legislators would finally start voting to save lives?

I, for one, feel like I'm living in a nightmare, hoping to wake up and discover these record numbers of mass shootings in our country aren't real.

It's time to step up to the plate and work for a USA free of mass shootings. Save someone you love by contacting the media and your state and federal legislators today. We all need to work together to solve this deadly problem and for our right to live.

Ellen Wentz
Kirkwood

Verse

'Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.'

James 1:12

Write us



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OUR MISSION is to be an essential part of people's lives by providing valuable information on what's happening in their world.

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Kansans want expanded Medicaid coverage

When it comes to expanding Medicaid, Kansas is quickly becoming one of the last states that continues to lose money and lives because of its refusal to change.

Kansas is surrounded by states that have expanded, and those states are experiencing economic and job growth, along with a much lower rate of rural hospital closures.

One of the last 11 states whose legislative leadership stood firm against expansion has now done a complete turnaround. Phil Berger, Republican and the president pro-tem of the North Carolina Senate, vowed to never allow expansion. He has changed his mind and now supports expansion, saying that all the concerns he had have been alleviated.

He first thought was that expansion might discourage people from working. He's finally realized that these low-income people are already working. He also thought that the federal government might renege paying 90% of the costs. He's realized that expansion is here to stay.



SUSAN OSBORNE

Guest columnist

North Carolina is now on the road to be the 40th state to expand.

So, why isn't the Kansas Legislature listening? At this point, lawmakers should already know the facts. Unfortunately, they seem to be playing political games rather than doing what's best.

Here we are in 2023, with 39 states having already expanded. Kansas has already lost \$6 billion (yes, billion!) by its continued refusal, while at the same time paying taxes that are being sent to the other 39 states that have expanded.

It would be different if Kansans disapproved of expansion; disapproved of saving our rural hospitals that are at greater risk of closure than any other state our size; disapproved of economic development or increased job opportunities or affordable health care for low-income working families. However,

almost eight in 10 Kansans do approve of Medicaid expansion and expect their legislators to move forward.

Unlike many states that have voted to expand, Kansans lack the right to put their own initiatives on the ballot. Legislative leaders are opposed to giving Kansans this right.

Why hasn't the Legislature acted? The federal government covers 90% of the cost, and if Kansas expanded this year, it would receive an extra incentive of 5%.

State and independent analyses have consistently shown that states that have expanded see an increase in net savings, and they haven't had to cut back on other expenditures.

No state that has expanded has pulled back.

The leaders in the state Senate and House have refused to allow expansion to be discussed. Sitting behind Gov. Laura Kelly in her January State of the State speech, top leadership looked the other way as she spoke in support.

If you want to learn more about the issue, visit the Alliance for a

Healthy Kansas online. Learn about the myriad organizations that support expansion of KanCare, as the Medicaid program is known in Kansas. Invite Alliance members to speak to your church, business or social group, or speak to them yourself. This shouldn't be a political issue. Both Republican and Democratic states have expanded. Check out the interactive map of states that have done so.

Like Berger in North Carolina, legislators who oppose Medicaid expansion should now know the old reasons for not expanding have been disproved. The 150,000 Kansans who can't access affordable health care are already working, and expansion is here to stay.

Sadly, the current income limit to qualify for KanCare is about \$8,750 per year for a family of three, which is less than \$4 per hour. The bar is way too low. Most states (including Nebraska and Montana) that have expanded are removing working and healthy-living requirements, not adding them. While anti-expansion leg-

islators claim they support mental health and addiction programs, they can do so by passing Medicaid expansion.

That would allow low-income families that are struggling with addiction to receive needed mental health care. Additionally, "expansion would lead to increased resources for behavioral health providers, decrease the costs of county jails in Kansas and reduce the number of children entering the Kansas foster care system due to neglect," according to the Alliance.

The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas and more than 130 supporting organizations are fighting for KanCare expansion this year. It's the right thing to do.

SUSAN OSBORNE is a member of the state leadership team of Women for Kansas, a nonpartisan organization that supports moderation in political issues and cooperation between political parties. She is retired from teaching and administrative positions at Wichita State University, Friends University and Newman University. This column originally appeared in the Kansas Reflector.

Republicans will be hurt if following interest group overreach

State Rep. Lane Roberts, R-Joplin, is not someone most would deem a “RINO,” or Republican in name only. The three-term Joplin Republican served as the director of the Missouri Department of Public Safety and as Joplin’s police chief, having previously led police forces in cities throughout Washington and Oregon, where he served as president of the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police.

In 2013, the Missouri Police Chiefs Association named him Chief of the Year. Once asked Roberts if he supported “compassionate release” legislation to free elderly inmates, given their low likelihood of recidivism due to “aging out” of criminal tendencies.

No way, he replied. “Look, I’m 75 years old and trust me, you don’t want to bump into me in a dark alley,” he said. “So no, age shouldn’t be the sole determinant of whether someone is a threat.”

Which is to say: The guy’s tough as nails, and not easily caricatured as weak. If being conservative means “Backing The Blue,” it doesn’t get much bluer than him.

NEW NORMAL?

But, perhaps, we must reckon with a new normal.

Earlier this month, the Missouri Firearms Coalition, which bills itself as a far more aggressive “no-compromise” offshoot of the



JEFF SMITH

Guest columnist

NRA, derided Roberts as a gun-grabbing RINO based on two components of a crime bill he’s sponsoring.

The organization is led by brothers who many long-time gun-rights activists have called “charlatans.” “The NRA is selling you out!” the organization claims.

The genesis of Roberts’ crime bill was a House leadership-appointed bipartisan working group charged last fall with addressing public safety challenges. The working group unanimously endorsed six reforms that it agreed would reduce crime around the state.

One section of the bill the Missouri Firearms Coalition excoriated was its requirement that ammunition sellers register with the Secretary of State. They contended that the Roberts’ proposal would criminalize a man who gives a box of ammo to his brother or son. In reality, it dealt with sales from unlicensed dealers.

The Missouri Firearms Coalition also attacked a second section, which sought to prevent unsupervised minors from openly carrying guns in public roadways. Some committee Republicans did not realize that

current statute allows this. “It’s not against the law, sir ... for a 10-year-old kid to walk around with a — with a pistol in their pants?” asked one lawmaker during a recent House hearing, according to the Post-Dispatch’s Jack Suntrup.

Indeed it is not, Roberts acknowledged in response.

“Missouri is pretty fanatical in our defense of the Second Amendment,” he noted, “but this kind of conduct is not what the Second Amendment was meant to protect. This is about people who don’t have the life experience to make a decision about the consequences of having that gun in their possession. Why is an 8-year-old carrying a sidearm in the street?”

Committee Republicans voted to strip the above sections out of the bill.

State Rep. Donna Baringer, D-St. Louis, offered a floor amendment to reinsert a narrowed version of the section to prohibit unsupervised minors from carrying, on public property, handguns readily capable of discharge.

The amendment, which Roberts designed to mollify his caucus’s many sportsmen and women by limiting it to armed children whose firearm is not otherwise legally allowed (those 11 or older may hunt by themselves after completing a hunter education class), failed 104-39,

on a near-party line vote.

It may have been possible at some earlier juncture to carefully craft language capable of winning over enough Republicans to cobble together a majority — and there may still be a way to do so, perhaps in a Senate committee or floor sub — but given the broader political dynamics, there was no way a House Democrat offering a high-profile floor amendment on guns would prevail.

RED STATE SHIFT

I’ve previously written about the implications of Missouri becoming a red state, most recently when I noted that U.S. Sen. Eric Schmitt felt no need to even feign a traditional general election pivot towards the political middle.

Our general election noncompetitiveness could, paradoxically, be the one thing that could make the state more competitive again in the coming election cycles.

That’s because the notion that Republican dominance is sacrosanct may lead the Legislature to pass laws that appeal to interest groups like the Missouri Firearms Coalition that wield outsized sway in primaries, but repel the median general election voter.

There is recent precedent for interest group overreach.

Over the course of the past decade, despite Missouri Right to Life’s continued grassroots strength (as demonstrated by 2022

state Senate primaries), many legislators began disregarding their urgent pleas. Once the Republican Party’s most feared interest group, MRL eventually strayed into so many disparate issues — from their rating of votes on the state Medicaid program’s Federal Reimbursement Allowance (where the MRL position could have cost the state billions of dollars annually) to the vote on a 7-1 congressional map — that legislative leaders began to dismiss their litmus tests, because they found MRL’s positions substantively extreme and/or politically damaging.

One of the Capitol’s smartest Republicans likes to say that the difference between good policy and bad policy often comes down to a dozen difficult conversations.

That is to say: The Legislature will make good policy if every key legislator in a given policy realm is willing to go back to their district and have a dozen tough conversations with constituents in the grocery store or coffee shop, most of whom they’ll be able to convince if they take a few minutes to dissect the hyperbolic arguments of interest groups thirsty for clicks, donations, and relevance.

JEFF SMITH is executive director of the Missouri Workforce Housing Association. This column first appeared in the Missouri Independent.

Dilbert’s Scott Adams and the rise in tribalism

I have always loved Scott Adams’ comic strip “Dilbert.” His depiction of the faux pas in middle management and the dysfunctional culture of work made our own experiences bearable.

When I heard that his comic strip was being removed from some papers for some things he said on his podcast, I was confused. For a guy who was so able to communicate the bawdiness of the job, surely he would understand the consequences of his spoken word. I was wrong.

In response to the results of a Rasmussen Reports poll of Feb. 13-15, Adams came to the conclusion that being Black made you part of a hate group. There were two questions in a poll of 1,000 people. You were asked to agree or disagree with two statements. The first was “It’s OK to be white.” The second was, “Black people can be racist, too.”

Because I am not a paying member to Rasmussen Reports I could not see the net results of the poll but can only repeat the information shared by Adams in his podcast. In response to the first question, he said that 26% of the Black respondents polled said “no” and 21% were unsure. Therefore, that data proved to Adams that being Black made you a member of a hate group.

His podcast went on to advise the white population to get away from the Black population.

Didn’t we go down this segregation road already?

He proclaimed that, “It makes no sense to help Black Americans if you’re white.” He also proclaimed that there is no fixing this. This is where I will disagree. The problem we have is we still continue to label people by their ethnic roots instead of the content of their character.

Adams’ conclusions are based on such a small, limited survey. Somehow, he translates the angst



JAMES GRAHAM

Guest columnist

of a small group into a declaration that all of the members of its greater population are members of a hate group. The FBI defines a hate group’s “primary purpose is to promote animosity, hostility, and malice against persons belonging to a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation,

or ethnicity/national origin, which differs from that of the members of the organization.” (“Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines” FBI October 1999)

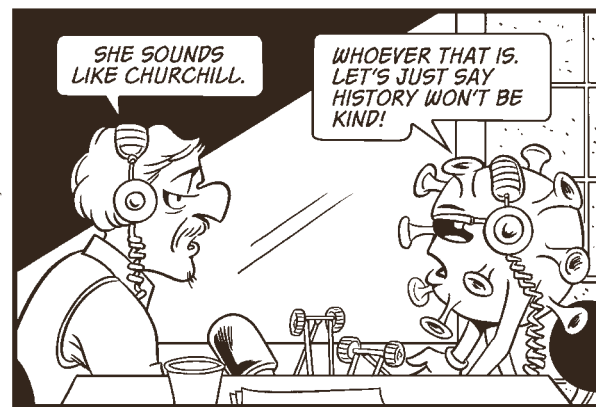
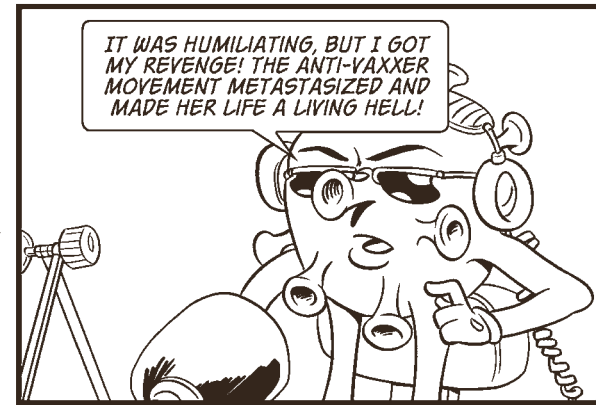
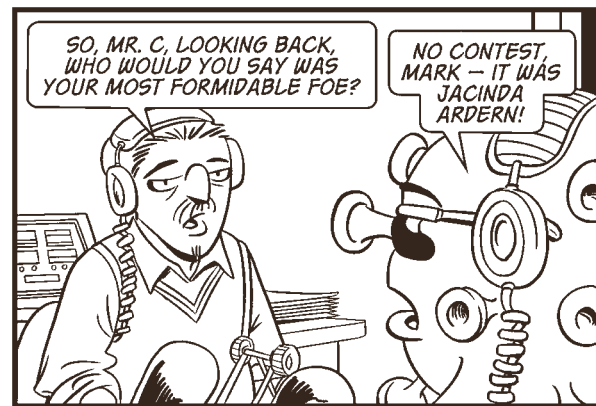
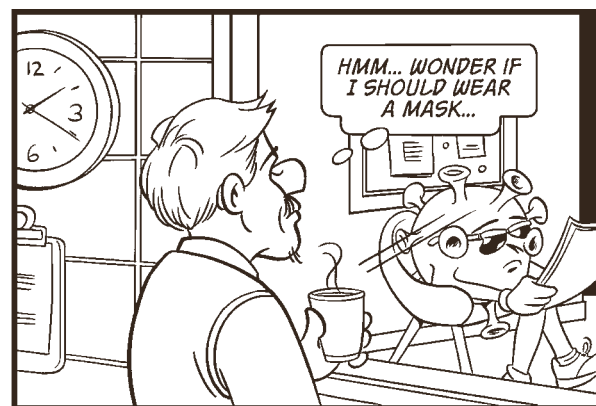
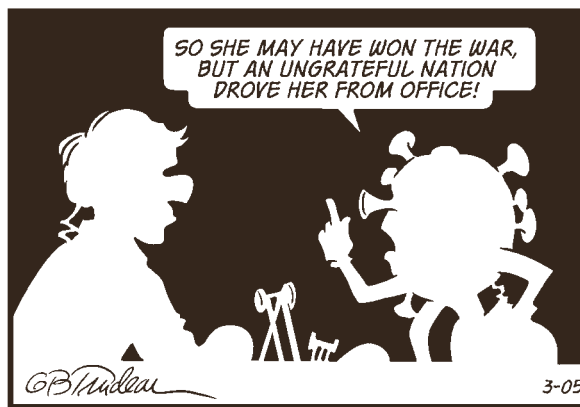
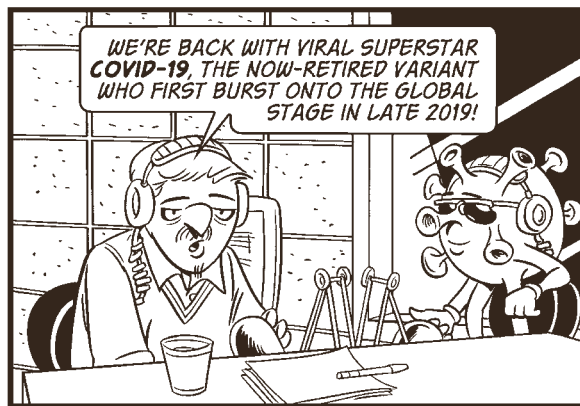
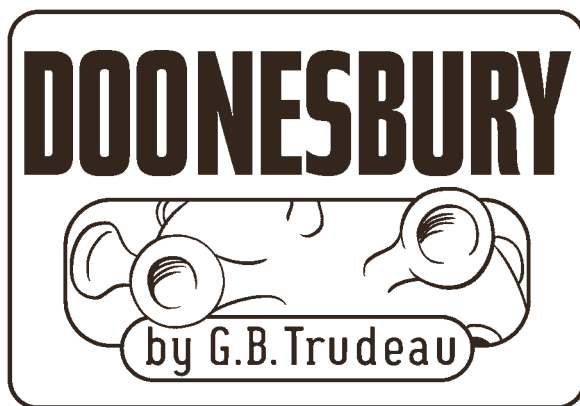
I don’t see it. With very few exceptions, we are all just trying to get by as best we can.

We fail to recognize that our hopes and dreams are tied together. In our own Declaration of Independence we proclaimed, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

What I am seeing now is a rise in tribalism — opposite of our stated declaration. We are trying to separate ourselves into groups of concentrated power. This seems to be happening everywhere, including the halls of Congress with the suggestion that the states divorce according to political alliance.

The kernel of truth that I accept within Adams’ podcast was his declaration that our entire system is based on lies. I have no doubt. Treachery and deceit are all too common tools for some to advance themselves or to quell the cries of the disadvantaged.

JAMES GRAHAM is retired from the energy sector and lives in Pittsburg, Kan.



Democrats doing nothing while border communities overrun

Feb. 23: The House Judiciary Committee held a field hearing on the crisis at our southern border in the Yuma City Hall, Yuma, Ariz.

Yuma County Sheriff Leon Wilmot testified that upon Biden’s inauguration they had started with 200 arrests per day, which grew to 400 and has exploded to over 1,000 per day. “Those are the ones we catch,” he said. He expounded on the destruction of the local ecosystem, crops damaged, trash and waste left behind by the continual stream of those crossing into the country illegally.

Dr. Robert Trenchel, president/CEO of Yuma Regional Medical Center, testified to the strains placed upon the only hospital in the county: \$26 million in uncompensated care, and Yuma taxpayers being denied use of their own hospital. “These costs are unsustainable ... We can’t continue, they have no ability to pay and we can’t bill them. We don’t know where they go.”

Yuma’s population is almost twice that of Joplin, yet the city lists only 406 acute care beds. Now, imagine what would happen



GEOFF CALDWELL

Globe columnist

with over 150,000 people every year crossing the Arkansas border and Freeman Health System and Mercy Hospital Joplin, with a combined total of only 579 listed beds, forced to provide the myriad levels of care and additional staff that Yuma has had forced upon it.

All while the federal government ignores you.

And as you imagine that 150,000, you must consider that the next closest hospital system to Yuma is across state lines, less than 200-bed capability and over an hour away, while the nearest comparable system is either Mesa or Phoenix, over three hours away. Your father has just had a heart attack, or your wife has gone into labor; yet you, the taxpayer, can’t get into your hospital because of a political decision by the sitting president of the United States to not enforce immigration law and leave the southern border open to any and all.

Feb. 28: The House Homeland Security Committee begins hearings titled “Every State is a Border State: Examining Secretary (Alejandro) Mayorkas’ Border Crisis.”

On the list of witnesses is Rebecca Kiessling, a private citizen, from Rochester Hills, Michigan.

The title and name looks innocuous enough, yet, as you are about to read, there is nothing innocuous about Kiessling’s testimony.

Kiessling is a mother of five who experienced a horror that no mother should ever have to endure. On July 29, 2020, her two sons, Kyler, 18, and his older brother Caleb, 20, were killed when they thought they were taking prescription Percocet pills but were instead swallowing fentanyl fakes to their deaths.

“Law enforcement made it clear to me that this fentanyl came from Mexico. It came from our southern border. I didn’t know what fentanyl was. I didn’t know what Narcan was, I didn’t know that people were dying. I didn’t know that my boys were taking anything that could kill them.

They didn’t think that they were, either. But the government knew. The government’s known for years and years.”

“The CDC, I saw yesterday, said that fentanyl deaths rose 22% from 2020 to 2021. I mean it’s unbelievable, you’d think that one death from fentanyl coming across our southern border would be enough to sound the alarm.”

“You have to stop it from its source. Now, if we had Chinese troops lining up along our southern border with weapons aimed at our people, with weapons of mass destruction aimed at our cities, you d--- well know you would do something about it. We have a weather balloon from China going across our country, nobody died and everybody’s freaking out about it, but a hundred thousand die every year and nothing is being done, not enough is being done, the numbers are going up, you talk about children being taken away from their parents? My children were taken away from me. A hundred thousand Americans every year are having their children ... two hun-

dred thousand because it’s both parents, right, are having their children taken away from them. This should not be politicized. It’s not about race. Fentanyl doesn’t care about race. You talk about welcoming those crossing our border seeking protection? You’re welcoming drug dealers across our border. Giving them protection, you’re not protecting our children.”

Not one Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee attended the field hearing in Yuma. In unison, they, their party and the national media that props them up called it a political stunt.

The Democrats on the House Homeland Security Committee did not have that privilege. They instead were forced to witness the cold, hard truth that Kiessling delivered for all the world to see.

To which I can only say: Thank you, Ms. Kiessling, and may God grant you at least a sliver of peace in knowing just how powerful your testimony is and that you called the cowards out.

GEOFF CALDWELL lives in Joplin. He can be reached at gc@caldwellscorner.com.