

OPINION

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THE PUBLIC PULSE

Praise for Shatel column

I read Tom Shatel's column, "Health scare changed his outlook; on everything," and it is by far my favorite so far this year.

Some of us readers have a tendency to forget that sportscasters and sportswriters are vulnerable to the same illnesses and life stresses as the rest of us.

Thank you for the reminder and a big thank you to Andy Kendeigh for sharing this life experience with you and all of us that read your column.

God Bless.

Rick Fetter, Council Bluffs

Words have meaning

Jeremy Aspen (Midlands Voices, "When we talk about Hitler and fascism, let's be accurate, not flippant") calls on us to avoid comparisons with the most notorious dictator of the last century when writing Public Pulse letters. Fair enough. It seems to me that facts like the following are sufficiently terrifying on their own to people of goodwill.

Babies were torn from their mothers' arms in the camps set up on the southern border by the Trump administration. Families were permanently broken up because record keeping was insufficient.

Today in Nebraska and in states with even more extreme abortion bans, women suffering miscarriages are in danger of being denied standard medical care, which would ensure their ability to have children in the future or save their very lives, because providers fear being prosecuted for performing unauthorized abortions.

Medical professionals in Nebraska are no longer free to treat with the best of their training teenagers suffering from the rare condition of gender dysphoria. Such treatment has been characterized by at least one official elected to high office in this state as the work of the devil.

Donald Trump tried to overturn the results of a free and fair election and launched an assault on the U.S. Capitol to try to stop the certification of said results.

I am grateful that Mr. Aspen reminds us of the sacrifices made by soldiers in World War Two. I don't understand how anyone could ever vote for Trump again after learning what he said about American soldiers resting with honor in graves in France.

Words indeed have meaning. No doubt there is evil in flippant comparisons to the horrors of the last century. But for the next 100 days or so, I think that it is important to be mindful of the evils of Trumpism that give rise to the comparisons in the first place.

Kerry Tupper, Omaha

Funding foster care

I serve as the executive director of the Foster Care Review Office, the independent state agency responsible for oversight of the foster care system and the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in out-of-home care in Nebraska. Through a process of case reviews, data collection and analysis, reporting findings, and making recommendations, we advocate for the best interests of children in foster care.

Legislative Bill 2, introduced by Sen. Robert Clements at the request of the governor, would reduce the FCRO's funding by \$500,000 this fiscal year. We are an agency with 28 employees and 280 volunteers across the state that serve on 53 local citizen review boards. LB 2 would reduce the FCRO's general fund appropriations for fiscal year 2024-2025 by \$250,000. That represents a 10% cut in our general fund appropriations. In addition, LB 2 would claw back an additional \$250,000 in unspent reappropriated funds from the previous

biennium.

These reappropriated funds have been saved over the last 10 years to cover IT projects critical to our work. Each biennium we have requested reappropriation of unspent general fund appropriations to complete our IT projects and each time the Appropriations Committee and the governor have agreed. Now it seems Gov. Jim Pillen has changed his mind.

The \$500,000 represents 14% of the FCRO's total budget. This would be devastating to our agency and would adversely impact our operations. The proposed cuts severely undermine the level of oversight and data quality required to ensure safety and well-being of children in foster care. It would result in fewer foster care cases being reviewed, less data collected, analyzed, and reported, and depriving the courts and the Legislature of accurate, timely information and data, placing children at risk.

The state of Nebraska should not cut corners when it comes to the lives of children in foster care.

Monika Gross, Lincoln
Executive Director, Foster Care Review Office

Thanks all around

I would like to extend a big thank you to OPPD, first and foremost, for the quickness of getting power restored after that terrible storm, including countless hours working over night. Secondly, to all the fast food workers who put in countless hours Wednesday night to make sure all of us without power got fed. Lines in drive-throughs were endless. And for the most part all were in good spirits. Fast food made a killing that night. And finally, first responders who work tirelessly through out the night

Thank you!

Kerry Hanson, Omaha

Nebraska's golf record

In the history of Nebraska amateur golf, four men have won a gold or silver medal in a USGA Championship. All four are from Omaha and two of them attended Westside High School.

Rick Schultz, Independence,
Missouri
Former Omahan

We are the future

As a teenager in 2024, most of what I hear from the elders around me are the complaints about how our generation is "weak" and "lazy." We don't want to work, we're ungrateful, and the future is disastrous. But I believe people's energy should not be spent chastising younger generations but helping us grow. If you tell a young person in this society that there's no hope for the future, all they will feel is frightened. Those scared thoughts will lead to them believing, that maybe there really is no hope. With no hope, there's nothing to fight or work for. It's all a cycle based upon the golden rule of "Treat others the way you want to be treated." So, if you ever see yourself or someone around you make untrue and biased comments about the younger generations, think about how we are the future, the way you treat us is going to be reflected in your future.

Grace Barna, Omaha

Getting rid of the stink

I'd like to say thank you to Bailey from the Nebraska Humane Society who came out to remove a dead raccoon from our street. With the 90-plus degree temps, it was, shall we say, very odiferous. This is one of those jobs people would say "you can't pay me enough to do," and seldom get thanks for doing. Thanks again!

Mike & Donna Hermsen,
Omaha

MIDLANDS VOICES

We must be thoughtful as we navigate 'our vocabulary of ideas'

Come November, as things stand at the moment, voters will choose between two very different visions of America's future.

Democrats are offering a business-as-usual, Kalama Harris-led vision that respects the institutions of self-governance. Conversely, Republican activists are signaling distrust for anyone and everything by vying to insert a norm-breaking, self-described authoritarian. Things are so akimbo, the Nebraska Republican Party endorsed



RICK GALUSHA

against their own incumbents including U.S. Sens. Deb Fisher and Pete Ricketts, and Reps. Don Bacon, Adrian Smith, and Mike Flood. With the change of presidential candidates, Democrats are in the midst of chaos and confusion.

Still don't know what I was waitin' for. And my time was runnin' wild.... Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes: Turn and face the strange — David Bowie, "Changes"

On both the right and the left, internal factions have made leadership difficult. Voters might recall Paul Ryan, Mitt Romney, Nancy Pelosi and Kevin McCarthy. Recent Nebraska governors straddled similar divides. President Joe Biden did, with limited success, navigate the complex interests of progressive extremism, moderation, political partisanship, and existential threats including Gaza, Ukraine, Taiwan, COVID-19, global warming, and cyberterrorism.

Ch-ch-changes. There's gonna have to be a different man. Time

may change me, but I can't trace time.

The parties intentionally force voters to choose the political extreme or cast inconsequential votes. Traditional conservatives and liberals are pigeonholed between a MAGA agenda and the progressive left. On the right, MAGA conservatives have grabbed the political reins by electing candidates across all layers of government. Their intent is to redefine American norms and traditions by undermining governing institutions, weakening the constitution, justifying a violent insurgency, and normalizing behaviors that 10 years ago they would have considered inconceivable.

On the left, progressives leverage educational systems to alter language and, thus, how we think. American pop culture has as much global influence as our military might. Our vocabulary of ideas includes, knowingly or not, legacy views on race, gender, and religion, including definitions of good and bad behaviors.

Obviously, language, and through it, norms, values, and thereby behaviors, have evolved for thousands of years. America's language and the imagery embedded within it, developed in a society historically dominated by white males and Protestantism.

I once used the phrase, 'personal responsibility' in meeting. The room exploded, accusing me of using 'conservative code words.' Recently, campus protesters used the Arabic term 'intifada,' which means uprising, despite knowing the term offended others. In my case, I learned quickly that I needed to change my choice of words if I

wanted to successfully navigate a conversation.

Ch-ch-changes. Don't tell them to grow up and out of it.

Words, and how we use them, matter. An aspect of modern politics is redefining language and the images embedded within it — thereby changing values, and ultimately behavior. Sometimes the results are desirable, while in other cases, it's caveat emptor or buyer beware. In a politicized setting, "illegal immigrant" carries a very different mental image than "undocumented worker" or "DACA recipient." Former President Barack Obama's refusal to use the phrase "radical Islamic terrorist" demonstrated his choice to protect American Muslims. Equally poignant was "Chinese flu," used to describe the COVID-19 pandemic, despite its use potentially sparking increases in violence against Asian Americans.

Generally, there are five attitudes associated with changing social mores: Rejection or withdrawal, tolerance, acceptance, celebration, and participation.

It's important to be aware and thoughtful while we all navigate the expectations associated with societal change. How we adapt and which attitude we display defines how we, and others, live out our lives because, in the end, our behavior defines society.

Strange fascinations... changes are taking the pace I'm goin' through. Ch-ch-ch-changes

Rick Galusha, Ph.D., teaches political science. He hosts a blues radio show and is a member of the Iowa and Nebraska music halls of fame.

This law 'has set Nebraska on a march toward a grand rebuild'

It has been more than two years since Congress passed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. It is said that politics is the art of the possible, but when it came to this historic legislation politics quickly became the art of confusion. Critics of the legislation called it "rushed and irresponsible," complained about "wasteful spending," and even went so far as to label it a "big government socialist agenda" to score political points.



JIM GLAZER



KIP EIDEBERG

The truth is that the law made a once-in-a-generation investment in our nation's infrastructure and competitiveness that has set Nebraska on a march toward a grand rebuild. As implementation hits its stride, the infrastructure law continues to deliver for Nebraska. As of January 2024, \$2.4 billion in funding has been announced and is headed to the state with over 260 specific projects identified for funding. From much-needed investments in roads and bridges, to upgrades to clean water and water infrastructure and a \$950 million makeover of Eppley Airfield, the infrastructure law is boosting our competitiveness and improving our quality of life.

Equipment manufacturers in Nebraska have faced their share of challenges over the past decade. Many of these challenges have been due to infrastructure issues. Traffic congestion has delayed deliveries of parts and components and caused maintenance backlogs. Insufficient investments in inland waterway

and port infrastructure have led to higher shipping costs. With roughly 30% of all equipment built in the United States destined for export, inadequate infrastructure has long undermined our ability to meet strong global demand for Nebraska-made equipment, further eroding our industry's global competitiveness and stymieing job creation.

This is changing. Nebraska has become a magnet for business development and job creation, thanks in large part to the infrastructure law. Take Elliott Equipment Company, which builds aerial work platforms, cranes, and digger derricks here in Omaha. The company's equipment is used to build and maintain many types of infrastructure the law funded, including Omaha Public Power District transmission projects, improvements to interstate signage and lighting, and broadband infrastructure projects in communities without access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet services. This business growth has led Elliott Equipment Company to invest heavily in new products, facilities, and equipment, creating dozens of new high-paying jobs.

Graepel, a manufacturer of perforated sheet metal products, is another Omaha-based business that has reaped significant benefits from the law. Last year, the company celebrated the expansion of its production site — doubling its operations in Sarpy County — and has added 20 new family-sustaining jobs since 2021. As demand for construction equipment, driven in large part by new infrastructure projects across the country, remains strong, Graepel is poised for continued growth in its construction machinery segment.

Infrastructure spending also has a significant multiplier effect. A 2022 analysis by the World

Bank found that every public dollar invested in infrastructure led to \$1.50 in resulting economic activity. No wonder that the unemployment rate in Nebraska stands around 2.5%, with 18,000 new nonfarm jobs added last year and over 20,000 new business applications filed in 2023. Douglas County had 8,000 of these new business applications, the most in Nebraska. Douglas County is represented by U.S. Rep. Don Bacon, one of only two members of the state's congressional delegation who voted for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Bacon, who played a key role in shaping the bill and building bipartisan support in the U.S. House, deserves a lot of credit for his leadership and commitment to renewing and revitalizing Nebraska's physical infrastructure.

As election campaigns kick into high gear, politics is about to become the art of convenience. Lawmakers who voted against the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act are busy taking credit for projects made possible by the law. This should come as no surprise. But the fact remains that by reaching communities across Nebraska — including rural communities and historically underserved populations — the law is improving lives for all Nebraskans and positioning the state for continued success. Political disagreements and cynical posturing aside, the infrastructure law continues to deliver for Nebraska.

Jim Glazer is the president and CEO of Elliott Equipment Company in Omaha and a member of the Association of Equipment Manufacturers CE Sector Board. Kip Eideberg is senior vice president of the Government and Industry Relations at the Association of Equipment Manufacturers in Washington, D.C.

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