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The Fortnightly Rant

The Great American SNAFU

The details of America's most recent inexplicable tragedy are as follows: a former student of a well-regarded Florida high school returned to his alma mater on Valentine's Day while wearing a maroon polo shirt issued by its JROTC program—apparently the only subject at which he excelled. He then shot 32 people with a legally-purchased AR-15, killing 17 of them.

There appears to be a broad consensus that such events, though increasingly common, are fundamentally undesirable; the ubiquity of that opinion paradoxically making it unique in American politics.

There is much debate over what should be done. Some may even be arguing—it's difficult to tell, given the level of obfuscation—that nothing should be done.

One proposed course of action seems to be receiving the preponderance of news coverage. That is probably because it's being touted by the President and other members of his Party, which happens to control both houses of Congress. That proposal would involve the issuance of arms, ammunition, and training to those teachers who are willing to accept them.

If one teacher in ten, say 300,000, accept this responsibility, and all of them are issued a relatively affordable pistol, that's one new \$150 million line item right there. They'll need to be trained and certified, of course; there goes another \$150 million. Ammo is extra; call that \$60 million. Altogether that would mean an increase in school spending on the order of a third of a billion dollars, conservatively speaking.

Teachers have long argued that schools and students would benefit from increased funding. Media reports suggest that this is not what they had in mind.

Proponents of this approach argue that “the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun, is a good guy with a gun.” While that statement has a certain rhetorical appeal, being a sequence of short, simple words arranged in an easily-remembered pattern, it seems to fall short as an accurate representation of reality.

On the day the Floridian bad guy shot 32 people, there was a good guy with a gun on the premises. As a Broward County Deputy Sheriff, presumably he was trained. Apparently that's no guarantee.

Some people have called that deputy a coward, including many public figures who are unfamiliar with the sound of bullets passing nearby. They tend to agree with the NRA: safety is always enhanced when there are good guys with guns on the scene. Another incident that same day seems to suggest otherwise.

About 100 people were worshipping in the Faith City Mission in Amarillo, Texas when a thirty-five-year-old man barged in brandishing a pistol. Several of them grappled with the gunman; in the scuffle, good guy Tony Garces grabbed the gun. When the police arrived Garces didn't drop the gun fast enough to suit them, so one of the other good guys shot him. His bad aim was Garces' good luck: the bullet hit him in the neck, but missed his carotid artery. He's expected to recover.

Many Americans insist rather reflexively that “we're number one.” When judged objectively against the standard set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution—the common welfare, domestic tranquility, and all that jazz—that's not an easy case to make. When it comes to school massacres, though, we win, hands down. No other allegedly-civilized country comes close.

Polite folk may be shocked, but history gives them few excuses. His-



torians write euphemistically of how the country was “settled.” As historian Francis Jennings has made clear, it was really an armed invasion. Spoiler alert: the guys with more guns won. There's debate over whether the 2nd Amendment was intended to assure Southern states that they'd be able to suppress slave rebellion. There is no doubt that guns gave Southern whites the upper hand, before and after emancipation. The conclusion may be regrettable, but it's also inescapable: violence, particularly gun violence is, indeed, as American as cherry pie.

Stepping up to grapple with this issue—and duly registering with the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization, so as to gain exemption from any pesky taxation—is the National Rifle Association, or NRA. It has two core principles: one, with the exception of bad guys and babies, everybody should always be carry-

ing a gun; and, two, any resemblance between the first principle and the fever dreams of the marketing departments of gun manufacturers and dealers is merely a coincidence.

The NRA has undergone a dramatic transformation since its inception in 1871. Co-founder and Civil War General Ambrose Burnside's original intent—should such a thing matter to anybody—was the promotion of better marksmanship. He said with some chagrin that only one in ten of his soldiers could “hit the broad side of a barn.” Burnside's legacy thus includes an apparently immortal cliché, a quasi-eponymous facial hairstyle unlikely ever to be surpassed, thousands of Union soldiers needlessly dead at Fredericksburg and Antietam, and an organization seemingly geared to kill more Americans, should another Civil War occur, or just Tuesday.

The organization was alive but boring until 1977, when it took a

sudden, sharp turn to the weird. At 4 a.m. on May 22nd, during its annual convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, Harlon Carter took over. In 1931, at the age of 17, Carter was convicted of murdering a 15-year-old Mexican-American boy in Laredo. The conviction was later overturned, but kept hush-hush until the 1980s. It didn't seem to hinder his employment. In 1950 he ran Operation Wetback, a massive deportation of farm workers. Since 1991 the NRA has been run by Wayne LaPierre. Except for a murder charge, he makes Carter look like Mr. Rogers.

Thus stands our imperfect union: on one side the NRA, backed up by its five million members—and, apparently, Vladimir Putin's close ally, Russian banker Alexander Torshin.

On the other, the rest of us, including 150,000 young Americans whose school days have been interrupted by gunfire and the ensuing chaos. Hang on, folks.

The Alleged News®

Dr. Green, the Bootlegger's Friend

Granite Staters of a certain age may recall an old nickname for the State Liquor Commission: “Dr. Green.”

The name derived from the green-fronted, dispensary-like facilities the State used to use to peddle booze, at least in the more rural districts. A rather cryptic menu on the wall listed the available products, along with their item numbers. Customers marked those numbers on a slip of paper, as if they were writing their own prescription, then handed the slip to a dour old gent behind a screen. He'd disappear out back and return with the goods, which, on leaving the store, had to be discreetly hidden in a brown paper bag.

The whole experience—we're only reporting a vague memory of what we were once told, you understand, oral history, as it were—reeked of

furtiveness and disapproval.

Times have changed, but the underlying principle has not. The State Liquor Commission [SLC] was organized, as was the state lottery, to shift the cost of government from thrifty, decent folks onto ne'er-do-wells and flatlanders, and it still performs that function.

Over the years, though, the user experience has been transformed. The furtiveness and disapproval have been replaced with expert marketing and overall Wal-Mart-ization. Nothing says “Welcome to New Hampshire” like a huge liquor store right off the interstate.

This more presentable but still ethically dubious system was cooking along quietly when, in mid-January, the *Union Leader's* Kevin Landrigan quoted New York and Vermont officials accusing the

Commission of bootlegging.

Liquor and tax authorities in those states, he wrote, “believe there is a growing pipeline of cheaply bought liquor here that is smuggled over to New York, so end users in clandestine markets can avoid paying their own high excise taxes.”

Landrigan cited as an example a New York man who was pulled over in that state on November 10th. Inside his van, “troopers found stacked floor to ceiling 757 liters of high-priced liquor bought at five different New Hampshire liquor stores.”

Commission Chairman Joe Mollica told Landrigan the state had done nothing wrong: “If he bought it and purchased it in the state, and he followed our policy, then the state of New Hampshire is covered. And I am sure we did.”

An anonymous liquor broker sug-

gested to Landrigan that Mollica's view was perhaps a tad Panglossian. “When the [pre-Christmas holiday season] gift card is available, the bootleggers come out of the woodwork and flood the store,” buying slightly less than \$10,000 worth of Hennessy cognac at a time. Purchases of over \$10,000 would trigger an IRS reporting requirement.

Vermont Commissioner of Liquor Control Patrick Delaney told Landrigan that “while this is not an enforcement priority for his state, an Internal Revenue Service agent recently contacted him about New Hampshire.” According to Delaney, the IRS agent's “[had the] impression that this activity had been going on for a long time.”

Mollica countered that “the *Washington Post* judged New Hampshire's operation to be the best run in the

nation.”

He was probably not referring to the *Post's* article of September 3, 2015, headlined, “Bartending book with drink names like ‘stripper mom’ pulled by N.H. liquor commission.” The Liquor Commission, it said, had shelled out \$3,300 for 500 copies of *The Bartender's Black Book Tenth Edition*, said to include more than 2,500 drink recipes. The *Post* cited only the aforementioned “stripper mom” and “the panty dropper.” Further research has established that other recipes included the “gang banger” and the “screw me sideways.” To no one's surprise, then-Governor Maggie Hassan was not amused. The books were pulled from the shelves. No doubt the Commission's ledgers

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from page one

recorded the venture as a loss.

Perhaps Mollica has a broad view of what approval looks like, or maybe he's talking about a different article.

The kerfuffle did not stop with Landrigan's article. In fact, that was just the beginning.

On February 13th, Executive Councilor Andru Volinsky presented Governor Chris Sununu and Attorney General Gordon MacDonald, Senate President Charles Morse, House Speaker Gene Chandler, and his colleagues on the Executive Council, a 23-page memo, "Re: Questionable Business Practices of the State Liquor Commission." The memo was the result of Volinsky's personal sleuthing, including at least one on-site visit, and revelations by Commission whistle-blowers.

The memo states that the Liquor

Commission "has adopted practices that appear designed to undermine the policy and facilitate money laundering." Money laundering is a crime.

Furthermore, he charges that the Commission "further facilitates cash bulk sales by maintaining inexplicably high inventories of Hennessy products at its stores that are conveniently located adjacent to the state's borders and near major highways for the benefit of out-of-state bulk cash purchasers." It also is said to have equipped some of those same stores with cash-counting machines, "another indication of the awareness of the problem by the SLC central administration."

According to Volinsky, the Commission sold \$26 million worth of Hennessy in fiscal year 2017. That represents 3.7 percent of the SLC's \$700 million income. That's a lot of cognac for this Bud-swilling state.

There is already something fairly



"Sports build character," it is commonly said. The veracity of that assertion is not for the Flag Police to determine. Blatant violations of the Flag Code, however, are another matter entirely. The so-called Olympic Games—played everywhere but in the vicinity of Mt. Olympus—are even worse than American football games when it comes to the casual desecration of the U.S. Flag. In this photo, according to Military.com, "A fan wearing the American flag cheers during the men's curling semi-final match between United States and Canada at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea, on Feb. 22, 2018. Fort Shafter officials are updating evacuation plans for American civilians in South Korea should war break out on the peninsula." Let us hope, should the President decide to nuke the Korean Peninsula, that the departing Americans will lower the colors before they depart, lest they be irradiated in any subsequent nuclear holocaust.

funny about the state being in the booze biz. For the state to cater to bootleggers, though, really ratchets up the irony. However, below its humorous surface, this story is really serious. As Volinsky notes, the state may be making itself liable in a whole array of ways, and its employees may be at risk due to the large amounts of cash floating around.

What to do, then?

Shoot the messenger, of course!

In a rather baffling document, the SLC wrote that "Well-before [sic] receiving the accusations from Councilor Volinsky, we had begun investigating the matter and our initial findings are deeply concerning."

The SLC's document insists that "There's nothing illegal or unscrupulous about making large sales to out of state customers as long as our employees follow the policies in place set forth"

The problem, in their eyes, is apparently that "a political figure, who happens to be an attorney," is treating Dr. Green "like a political football."

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A Parade? OK—On One Condition!
One week ago, in classic Friday-

news-dump style, *Politico* reported that an unnamed "senior administration official" had "summarized" an unclassified memo on the President's proposed military parade. Trump wants a briefing from Defense Secretary Mattis on "concepts of operation" for a parade from the White House to the Capitol.

National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster's memo "makes clear the administration, at the president's direction, is moving forward with plans for the parade, and has potentially settled on a date," according to *Politico*. That date would be November 11th—Veterans Day.

"Whether the president himself will participate in the event remains unclear," *Politico*'s article concluded. "[French President Emmanuel] Macron took part in France's parade, riding in an open-top military vehicle alongside the former chief of the French armed forces and surrounded by hundreds of military men on horseback."

Macron's parade gave Trump the idea to have one himself. *Politico*'s last paragraph gave us an idea for a way to make Trump's parade tolerable: let's arrange to borrow Roy

Moore's balky little pony, so that President Bone Spur can ride it down Pennsylvania Avenue, leading ranks of men and women with more character than himself.

Alternatively, we could take the \$20 or \$30 million this farce is expected to cost and use it to fill some of the 35,000 vacant positions in the VA health care system.

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An Heroic Historical Effort

A Greenland resident, Leonard Schwab, sent us the following dispatch of historical note:

"If a book cannot be judged by its cover, then the nine volume history of the Town of Greenland, *A Quiet Abiding Place*, certainly cannot be judged by its covers. The town's history encompasses 2,646+ typescript pages covering the period 1635 to 2000. Originally begun in the 1960s as a labor of love by Paul C. and Anna Hughes, the work of organizing data and fact checking was continued and completed in 2002 by their son Paul F. Hughes (Greenland's 2016 Citizen of the Year). When supplemental pages were added, the total number of volumes came to eleven over-sized

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3-ring binders chock full of town history that otherwise could have fallen to the wayside and been forever forgotten.

“Until this January there existed only two paper copies of this remarkable work, one of which sat atop the archival cabinet at the Weeks Public Library. Beyond the obvious limited lifespan of paper documents, having only a single local source presented a serious problem for historians, genealogists, and various scholars who might wish to refer to it. For a researcher who might know a person’s name or event of interest but does not know the associated time frame, this would become a major problem due to the lack of an index, forcing a researcher to take the time to read a large portion of the history in search of a specific event or person of interest. Also, anyone not located in or near Greenland would have needed to travel here to do their research.

“Shortly after the Greenland Historical Society was rebooted in October 2017 by town residents Karen Mason and Leonard Schwab, a goal was set to scan, digitize and store the

entire town history as a searchable PDF (Portable Document Format) file. Thanks to the generous support of local businessman Steve Leonard for the use of his Xerox workstation scanner, the history now exists as a single 80 MByte digital volume, after the three-month effort to convert it to the digital world. The conversion was completed none too soon when in early February a Massachusetts gentleman who is a distant relative of a long time Greenland family inquired by “snail mail” about the availability of certain genealogical data. The Ctrl-F search function was well exercised to extract the requested information from the digital history file.

“The Greenland Historical Society is dependent on a very limited source of funds from member dues at the paltry rate of \$10 per year. The society plans to acquire a URL address on the internet where all things historical related to Greenland will be found in the future, including links to WeeksBrickHouse.org and WeeksLibrary.org. After the internet address is acquired and the digital file



of the Hughes Family Collection of Greenland History is installed, the society plans to acquire and install digital copies of the U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps of Greenland, which have been printed every ten years since 1890. If a generous donor comes forth to fund the lease or purchase of a book-edge scanner, then the society would also scan and digitize all the annual town reports, allowing anyone to search for information on specific items of interest in the town’s history. Until that time, preservation of Greenland’s history will continue at a slow pace consistent with the limited funds available.

“For further information or to volunteer for some of the preservation work, please contact Karen Mason at kjkmason@gmail.com or at (603) 366-6336, or alternately Leonard Schwab at lschwab2@gmail.com or at (603) 661-5209.”

To which we can only add, the Town of Greenland, and its residents past, present, and future, are fortunate to have such stewards.

Maplewood Avenue Graboid Alert!

We’ve been impressed before by the efficacy of this town’s SeeClick-

Fix system, which allows anyone with internet access, via desktop or smartphone, to alert City Hall of situations requiring official attention [SeeClickFix.com].

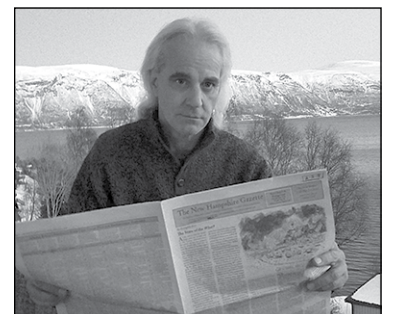
Now we’re intrigued by the possibility of its entertainment value. On Saturday, an anonymous user posted the photo below showing the crumbling sidewalk next to the empty lot where the recently-demolished Shaines & McEachern law offices formerly stood, along with the message, “Looks like a Graboid from the movie *Tremors* just tunneled under the sidewalk chasing Kevin Bacon.”



bling sidewalk next to the empty lot where the recently-demolished Shaines & McEachern law offices formerly stood, along with the message, “Looks like a Graboid from the movie *Tremors* just tunneled under the sidewalk chasing Kevin Bacon.”

Distribution Record Nearly Broken!

We reported on September 19, 2008, that Portsmouth’s own Brian Wazlaw had set a record for Northernmost Ad Hoc Hand Delivery of the *Gazette*. Brian brought a copy to the Waldo Arms, “Kaktovic’s Finest” hotel, on Barrow Island, Alaska; latitude: 70° 07’ 05”N—1,380 miles from the Pole.



Murph, who, like many Indonesians and Afghans, dispenses with the pretentious use of multiple names, nearly broke that record recently. He brought a copy of our February 2nd paper to the Magic Mountail Lodge in Lyngseidet, Norway; latitude 69° 34’ 57”N. By our measure, and with a little help from Google Earth, that’s just about 50 miles farther south than Kaktovic.



Monday, February 19th began with the temperature at 19° Fahrenheit—approximately “normal.” By Wednesday afternoon it reached a record-setting 74°. Perhaps some hitherto-unknown force struck the region and vaulted Market Square a few months into the future. Or perhaps the fossil fuel industry has broken the climate; opinions vary. Meanwhile, over the past few days, Europe has been colder than the North Pole. This development tends to confirm the work of those pointy-headed liberals with science degrees who say fossil fuel use is changing the climate. For some reason, though, it’s not giving them comfort. It’s freaking them out, instead.

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Take to the Streets

To the Editor:

At some point between the brief time span separating the mass slaughter on the streets of Las Vegas and the Valentine's Day massacre in the Parkland high school I came across a relevant YouTube video. It featured Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones and rocker Sheryl Crow. Richards was discussing the Stones' 1968 song, "Street Fighting Man," which was banned in some U.S. cities. The gist of the message was that of taking to the streets in protest of injustice or to rally in favor of a worthy cause. Crow agreed, saying that the song is pertinent now and is the anthem for what is happening in America right this second.

Taking to the streets en masse or speaking directly to legislators represent time-honored mores of our democracy since its very beginning. Whether demonstrating in support of issues like women's rights, racial equality or environmental concerns of Native Nations at Standing Rock, taking action is imperative. Conversely, acting in opposition to affronts such as a senseless war, the Northern Pass or to the rampant availability of AR-15 assault rifles and 30-round magazines, peacefully speaking out is an essential right under the First Amendment of our Constitution.

In retracing the origins of "Street Fighting Man," Richards reminds viewers that "America wouldn't be here if it wasn't for people going to the streets."

All Americans have been traumatized by the never-ending gun violence (so often committed by Americans) against innocent citizens, whether in school, in church, at a concert or at about any place where people gather. Time after time we've said this has to stop. But with our vomitous autocrat-in-chief and his right-wing minions in Congress so monetarily influenced by NRA lobbying power, nothing meaningful has changed.

Now, Trump's toilet paper bandage to school massacres is to arm teachers. More guns, not less. Overwhelmingly, teachers, cops, students and their parents don't want any part of such a

ridiculous idea. For one thing, they understand Murphy's law: "anything that can go wrong will go wrong." Making assault weapons illegal would lessen the chances of that adage's probability without arming educators.

Nearly 70 years ago President Truman said in a message to Congress, "Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear." The Rolling Stones' song says this in a different way!

I'm so proud of the Parkland survivors and students all across this country for the courage, resilience and energy they're so clearly expressing in words and actions. With Truman's and the Stones' message in mind, I encourage them not to give up and for all of us who are older to join their efforts toward significant gun control. There exist many restrictions which would uphold responsible gun owners' rights while helping to protect people just innocently carrying on with their lives.

Paul Nichols
Loudon, N.H.

Paul:

Thanks for writing. It is always a delight to assist a former Marine with a Purple Heart when he's busting up an old stereotype.

The Editor

You Call That Interference?

To the Editor:

Notwithstanding any Russian interference in U.S. elections, how many times has the U.S. government (CIA) intervened in the internal affairs of numerous countries from Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961), Chile (1973) and others such as Syria today. (See William Blum's *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since WWII*).

About a month ago, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said: "the U.S. will maintain a military presence in Syria ... insuring ISIS cannot re-emerge." Tillerson also stated that the U.S. is



committed to regime change in Syria. As Syria is a sovereign nation, by what authority are some 2,000 American troops in Syria and an unknown number of Special Forces inside Syria? Moreover, who has authorized the building of a permanent U.S. military base there? As far as I know, there has been no Congressional authorization for sending and keeping these 2,000+ troops inside Syria. What about international law, the U.S. Constitution and the 1973 War Powers Act concerning placing our military in harm's way? It would appear that the corporate-controlled Congress abdicates its responsibility in pledging to support and uphold the Constitution.

Who is encouraging the U.S. to engage in regime change in Syria? None other than our strongest "ally," Israel, and the terrorist-sponsoring Saudi regime. Naturally, the real target is Iran whose government Israel wants gone (as it also lobbied in 2002 for removing Saddam).

Is U.S. preparing for another war? "Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive."

Will Thomas
Auburn, N.H.

Will:

Lo and behold: another veteran heard from, also dissenting from the knee-jerk, militaristic stereotype. Thank you for raising the red flag about what may prove to be our next idiotic war.

Ex-U.S. Rep. and current radio talk show blatherer Joe Walsh [R-Ill.], tweeted Tuesday that he was proud to be "honored with an award by Jerusalem TV as one of #70at70. One of 70 non-Israelis who have most stridently [sic] supported #Israel." That prompted one John Cardella to respond, "So you support Israel and their strict gun laws, universal health care and paid abortions? Why don't you support that here?"

If he (a) knew what he was doing, which is doubtful, and (b) was honest, which would be politically suicidal, Walsh

would reply, "I am a Republican, ergo, I am a hypocrite."

The Editor

Incomplete Text in the Rant of February 16

To the Editor:

In column two, where it states "... occupies the lavish unit of public housing ..." the text should should more completely state, "... occupies the lavish unit of public housing previously occupied by a black family of better credentials and greater intelligence ...".

Leonard Schwab
Greenland, N.H.

Leonard,

[In the voice of Sydney Greenstreet playing Kasper Gutman in The Maltese Falcon] Right you are, sir, right you are. We extend our most sincere apologies for our careless omission.

The Editor

Amend to Protect Our Future

To the Editor:

I recently testified before the New Hampshire House Municipal & County Government Committee in favor of the New Hampshire Community Rights Amendment, CACR19. Local people from the Towns of New Hampshire do not find it difficult to understand how the structure of law and government work to deny us our individual rights enumerated within our state Bill of Rights.

There's been concern expressed over whether the proposed state constitutional amendment is proposing unlimited Home Rule for New Hampshire municipalities, after all, New Hampshire is a Dillon's Rule state! Dillon's Rule is a legal doctrine that says towns are only empowered to enact laws permitted by the State. The State is the parent, the Municipality is the child. Home Rule is a legal

doctrine that empowers towns to pass laws that are not specifically prohibited by the State. The problem is that both doctrines allow preemption to override local law-making that affords greater protections than provided by state and federal laws.

I would describe CACR19 as a "limited home rule" amendment, offering a narrow portal of allowable municipal laws that are not subject to punitive preemption, thereby protecting municipalities from certain kinds of legal action.

And, clearly, we do not have to be a home rule state to empower municipalities with forms of home rule authority. As a matter of fact, we already do! During the Onassis Oil Refinery debacle in the mid-70's, the legislature saw fit to pass HB 18 leading to RSA 31:109 and 47:27, which reaffirmed the Town's home rule decision-making authority over refinery siting in both towns and cities.

Government is supposed to protect the people and regulate corporations, not protect corporations and regulate the people. Yet the current structure of law and government renders the people within a community as abused children; corporations as the abuser; with the state as the enabler of the abuse through the issuance of land-use permits that legalize the abusive activity; then the courts are there to protect the abuser from the abused when they attempt to stop the abuse!

If I were truly speaking of an abused child, there would be outrage over such a system that would legalize child abuse, protect the abuser and punish the abused for trying to stop the abuse, and yet I am talking about children; their mothers, their fathers, and other family members too. We all make up our communities. We are the fami-

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Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) author
from *Fahrenheit 451*

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CACR19 is the only way to stop the abuser because it empowers the abused with legal authority to stop the abuse and instructs the courts to protect the abused from the abuser and no longer the other way around. Learn more at www.nhcommunityrights.org.

Michelle Sanborn
NHCRN President
Alexandria, N.H.

Let the People Vote on CACR19

To the Editor:

On February 6th, the New Hampshire Community Rights Amendment, CACR19, inspired so many supportive citizen testimonies that its House Municipal & County Government committee hearing ran 90 minutes rather than the scheduled 30. The following week, CACR19 left its subcommittee with a 3-2 bi-partisan vote recommending it ought-to-pass.

The next step is CACR19's executive session on Tuesday, February 27th, at 9 a.m. in Room 301 of Concord's Legislative Offices Building. The complete House Municipal & County Government committee will vote how to recommend CACR19 to the full New Hampshire House. If recommended ought-to-pass and approved in both New Hampshire House and Senate by three-fifths majority, then a two-third vote by the New Hampshire people would establish CACR19 as Article 40 of New Hampshire's Bill of Rights.

Supported by nine bi-partisan co-sponsors, CACR19 seeks to codify

the recognized constitutional right of New Hampshire citizens to pass local laws by majority vote to protect their human communities and the natural ecosystems (e.g. air, water, soil) on which they depend—so long as any locally-made laws do not infringe on real persons' existing rights under state and federal constitutions and laws.

CACR19 would give New Hampshire citizens real voices against harmful corporate interests that routinely and successfully lobby legislatures and petition courts to apply state preemption to nullify local ordinances and any say New Hampshire people have over where they live and what projects come into their communities.

Plymouth's Rep. Steven Rand (D) outlines the solution CACR19 would offer legislators and constituents: "We represent constituents to create statutes, but the people represent themselves constitutionally. The constitution is higher than statutes. Giving them the chance to vote on CACR19 is the one thing we can do to support their ability to protect their health, safety, and welfare. It will help them expand, not decrease their rights."

Rep. Vincent Migliore (R) of Bridgewater, a self-identified conservative, believes that "In lieu of revolution, CACR19 offers a peaceful way for people to self-govern when the need arises." To those worried over CACR19's scope, the NRA member quotes the amendment itself: "Local laws adopted pursuant to this article shall not weaken existing protections for, or constrict the fundamental rights of, natural persons, or their local communities, or nature, as those protections and rights are secured by local, state, federal, or international law."

Jaffrey's Rep. Franklin Sterling (R) shockingly retorts that "New Hamp-

shire is not a democracy, it is a republic. This amendment changes our form of government to democracy and we are not a democracy."

In response, Swanze's Rep. Bruce Tatro (D) asserts that New Hampshire indeed is a democracy: "CACR19 is an amendment to a constitution that was formed by the people of the state. The people should have the opportunity to vote this amendment up or down. I'm not in favor of short-circuiting that."

For more information on CACR19 and the community rights movement in New Hampshire, please visit www.nhcommunityrights.org.

Adam Tardif
Newmarket N.H.

Single Payer Will Boost Economy

To the Editor:

America spends more than twice as much on healthcare as the average developed country (almost one-fifth of its GDP—the world's largest share), yet it ranks very low, and in some cases, last, among developed countries in all major health care categories such as infant mortality, life expectancy, heart and lung disease rates and teen pregnancies.

We pay \$8,745 per capita, versus an average of \$3,484, causing many citizens to go bankrupt from the medical expenses. The primary reason that we pay so much more, and get less than other advanced nations, is that we have an insane employer-based health insurance "system" consisting of thousands of for-profit medical insurance companies, whose main motivation is, not to administer to your well-being, but to make higher profits for their executives and shareholders.

Not only is this system not healthy for American patients but it is also terrible for businesses. It compels the business community to shoulder the enormous non-operational expense of providing health insurance to their employees, to the detriment of ac-

tually operating their business. The current system often forces business leaders to limit their number of employees and the number of hours that they are hired to work. It encourages businesses to outsource or export jobs overseas where they can escape providing healthcare. It keeps them from maintaining a healthy workforce and providing competitive wages and benefits. Most of all, it prevents businesses from innovating, expanding and making profits. The current system also deters Americans from starting-up their own businesses. Despite it all, the business community continues to be the major pillar holding up this decaying structure.

Establishment politicians, bought and paid for by industry lobbyists, won't listen to the people, but will surely listen to American's business leaders who should inform their elected officials that they've had enough and that Single-Payer Healthcare (i.e. Medicare for All), with greatly lowered administrative costs, like Medicare, is the only sensible solution. The American economy would save about \$500 billion per year while all citizens would receive quality healthcare and businesses could concentrate solely on production and making profits.

Wayne H. Merritt
Dover, N.H.

Wayne:

Have you ever thought about going on a road trip, visiting all New Hampshire's largest businesses, and getting their CEOs to sign a petition demanding Medicare for All?

Your argument ought to convince them, and a long list of their names might convince some Republicans to be less stupid.

The Editor

Our Spineless "Leaders"

To the Editor:

In response to yet another mass shooting involving an assault type weapon, our spineless "leaders" in Congress are proposing raising the age for purchasing an assault weapon to 21 years old. If you look at the history of all mass shootings in the United States since 2000, it is very obvious that increasing the age to purchase an assault

weapon would have very limited impact.

Since 2000, there have been 31 mass shootings, not including the Texas motorcycle gang shootout involving dozens of shooters. Of the 31 shootings, five involved a shooter less than 21 years old, or 16 percent of the mass shootings. Of those five, three used an assault-type weapon, and in the Sandy Hook event, the 20-year-old shooter did not buy the weapon but used an assault weapon his mother owned. As such, nine percent of all mass shootings in America since 2000 were committed by a person less than 21 years of age using an assault type weapon. This means that the proposed legislation would not have made any difference in more than 91 percent of the mass shootings (*Metro.us* news, February 14th).

Reviewing the above data clearly tells you why Congress, at the behest of the NRA, prohibited the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from conducting gun violence research. As an epidemiologist, I was trained to evaluate adverse health events, including intentional injury, based on an analysis of the person, place and time of the events. The goal in any epidemiology study is to evaluate all the risk factors leading to the event and working to identify the weakest link in the chain of causation, including the agent, host and environment, to help prevent future events. When you analyze the 31 mass shooting events, the key risk factors that emerge are that in all but one of the cases (one involved a man and a woman), men were the shooters, in most of those involving a large number of victims, an assault type weapon was used, and the median age was about 32. The age range was from 16 to 64 years old.

If we were to take appropriate public health prevention action based on these data, clearly assault weapons should be banned for males at any age. Since singling out males might be considered unconstitutional, assault type weapons should be banned for

Hate Mail, &c.

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What's in Trump's food-box?

by Jim Hightower

Even Charles Dickens, England's masterful satirist of the Victorian upper class, couldn't have imagined elite rulers using a box of food as a gratuitous way to slap poor people. But Donald Trump and two of his slap-happy cabinet officials did imagine it—and then did it.

They slipped a malicious, punish-the-poor provision into the food

stamp budget Trump sent to Congress. Instead of providing a small monthly allowance for destitute families to spend on foods of their choice, the Trump provision would take away half of the allowance and substitute a monthly box of peanut butter, canned goods, and other packaged edibles chosen for them by the Federal government.

It's bureaucratic, patronizing, demeaning ... and stupid, but Trump Ag secretary, Sonny Perdue, hailed

it as a "bold, innovative" idea. Sonny has also disdainfully said that food stamp recipients are hooked on a culture of dependency—so maybe a diet of peanut butter will cure them of that.

Then came Trump budget director, Mick Mulvaney, a Tea Party extremist who bizarrely tried putting a luxury spin on the government-issued box of grub by comparing it to Blue Apron, an upscale grocery delivery system. But, Mick—get a

clue—Blue Apron patrons get to choose what's in their box—and it ain't peanut butter! It's locally-sourced, fresh food.

As the leading Democrat opposing the Trump mob's food-stamp gut job says in dismay, "My god, these people are awful ... really just not nice people."

Less nice is their real intention to kill the food stamp program entirely. Trump's budget calls for slashing 30 percent of the funding this year. As

watchdogs at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities put it, "That's the real battle." The food-box silliness is a distraction to let them pull off the big theft. To help stop them, go to www.cbpp.org.

Populist author, public speaker, and radio commentator Jim Hightower writes The Hightower Lowdown, a monthly newsletter chronicling the ongoing fights by America's ordinary people against rule by plutocratic elites. Sign up at HightowerLowdown.org.

gasoline, the AR-15 can't kill anyone without ammunition. Ban the distribution, sale, and possession of the readily-available 35-cent-a-round high-velocity ammo that makes this firearm "special," and it will quickly become little more than an obsolete relic to hang over the fireplace mantel.

Rick Littlefield
Barrington, N.H.

Rick:

While this approach would no doubt have some effect, it would only restrict the ammunition supply. There are millions of gun owners who are fully equipped to reload spent ammunition. Mostly, they're duck hunters reloading shotgun shells.

Some of them, though, are full-bore 2nd Amendment fanatics. We suspect that for a subset of them, an ammunition ban would represent what prohibition did to Al Capone: a business opportunity.

We can't say what the overall effect of an ammunition ban would be—but we recognize creative thinking when we see it!

The Editor

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Gun Control Language and Fentanyl

To the Editor:

Fentanyl does not kill people, people do. The only way to stop a bad guy with fentanyl is a good guy with fentanyl. Drug control does not work. Fentanyl should be deregulated.



These statements only make sense to those who make them with guns instead of fentanyl. If you are upset about opiate deaths in this country and support getting opiates off the street then you should be upset by gun deaths and support getting guns off the street too. Clearly the spread of more and more deadly guns has not made us safer.

Walter Hamilton
Portsmouth N.H.

Walter:

Tyrants aiming to abuse the population must first abuse the language.

The Editor

=====

The Donald's Suspect Gun Safety Policy

To the Editor:

My longevity is due to this policy: "never argue with someone holding a gun." So, how will students be able to question what their gun-totin' teachers say, in safety?

What happens if a disruptive student throws a spitball in class? Will he/she be shot? How about just a simple wound if it's a first offense?

Since substitute teachers don't work full-time, will the school provide a gun when they get an assignment, or will they have to bring their own?

Since three armed guards were unable to stop carnage at the Park-

land school, how many armed guards will it take?

If giving "good guys" guns will protect against bad guys with guns, how will we know who are the good guys? How will they be chosen?

Questions abound, but I'm sure the President has thought this through thoroughly. The Donald wouldn't duck deep analysis, would he?

Bruce Joffe

Piedmont, Calif.

=====

Donald: A Great Disappointment

To the Editor:

Donald Trump's performance as President has been a disappointment. He has done absolutely nothing to prevent further Russian meddling in our elections. He has refused to enforce additional sanctions against Russia despite overwhelming bipartisan support for such action by Congress.

He withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accords so that we are now the only nation not to have signed it. He has failed to protect our school children by not backing gun safety legislation. At a time when the world is moving toward renewable sources of energy such as wind or solar, Trump has ig-

nored them and attempted to revive the polluting coal industry.

He has failed to solve the DACA dilemma, placing at risk for deportation, hundreds of thousands of blameless children who were brought illegally to the United States by their parents. These children know no country other than the United States. And perhaps most senseless, Donald Trump wants to spend anywhere from \$15 to \$25 billion on a wall separating the United States and Mexico to fulfill a campaign pledge, an action most voters and experts see as a waste of money.

Yet, beyond that, Trump does additional long-term damage to our country by virtue of his unstable personality. The *Washington Post* (January 2nd) reports that Trump lied 1,950 times during his first 347 days in office, an average of over five lies a day. His combative partisan style has deepened the divide among Americans and undermined institutions such as the FBI, the Department of Justice, and our intelligence agencies, three organizations long held in high repute by the public.

Trump's personal life has demeaned the dignity of the presidency. In the 1950s, the fitness of candidate Adlai Stevenson to be

president was questioned simply because he was divorced. A decade later, Gov. Nelson Rockefeller was rejected as a presidential candidate by voters after he left his wife for another woman in the midst of his campaign. By contrast, Trump has been married three times; has been alleged to have had two extramarital affairs, and has been accused of sexual harassment by 19 different women (New York magazine, 12/12/2017).

By virtue of his behavior, Trump lowers presidential decorum and sets a damaging precedent for future Presidents. "If Trump could do this, why shouldn't I?" It is said that Vladimir Putin meddled in our 2016 presidential election because he wanted to undermine our democracy, deepen our partisan divides, and destroy our support for respected institutions. He saw his support for Trump as a mechanism for achieving his goals. Considering the effects of Trump's behavior in office, Putin's plan has been wildly successful.

Gary Patton

Hampton, N.H.

Gary:

While we share your disapproval of the Grand Yam, we cannot say we're disappointed. That would imply we had some sort of positive expectations.

We were not without expectations, of course; it's just that they were all negative. Would that we were disappointed!

The Editor

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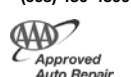
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