

# OPINION

Editor  
Clint Wolf  
608-364-9225

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

## Editorials

# Thank the grandkids for paying our debts

**Pandemic funds likely will go toward non-pandemic national spending spree.**

Good intentions do not necessarily make good policy.

Consider the American Rescue Plan, part of federal efforts to throw unbelievable amounts of money into the economy in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. That particular legislation carried a \$1.9 trillion pricetag, including about \$350 billion for state and local governments.

The City of Beloit's share is a bit more than \$15 million. The city's spokesperson recently told the *Beloit Daily News* that municipal officials expect to move along the process of identifying spending priorities by the middle of this year.

While it would be an exaggeration to say the pandemic is over, it's fair to observe that America is in a different space than it was a year ago when this package was adopted by Congress.

Let's also hasten to add that Beloit is not unique. All across the 50 states decisions will be made about how to spend that \$350 billion in assistance. Presumably, the money will go toward good improvements for Beloit.

It's worth a look back, though, at how the package was sold by Washington politicians. President Biden said America was “one step closer to getting state and local governments the money they need to prevent massive layoffs of essential workers.” The bill called for the money to be spent on public health costs and to replace lost revenues from the economy's precipitous plunge.

By last fall, though, state and local governmental organizations were petitioning for expanded use of the money for items like infrastructure and community revitalization.

Translation: There was more money flowing than governments needed strictly to offset pandemic costs, so officials wanted to be able to spend it on other priorities.

Worthwhile expenditures? Probably. But it's not necessarily what taxpayers expected from the pandemic-related legislation.

Moral of the story: It's always easy for politicians to throw around other people's money. Or, in this case, money the federal government didn't have but borrowed anyway and added to the national debt. Now, it's likely to be spent on non-pandemic projects. And, a year into the spending spree, more and more reports are coming forth about outright fraud and theft in various parts of the federal program. That's what happens when fast money is flying in the wind without proper controls. Nothing is free. Sooner or later debt must be paid. Thank your grandchildren for their generosity.

## Spare Wisconsin any more silliness

**Voices growing on both sides to end the Gableman embarrassment.**

As the old saying goes: Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.

Former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman looks more like a partisan hack every time he opens his mouth. Called before legislators for a hearing last week on his much-criticized—by both sides—examination of the 2020 election Gableman said it was time to “take a very hard look at the option of decertification of the 2020 (election result).” The man who days after the November 2020 vote declared President Trump's victory in Wisconsin had been stolen from him was asked at the hearing if he had voted for Trump: “You bet I did,” he fired back. A simple “yes” would have sufficed, and sounded much less combative and biased.

A few things to consider.

After Gableman's testimony, Republican Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke flatly rejected the decertification argument, calling it an illegal “fool's errand.”

Ann Jacobs, chair of the bipartisan Wisconsin Elections Commission, said Gableman was spouting a “crazy conspiracy theory.”

Gableman was particularly harsh in labeling private contributions for get-out-the-vote efforts as “illegal bribery.” Three courts have considered the issue and ruled it's legal.

Multiple examinations have found a couple dozen possible cases of vote fraud in Wisconsin, from either side, obviously not enough to erase a 21,000 vote difference.

Literally dozens of court cases, state audits, private audits, recounts and other examinations have confirmed the election results.

This ugly mess lies directly at the feet of Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who caved to pressure for a partisan circus despite knowing better, and acknowledging as much earlier. It's up to him to end this embarrassment which increasingly and justifiably is drawing bipartisan complaints. Gableman's rants, not to mention his wasting hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars, have caused enough damage.

### How to write the Forum

The Beloit Daily News welcomes letters to the editor from its readers on subjects of general interest. Opinions in the forum are the author's, and do not reflect the views of the Beloit Daily News.

Letters may be submitted for consideration to Public Forum, 444 East Grand Ave., Suite 102, Beloit, WI 53511. They may also be submitted electronically at [www.beloitdailynews.com](http://www.beloitdailynews.com).

Letters should be kept to 300 words or less, and must include the author's name, signature, address and telephone number for verification purposes. Only the name and hometown will be published.

Not all letters will be printed. Letters that engage in profanity, name-calling or address narrow personal interests will be rejected.

The Beloit Daily News reserves the right to edit letters for brevity and clarity.

# America the beautiful, in 6,500-mile slow lane

For many years family and friends heard me say my goal upon retirement was to point my Harley west and keep going until the front wheel touched the Pacific.

Well, like they say, Father Time always wins.

I still love throwing a leg over the saddle of my old Heritage Classic. I trust the bike. It's me that is less trustworthy for that kind of endurance riding over mountains and across deserts.

So my wandering spirit traded two wheels for the comfort of my four-wheel drive SUV. I recently returned from a 6,500-mile discovery tour of the great American West. I hope, at least once, every American eye may witness such breathtaking beauty.

I fell about 400 miles short of dipping rubber in the Pacific, but traversed 11 states on a meandering route. The destination was Tucson, Arizona, for a few weeks of trying out the snowbird lifestyle. Not surprisingly, I like it. A lot. So did sons Kyle and John, who flew in for a golfing break from the winter. So did the lovely wife, Stephanie, whose only complaint was she couldn't stay longer because she's still working full-time. Being older has few advantages, but retirement surely is one of them.

Tucson is a gem. Throw out every preconceived notion you have about the American southwestern desert. It is not endless miles of sandy nothingness. It is bursting with life and beauty.

A recent column spoke about my father's 95th birthday, so the first leg of the trip was a visit to the family farm in downstate Illinois. My



William Barth

Wisconsin friends might say it's flat. Boring. Not me. It's the beauty of America's breadbasket, among the country's most productive farmland. A relative handful of people feed millions. America is only as strong as its farmers.

Next stop: Oklahoma City, for a few days visiting my sister, Kathi. She's older but looks younger. Not fair. My bet is there are others in the readership who have siblings strung out across the country, seeing them sparingly. Make time.

By Oklahoma and then Texas, the scenery and the temperature changed. Still mostly flat; the plains stretch endlessly under a big sky. Less crops, more cattle. Fewer people. A growing sense of the nation's size, of remoteness, of the relative smallness of mankind as humanity clings precariously to the soil.

I like to see the America that's mostly invisible from the great superhighways, so I chose the old roads through Texas and New Mexico. A night's stay in Roswell—yes, that Roswell—found a tourist town complete with small green statues of aliens everywhere. Even the street lights were painted to show an alien face. Or whatever we earthlings think aliens are supposed to look like.

From there the drive quickly shifts toward the spectacular, taking U.S. 70 across the Sacramento

Mountains and entering the Mescalero Apache reservation. In preparation for the trip I devoured several southwest history books, all of which gave me a sense of what this land must have looked like when the only people here were what we call Native Americans these days. The inescapable truth is that those people were original inhabitants thousands of years before European explorers and later, their descendants, arrived to seize the land by any means necessary. In school we were told that was “Manifest Destiny,” a concept holding that the United States was ordained to become a continental nation stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In practice, it amounted to the near-extirmination of people whose misfortune was being in the way.

Connecting with Interstate 10 at Las Cruces, words scarcely can describe the remote desert landscape between there and Tucson. Signs warn of dust storms, telling drivers to pull over, stop the engine and wait it out. Fortunately, it was sunny and mild.

Tucson does not have a big-city vibe, because it literally stretches for miles across a valley surrounded by mountains and is built with respect for the natural surroundings. Tall buildings are rare. It's a dark-skies city, limiting light pollution, so at night the stars are incredible. Golf is great. Mountain hiking is everything it should be. The Desert Museum is a must-see. Nearby day trips to Tombstone—the historic site of the OK Corral gunfight—and to places like the old mining town of Bisbee, or the Casa Grande ruins, or old Spanish missions, are easily arranged.

Foodies will love Tucson, as my pathetic waistline attests.

There were places I wanted to see calling for a different return route, two-lane roads through towns like Globe and Show Low and Snowflake. Good decision. The natural beauty—whether along lonely desert stretches or into the high plateaus and mountains—is exceptional. My destination along U.S. 191 and a couple of all-but-deserted tribal roads was Chinle, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation beside Canyon de Chelly. It's sacred land to the Navajo, containing ancient ruins. The grandeur, combined with the remote stillness, is spiritual.

From there it was more nearly vacant roads through Utah—a highlight is Moab and its surrounding national parks—then a white-knuckle crossing of the Rockies in Colorado. Remember those reports of major snowstorms in the mountains a couple weeks back? My timing was perfect. Let's just say the four-wheel drive was tested topping Vail Pass summit at 10,600 feet.

Nebraska. Iowa. Illinois. Not much to say, except crossing the wide plains in a covered wagon must have been hell.

The point of this particular travelogue? Get out and see America. Ditch the plane ticket. Buy that expensive gas. Wander off the expressways. Read some history before you go. Measure the trip in sights seen, not miles crossed. Your soul will thank you.

*William Barth is the former Editor of the Beloit Daily News. Write to him at [bbarth@beloit-dailynews.com](mailto:bbarth@beloit-dailynews.com)*

## Letters to the Editor

### Larson would provide leadership for district

Diane and I spent a combined 59 years as teachers in the Beloit School District. Our two children received an amazing education in Beloit. Now retired from teaching, we continue to follow the progress of the School District. We are very concerned.

For our district public schools to succeed, we need leadership that is willing to work together as a team and accomplish the duties of the Board. We need people who creatively tackle our problems of student discipline, large class sizes, student literacy, teacher retention, and financial stability. Our Board needs people to come to the table not to promote a personal agenda, but in a spirit of collegiality and with the interest of our students foremost.

We have had the pleasure of getting to know Kathy Larson and are very impressed with both her experiences and her leadership qualities. We feel she will be a true asset to the Board of Education and we support her campaign wholeheartedly. You can check out Kathy's quali-

fications at [electkathylarson.org](http://electkathylarson.org).

LOREN SASS  
Beloit

### Trump cult must go, vote for democracy

Mike Pompeo, Donald Trump, Tucker Carlson, and the others don't see what most people do see when they look at President Putin. The cult doesn't see President Putin as a bloody dictator. They admire the liar Putin.

They are wrong. Back in the 1930s, some Americans thought the liar, Hitler was not a racist, ruthless dictator. American aviation hero, Charles Lindbergh thought Hitler was admirable. He was wrong.

With the investigation of the January 6 attack, people can see how close the United States was to dictatorship.

Congress and state governments are filled with Trump cult, anti-democracy “legislators.” They push a very clear agenda of sabotaging our free vote. The supreme court is complicit with the cult's agenda of racial Gerrymandering, unlimited dark-money campaigns, restrictions

to absentee voting, and un-Constitutional “vote-stealing” laws.

Stand for democracy, help a local organization restore voting rights. In November, peacefully vote to oust the violent, criminal (January 6) Trump cult from our government.

DANIEL HOLZMAN  
Baraboo

### Four candidates best for school board

The most important quality in a school board member is their earnest desire to work for the best interests of every child in our community. It's an easy conclusion to draw that the best four candidates are Megan Miller, Gregg Schneider, Kathy Larson, and J'juan Winfield. Miller is an experienced board member with a track record of advocating for children, careful decision making, and responsible leadership. Both she and Schneider are educators and like Miller, Schneider brings a tremendous amount of experience to his candidacy. Schneider's leadership skills are commendable and his life's work has demonstrated

his commitment to our community's children. Larson has a corporate and entrepreneurial background, and is also an avid supporter of public education. She will bring a fresh perspective. J'juan Winfield seems to have coached every child in this community. His enthusiasm for Beloit children, whether it's athletics or academics, is admirable. Miller, Schneider, Larson, and Winfield are all running independent campaigns grounded in serving all students and bringing the community together to support them. Unlike the other candidates, they are not relying on dark money ads, or extraordinary financial support from people who don't live or vote in this community who are openly against public education and favor private schools and vouchers. Miller, Schneider, Larson, and Winfield are all separately in this race for the right reasons and I see them working together as a great team to further the important work that lies ahead for this board. Vote on April 5.

STEVEN HOWLAND  
Beloit