

THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL represents the view of The Joplin Globe's editorial board. Members of the editorial board are: **Andy Ostmeier**, editor, aostmeyer@joplinglobe.com; **Emily Younker**, managing editor, eyounker@joplinglobe.com; and **Jerry Willis**, design editor, jwillis@joplinglobe.com.

## OUR VIEW

# Put those loudmouths to work umping games

Here's a home run for ya — a kid's baseball program in New Jersey requires parents who yell at umpires to become an umpire for three games.

If they refuse, they're thrown out for the season.

The Little League president explained to the media the idea came to him after two umpires quit, telling him: "We didn't sign up for this. We don't need harassment."

This comes with cons as well as pros — the biggest drawback being that most of these loudmouth parents don't know the rules of the games, and some of these parents may not see well enough to differentiate balls from strikes or call a close play at the plate. In fact, their mouths may be the only part of their heads that work.

To solve that, the New Jersey League keeps a certified umpire nearby.

Still, it gets the point across in a uniquely effective way. Parents who are required to ump will realize within the first couple of pitches that it is not as easy as it sometimes looks from the stands.

We're not saying we need to do that around here, although we wouldn't criticize leagues if they did, but hope the rather ingenious solution gets everyone's attention about a serious problem — a youth sports culture that has gotten out of hand.

In Ontario, a soccer association is asking referees to wear body cameras after one of the refs was assaulted in a parking lot after a game.

The Washington Post reported this spring: "Across the country, youth sports leagues have tried other ways of tamping down on abuse. One club makes teams pay a sportsmanship fee that they get back only if no parents or coaches are ejected from a game all season, said Brian Barlow, a former youth soccer referee who runs a Facebook page that shames poorly behaved youth-sports fans. Some soccer associations have 'Silent Saturdays' where spectators aren't allowed to speak. And many teams give lollipops to fans as a symbol of keeping their mouths shut."

Parents, fans and sometimes even coaches and players are getting not just loud but aggressive and even violent.

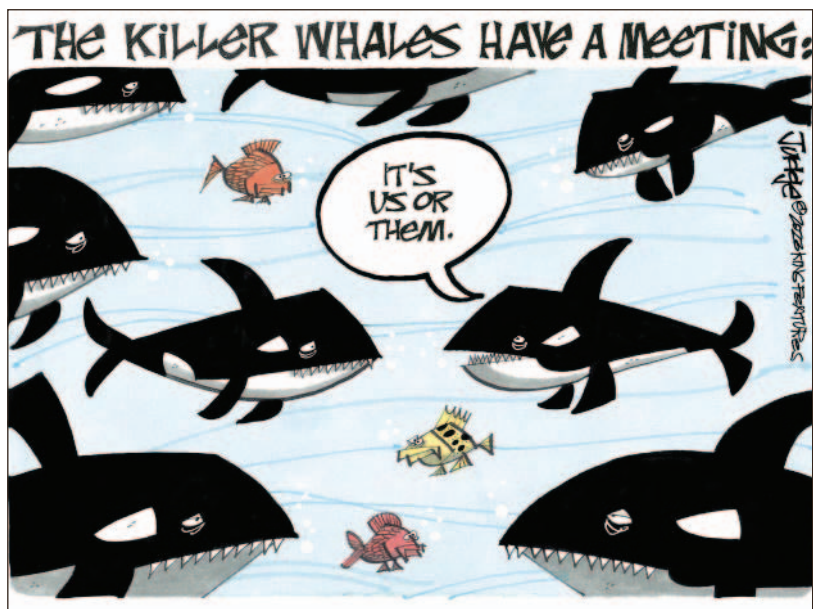
Not long ago, a Little League in San Antonio sent out a letter reminding players and fans that umpires go through many hours of training. "We're learning more and more every day the reasons why sports, all sports, are experiencing problems getting umpires or officials into their programs. One of the main reasons, sportsmanship. Not just from the managers/coaches or players, but parents too," the letter noted.

It cited a 2019 study by the National Association of Sports Officials, which found that:

- 13% of umpires and officials at games have been assaulted.
- 47% have feared for their lives.
- 57% have broken up fights.
- 64% have ejected players, managers, coaches or parents.

"So, the next time you're watching your child, family members or friend playing at your local league, remember: Umpires are human too. We make mistakes but a good umpire will do everything in their power to get it right. We know that when there's a close play, we're going to make half the people happy and not the other half. In the end, we want to get the call right... we're all doing this for the same reason, your child."

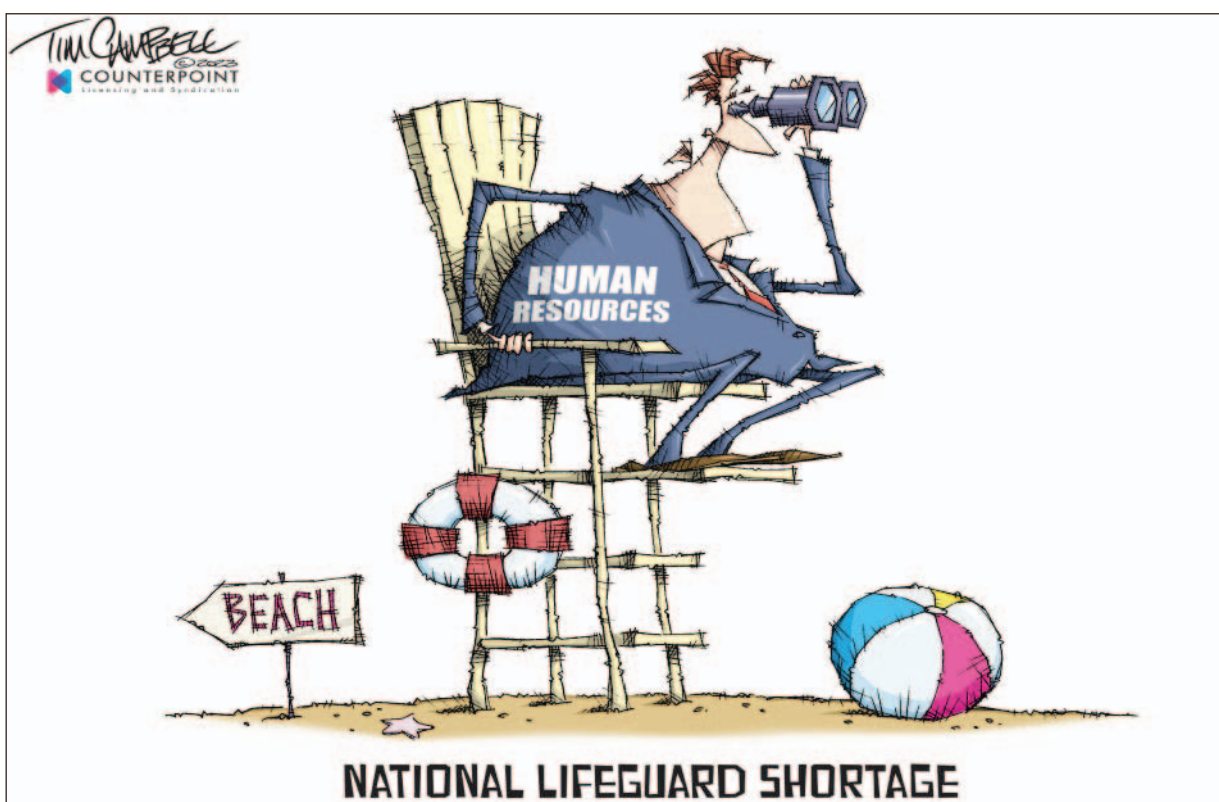
Now, can we do anything about the way we talk to one another on social media?



## Verse

*'But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.'*

Luke 6:27



# The dysfunctional Missouri Senate

The closing days of the Missouri Legislature were among the most dysfunctional I've covered in more than half a century.

Filibusters by Senate Republican conservatives blocked action on a number of issues.

Ironically, the issues killed included conservative issues to allow firearms on public transportation and to increase the vote percentage required for approval of a state constitutional amendment in the face of a proposed initiative to put an abortion-rights constitutional amendment on the ballot.

Although, to be fair, there were some Republican successes that include banning transgender medical procedures for minors, banning males from participating in school sports teams designated for females, the Republican governor's proposal for a massive budget to widen Interstate 70 and a package of tax cuts.

The Senate conservative gridlock was the opposite of the vision I heard from the two Senate Republican leaders chosen by their caucus after the 2022 November elections.

They voiced hopes to bridge the GOP divisions that had gridlocked the Senate in the previous session.

A major factor for this year's legislative dysfunction involved how both the House and Senate loaded bills with amendments unrelated to the original single subject as required by the state constitution.

It caused hours of lost time as legislators asked for explanations about what was in a measure upon which they were to vote.



**PHILL BROOKS**

Columnist

Sen. Mike Moon, R-Ash Grove, spent hours in the closing days objecting to bloated bills he argued violated constitutional restrictions and sought detailed explanations of the contents.

Imagine a legislator getting a substitute for what had been a short bill but returned to the chamber with a pile of unrelated provisions expanding the bill to nearly 200 pages and having to vote on the measure just a few days before the session adjourns.

Maybe legislative leaders should have ruled out of order any amendment that violated the Missouri Constitution's requirement that limits bills to the "original purpose" and restricts nonappropriation bills to "one subject."

Maybe it would have helped if Gov. Mike Parson had publicly warned he would veto bills that covered unrelated subjects that went beyond the original purpose.

After all, in 2022, of the four nonbudget bills he vetoed, Parson cited violation of the single-topic constitutional requirement for vetoing two of those bills.

One of the most profound vetoes citing the single-topic requirement of the state Constitution was in 2012.

Gov. Jay Nixon vetoed a bill that he described had begun as a relatively "simple housekeeping measure. ... But in the final days of the session, discipline

waned as amendment upon unrelated amendment was added, transforming the bill into a seventy-nine page hodgepodge of unrelated matters, and abandoning the constitutional guideposts for legislative transparency in the process."

Nixon concluded his veto letter charging the bill had become "a sanctuary for orphaned ideas in search of safe transport to becoming law."

That is almost a perfect description of so many bloated bills in the 2023 legislative session.

I fully understand Moon's frustrations with the complexity of understanding what actually is contained in a bill covering a hodgepodge of subjects facing legislators in the final hours of a session.

Early in my career as a Statehouse reporter, Sen. Clifford Jones, R-St. Louis County, urged me to always read the actual text of a bill and not rely on staff summaries or sponsor descriptions.

Following his advice, I often found tremendous stories buried in bills.

But this year, the size of these bills expanded by unrelated amendments in the hectic final days made it impossible for me to adhere to his advice.

I wonder if legislators before taking a final vote on these bills experienced the same frustration as I did this session.

**PHILL BROOKS** has been a Missouri Statehouse reporter since 1970. He is the Statehouse correspondent for KMOX Radio, director of MDN and an emeritus faculty member of the Missouri School of Journalism.

# Social Security, Medicare are still toast

Social Security is toast.

So is Medicare.

Too many of us old people live longer, so there are not enough working people to support us.

Soon both Social Security and Medicare will be broke.

Our politicians don't have the guts to do anything about it. Or even talk about it.

It's easy to see why.

Recently, France's president, trying to keep his country's pension system from going broke, raised France's retirement age from 62 to a measly 64.

People have been protesting ever since.

In America, politicians who even hint at such solutions get screamed at by misinformed seniors: "Don't touch my retirement funds! You took money from my paycheck for years; that's my money I'm getting back!"

But it's not. It's young people's money.

People my age rarely realize that most of us now get back triple what we paid in.

When Social Security began, a government retirement plan made financial sense. Most Americans didn't even live until age 65. Social Security was just for the minority who did.

But now Americans live, on average, to age 76. I'm 76. Since most of us live so long, there are just not enough workers to pay for us.



**JOHN STOSSEL**

Columnist

Yet our vote-hungry politicians won't say that in public.

Even Donald Trump cowers, saying, "No one will lay a hand on your Medicare or your Social Security."

The most clueless, like U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, even deny the obvious truth. He shouts: "Social

Security today is not on the line going broke!"

But it just is. Reserve funds are projected to run out by 2034.

Medicare's reserves will run out even sooner. Of course they will. When I first got Medicare, I was surprised how no one even pays attention to costs. Everything seems free.

"Get an MRI," says my doctor. I immediately do. I don't ask the cost. The MRI people don't mention it either.

Months later, I get a complex notice that says my MRI cost \$2,625 and I must pay \$83.65. Or sometimes, nothing. Who did pay? Blue Cross? Taxpayers? The paperwork is so complex that I don't even know.

Old people who scour supermarkets to save a dollar on groceries never comparison shop for MRIs or heart surgery. "Why should I? Someone else pays."

Medicare is a bomb with a burning fuse moving closer.

"Sooner or later, it will blow up," says economist Dan Mitchell of the Center for Freedom and Prosperity. "Politicians figure, 'Oh, well, maybe it blows up in five years or 10 years or 20 years. I won't be in office anymore.'"

Some claim raising taxes on rich people would solve the deficit, but it won't. There just aren't enough rich people. Even taking all the money from every billionaire wouldn't cover our coming bankruptcy.

The only solution is cutting benefits, raising the age when benefits start (sensible, because we live longer) or, Mitchell's preference, privatizing retirement plans, like Australia and Chile did.

America's politicians won't do any of those things.

McCarthy said Medicare and Social Security were "completely off the table." So the programs are still doomed.

"Sooner or later bad things will happen to senior citizens," Mitchell explains. "The government will either cut their benefits or all of a sudden start rationing health care. Or reimbursement rates will be so low that you won't be able to find a doctor or hospital to treat you."

**JOHN STOSSEL** is an award-winning news correspondent who was the co-anchor of ABC News' "20/20."

# Family-forward policies will strengthen Kansas communities

Kansas is expected to add more than 11,000 new jobs in 2024. The unemployment rate in Kansas is projected to reach 2.6% in 2024, according to the new Kansas Employment Forecast released this month by Wichita State University's Center for Economic Development and Business Research.

Under these economic conditions, Kansas businesses will be competing to attract and retain talented employees. They will be looking for ways to stand out from one another. The solution may be as simple as implementing practices that support employees and their families.

Family-forward workplace practices give companies a strong competitive advantage by improving employee retention and recruitment. Offering flexible scheduling and paid leave create a healthy work environment, where employees can prosper. Parents face numerous challenges while balancing work and family life. For instance, 75% percent of U.S.



**BRENDA BANDY**

Columnist

mothers and 50% of U.S. fathers say they have passed up work opportunities, switched jobs or quit to care for their children. Nearly 40% of parents nationwide say they have left a job because it lacked flexibility. First 1,000 Days Kansas, an initiative of the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, recognizes the correlation between the health of Kansas families and Kansas businesses. That's why we recently launched a communications campaign to reach Kansas employers and human resources professionals: Family Forward Workplaces.

We encourage and support employers to offer paid leave, flexible scheduling, child care access, and accommodations and support for pregnant and breastfeeding employees. This improves their competitive edge and contributes

to the health of Kansas families and the economy.

Offering family-forward policies can make a significant difference to Kansas businesses' bottom line. Employers that want to attract and retain talent must prioritize incorporating family-forward practices. It is estimated that up to 5 million more workers would join the U.S. labor force if businesses offered more family-forward benefits, such as paid parental leave. The cost of replacing an employee who leaves is approximately 33% of an employee's salary.

These policies help businesses reduce expensive turnover costs. Furthermore, affordable child care is essential for working parents. The lack of high-quality child care has a direct effect on businesses, as employers nationwide lose \$4.4 billion each year due to employee absences and loss of productivity related to child care issues. Employers can leverage the Child Day Care Business Tax Credit to reduce their taxes, while helping their employ-

ees pay for child care.

Employers can also offer Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts, giving employees the option to use pretax funds to pay for child care. When workers are able to afford child care, they are more likely to remain at work.

Paid leave is also an essential part of family-forward workplace policies. It allows workers to take time off to care for themselves or a sick family member without financial insecurity. Flexible scheduling enables employees to work around their family's needs, while breastfeeding accommodations are necessary for mothers returning to work after giving birth.

Family-forward workplace policies benefit both businesses and their employees. They create a positive work environment, improve employee retention and recruitment, and help businesses compete for talent by creating a positive brand image amongst potential recruits.

When it comes to families, these policies strengthen families in

several ways. They allow parents to balance their work and family responsibilities more effectively. This, in turn, can reduce stress and lead to improved physical and mental health outcomes for both parents and children. Providing breastfeeding accommodations also allows mothers to continue nursing their babies after returning to work, which improves both maternal and infant health outcomes and fosters stronger parent-child bonding.

Additionally, family-forward policies can increase job satisfaction and loyalty.

We encourage Kansas businesses to become family-forward workplaces. Kansas' economy depends on it. Kansas families will be healthier because of it. Together, we can help businesses and families thrive and strengthen our state.

**BRENDA BANDY** serves as the co-executive director of the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition. This article first appeared in the Kansas Reflector.



Bethsaida Sigaran (left), of Baltimore, her brother Jaime Sigaran, with American Rivers, and Thea Louis, with Clean Water Action, join supporters of the Clean Water Act as they demonstrate last year outside the Supreme Court.

ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

## Supreme Court decision setback for environment

The U.S. Supreme Court in a major environmental decision on May 25 overturned the Environmental Protection Agency's definition of wetlands that fall under the agency's jurisdiction, siding with an Idaho couple who had said they should not be required to obtain federal permits to build on their property that lacked any navigable water.

**JOE PITTS**

Columnist

I am writing to express my concern about the real and potential impacts that will surely follow this negation of a large part of the Waters of the U.S. rule, which would leave many of our nation's waterbodies unprotected from pollution.

The WOTUS rule, which was finalized by the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers in 2023 after extensive public input and scientific review, provides federal protection for wetlands, streams and other waterbodies that are essential for drinking water, wildlife habitat and flood control.

The rule reflects the intent of Congress under the Clean Water Act to protect our nation's waters from pollution and degradation.

However, some opponents of the

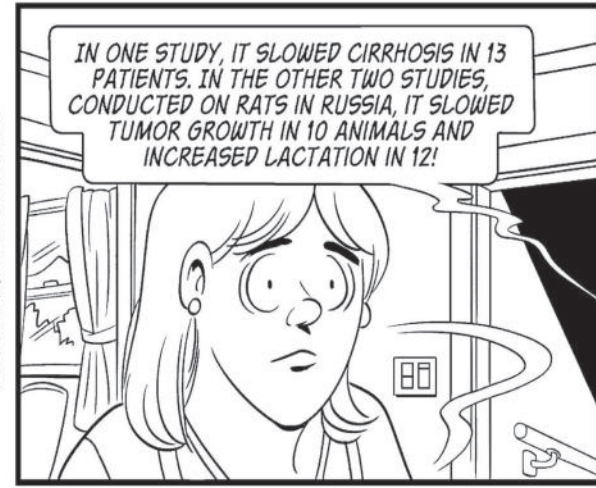
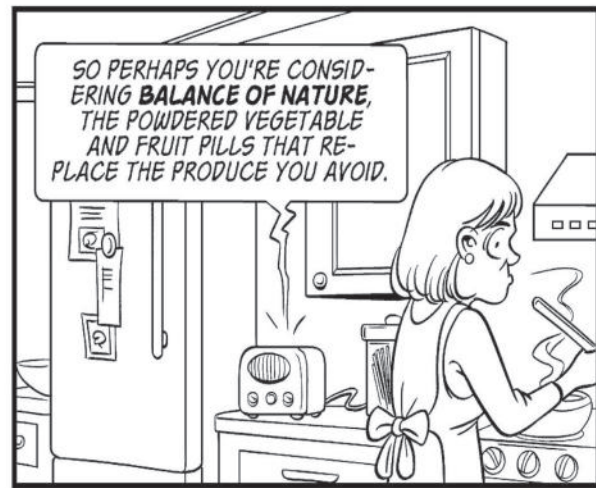
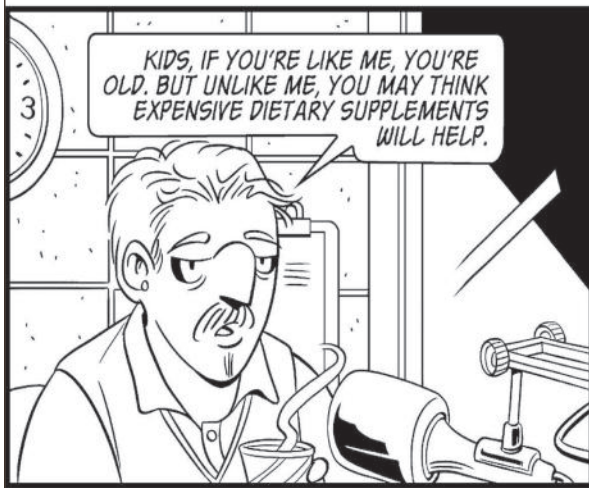
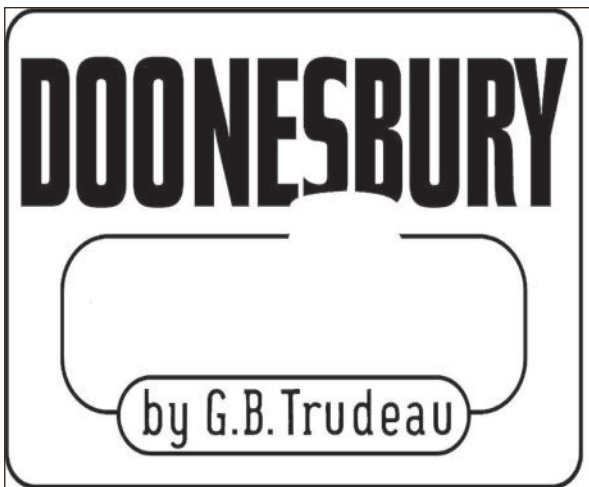
rule have challenged it in court and sought to delay its implementation. If the rule is suspended, many waterbodies would lose federal protection and be vulnerable to pollution from various sources, such as industrial waste, agricultural runoff and urban stormwater.

This would threaten the quality and quantity of water available for human and environmental needs, and increase the risk of waterborne diseases, toxic algae blooms, fish kills, and will increase the cost of removing pollution from drinking water supplies.

As a concerned citizen who values clean water for myself and future generations, I urge our elected officials to defend the Waters of the U.S. rule and oppose any attempts to weaken or repeal it.

The radical right wing of this corrupted Supreme Court is actively trying to destroy your right to a clean and healthy environment. Suspension of the WOTUS rule will return us to the days of rivers on fire, full of dead and decaying fish, and a poisonous stew of toxins that will threaten our health, environment and economy, and we cannot afford to lose it.

**JOE PITTS** is a retired educator, environmental specialist formerly with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and a former executive director of the James River Basin



## Republicans should try to build on Kevin McCarthy's foundation

Last Sunday morning broke with the news that there had been a tentative "agreement in principle" between House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden's team on a debt ceiling deal.

As of deadline for this column, the House had passed the bill and it was moving over to the Senate, where Senate Majority Leader has stated he will keep the Senate in session until the bill passes.

The final House vote tally was 314-117, with 71 Republicans and 46 Democrats voting against the deal.

I now take you back to that Sunday morning, the three days that followed, and my own little visit down the rabbit hole of Republican infighting.

It was barely 9 a.m. Sunday and the screams were coming, about how bad the deal was, how the speaker had gotten played, and how



**GEOFF CALDWELL**

Columnist

he had sold out the American people. The text of the bill hadn't even been written yet, but the rage machine was already spinning at warp speed.

"Sell out," "RINO," "Traitor" and "Liar," and plenty of other descriptions not fit for print were dive-bombing McCarthy and anyone else who dared even whisper a word of support for the agreement.

What I should have done was close the laptop and enjoy a peaceful Sunday morning. What I should not have done (but did) was jump into the Twitter fray with: "Perspective on @SpeakerMcCarthy 'caved': 1. You eat an elephant ONE piece at a time 2. We only have 1/2 of Congress

3. Biden/DNC left would NEVER allow what's really needed 4. Debt is now topic for 2024 w/o media frenzy 5. It's a START 6. Take the win & take back the WH & Senate."

Because this is a family newspaper I shall refrain from relaying the responses received.

Two days later, U.S. Rep. Diana Harshbarger, R-Tenn., who sits on the House Commerce committee and represents East Tennessee, boldly declared: "I am voting NO on passing down trillions more in debt to our children and grandchildren while giving Democrats a blank check to pay for their radical agenda, including the weaponization of federal agencies. It's time to get our fiscal house in order and rein in wasteful spending"

To which once again, I went against my better judgment and replied: "And that time comes when we

have EARNED that right via elections & Constitutional process. I'm a twice Trump voter but we have only 1/2 of Congress. This 'we demand' is as bad as when @AOC & squad did it. Take the deal and win '24. Tweets mean nothing. Elections mean everything."

As of this writing, Harshbarger's tweet had received over 275,000 views with the overwhelming majority of interaction being in the "thank you," "motion to vacate," "fight," etc. category.

My little 'tweet about reality? Didn't stand a snowball's chance.

But my most head-shaking moment came when a man in the thread praised Harshbarger as: "This is what COURAGE looks like."

No, Mr. Twitter warrior, that is not what courage looks like.

Courage is realizing the political reality of the day, that despite fantastical dreams that the president

and his party would agree to Republican demands to cut their most cherished programs, the reality is that the Republicans are lucky they got anything from Biden and company.

Courage is acknowledging that we're a constitutional republic, and that within the bounds of that constitutional republic no political party that holds only half of Congress gets to mandate anything.

Is the deal perfect? Of course not. It couldn't be.

Is it better than nothing? Absolutely.

No, it does not change our current path of a self-inflicted fiscal flameout, but it does lay the foundation upon which to build and buys us the time to do it.

It forces Congress back to regular order of annual appropriations bills or see mandatory 1% cuts kick in. Yes, 1% is barely noticeable, but again, it's better than nothing.

Yet in this columnist's opinion, the most important part of the deal is that it takes the debt ceiling drama off the table until after the presidential election — drama that would only distract from the one thing that really matters: Republicans holding the House and winning back the Senate and the White House.

Without real, viable political power, the post-COVID-19 spending trajectory that Biden has set us upon will remain and before a child born today can graduate high school, this nation will face a debt crisis that will make the Great Depression a Sunday stroll in the park by comparison.

And that's not some right-wing fanatic talking. That's just plain old bipartisan math.

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