

Opinion

Editorial

The cost to a nation defending democracy

The price of gasoline soared this week, up more than half a dollar in just a few days. Alliterative clichés like “pain at the pump” and “sticker shock” sound quaint and are mainly offered to soften the blow, but many people are probably now uttering a few choice curse words under their collective breath.

More than 50 percent of the cost of gasoline is the price of crude oil, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The U.S. announced a ban on Russian oil this week, Tuesday, and while the U.S. isn’t overly reliant on Russia for crude oil, that will probably result in an even greater hike in gas prices.

As if \$4 a gallon isn’t bad enough, the cost of a gallon of gasoline is now bound to go even higher. This is on top of soaring inflation already making life difficult for many.

Oil is used for everything from packaging of the things we buy to the fuel used to deliver goods and services to market, and to our homes.

Effective short-term strategies to help cope with higher gasoline prices include driving less, carpooling more and combining trips. Other solutions include walking or biking more, or just not making a trip if it isn’t absolutely necessary.

Long-term strategies include ditching the gas guzzler, buying an alternative fuel vehicle or living closer to work to reduce commuting distances.

Kneejerk political reactions usually focus on releasing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve or suspending gasoline taxes.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve release amounts to a drop in the barrel, or the equivalent of less than three days’ worth of U.S. oil consumption. This will help, but only a little.

The gas tax is a relatively small part of the price consumers pay with the federal gas tax just 18.4 cents per gallon. State gas taxes and fees average about 30 cents per gallon. This will help, but also only a little.

Political smoke and mirrors can only trick the public for so long.

Eventually, the reality will hit that everything we drive and everything we buy is dependent on transportation and oil.

To provide even greater relief, the US is reportedly now willing to crawl out of bed with one devil, Russian President Vladimir Putin, to entertain another devil, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. U.S. officials are mulling relaxing sanctions against Venezuela in a bid to secure a new source of oil following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The US and Venezuela held their first high-level bilateral talks in years on March 5 in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas, according to media reports.

The Caracas talks involved discussions about a temporary easing of sanctions imposed on Venezuela by the Trump administration in 2019, per the *Wall Street Journal*.

Venezuela sits on top of the world’s largest oil reserves at 18.2% followed in order by Saudi Arabia (16.2%), Canada (10.4%), Iran (9.5%) and Iraq (8.7%). The U.S. is 11th at 2.1%. If just a slice of new Venezuela production comes to the U.S., it would make a difference, but at what cost?

There’s every indication things are going to get worse before they get better, especially as America and its western partners stop buying Russian oil in response to that nation’s brutal invasion of the Ukraine. It is an assault that prompted Ukrainian men to pick up arms to defend their country and 2 million of its citizens – mostly women and children – to flee into surrounding countries in the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II.

This is the cost of standing with our nation’s allies. This is the cost of ending needless human suffering. This is the cost of preserving freedom. This is the cost of defending democracy.

It is time to decide. Do we really want to help the Ukrainian people or do we really only want to help ourselves?

Ladysmith News editorials are written by news staff.

Letters

Makes three points about Flambeau School Board not renewing principal contract

First, thanks to Jerilea Hendrick and Ladysmith News for thorough coverage of the student walk-out at Flambeau School after High School Principal Craig Cahoon’s contract was not renewed by the School Board/District administration. I am former substitute teacher at Flambeau School, but am not currently teaching there for personal reasons having little to do with issues the District grapples with. I have 3 points to make regarding this situation:

1. Flambeau High School Principal Cahoon has earned my respect and support during the years he was Principal while I was substitute teaching at Flambeau. He put students first, got to know them, and did everything in his power to be positive and help them stay healthy, growing, and learning. He

supports the numerous teachers at Flambeau who share these worthy goals.

2. The two stated reasons for not renewing Principal Cahoon’s contract existed when I taught there several years before Craig Cahoon was High School Principal at Flambeau. Certain clocks in certain classrooms are not accurate. One simply works around it by wearing an accurate watch or checking school phones or computers. Maintenance staff does their best on the sidewalks, but when a storm is in progress or very recent, they cannot remove it all instantly. None of the other High School Principals we had while I was substitute teaching there ever experienced a non-renewal of contract for these reasons even though they existed then, too.

3. After carefully reading the entire March 3, 2022 article twice, I too suspect that some kind of unfair retaliation is in play, perhaps on a couple different levels for a couple different reasons. If anyone should be leaving to fix problems in the Flambeau School District it is not High School Principal Craig Cahoon. Frankly, everyone investing their time working in the District has their ideas about what is best for the students. Realism, honest, rational discussions and courageous solutions based on facts and accepted principles of fairness are the answers, not what appears to be a “my way or the highway” approach that forces competent and thorough professionals like him to leave.

**Terry Dukerschein
Glen Flora**

Beef farmers demonstrate sustainability commitment, feel good about eating beef

Cattle farmers, like my family and I, are dedicated to caring for our animals and the land every day of the year. Our continual focus on sustainability is often overshadowed by misinformation regarding beef’s contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), GHG from beef cattle only represents 2% of emissions in the U.S. Between 1961 and 2018, U.S. cattle farmers decreased emissions per pound of beef by 40%, while producing 60% more beef per animal.

Cattle expel methane which only remains in the

environment for 9-12 years before mother nature recycles it through plants, cattle, and the atmosphere. Cattle grazing accelerates the process of storing carbon in the soil. In contrast, carbon dioxide, produced from burning of fossil fuels, remains in the atmosphere for several hundred years.

Transportation accounts for 29% of GHG emissions, and electricity accounts for nearly 25% of emissions in the U.S. If all livestock in the U.S. were eliminated and every American followed a vegan diet, GHG emissions would only be reduced by 0.36% globally. Reducing car trips and

electricity use are significantly more impactful to achieve climate neutrality than adopting a meatless diet.

Consumers should feel good about eating beef, knowing it’s produced on farms like ours, by people like us, across America. Beef farmers are committed to further increasing our sustainability and investing in future-focused solutions. Your choice of beef supports local farmers, who re-invest those dollars in the local economy, all while caring for our natural resources.

**Brady Zuck
Ladysmith**

Grateful to be a member of a democracy, despite contention an inevitable dynamic

I’m weary of the tack civic conflict has taken in this nation. I’m tired of recurring, wasteful squabbles, wholesale brandings, regressive posturing. I’m fatigued from having to combat ignorance masquerading as knowledge, conspiracy theories distorting reality, short-sightedness and distrust of science damaging the eco-sphere. I’m tired of the need to protest against religious leaders who con-

found equitable sharing and opportunity with Communism.

Even so, I’m grateful to be a member of a Democracy, despite the fact that contention is an inevitable dynamic. I will persevere to raise my voice, as will colleagues and opponents alike, to advocate for what we view is best for the common good.

Indeed, the free voicing of our differences, if

done civilly, knowledgeably and intelligently, ought to constitute our greatest civic pride.

When those fundamental components of discourse are assiduously adhered to, I do not readily tire of debate nor despair of our nation’s soundness.

**Michael Doran
Ladysmith**

Says Vladimir Putin is a war criminal; Russian government never is to be trusted

A couple of years ago when I was sitting with a co-worker we were discussing Trump/Putin praising each other. She saw nothing wrong with it. I strongly disagreed.

I told her in 1956, Russia invaded Hungary, my homeland. My parents were living a peaceful life until the Russians came in with their tanks and started a war on civilians. One horrible night in the middle of bombs being dropped on innocent civilians, Russian soldiers came into the apartment buildings and started taking men, women and children out of their apartments. My mother recalled how the screaming of mothers begging for their children’s lives, only to be killed. My dad, who was vehemently against com-

munist, fought against the Russians in the streets of Budapest, along with other Hungarians. My dad knew he was going to be next, to be eliminated. My mother begged him to leave in the middle of the night with me on one arm and the other carrying one suitcase. They walked 80 miles to the Austrian border. Putin and the Russian Government are NEVER to be trusted.

When our former president was telling the public that he “believed Putin above his own government intelligence, including the CIA and FBI”. That statement from Trump was giving Putin the green light to do whatever he wanted because the US would not intervene.

Remember, when Trump asked for the transcripts

after the meeting with Putin, and Trump tore it up so there would be no official translation record of the meeting? I remember. Did Putin wait to invade Ukraine, until after Trump was out of office so Trump wouldn’t be implicated?

Why is Trump along with Tucker Carlson calling Putin “Smart and a Genius”? Putin is a War Criminal. Always was and always will be. He has given orders to burn the dead bodies so no he won’t be accountable to the many thousands that he and his army has assassinated. Wake up America! Can’t hide from the truth.

**Kathalin Tuisl
Sheldon**

Writes open letter to Congressman Tom Tiffany, asking views on climate change

Dear Congressman Tiffany,
In the latest edition of your weekly e-newsletter, The Tiffany Telegram, you were highly critical of President Biden’s policies to address climate change, but you didn’t offer your views on climate change or any alternative proposals to address it.

According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication (<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us>) 58% of your constituents are worried about global warming; 67% believe it will harm future generations; 54% believe it

is already harming people in the US; and 53% think Congress should do more to address it.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently reported that “The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief, rapidly closing window to secure a livable future.” (https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_PressConferenceSlides_small.pdf). That is, if we seek to achieve energy independence by increasing our production of

fossil fuels instead of greatly accelerating our transition to renewable energy, we’ll be sacrificing human well-being, the health of the planet, and a livable future.

This is a very serious concern for many of your constituents. I think they deserve to know your position on climate change and what actions, if any, you think Congress should take to address it. I hope you’ll thoughtfully address these concerns in the next issue of The Tiffany Telegram.

**Bill Bussey
Bayfield**

Hopes Russian invasion of Ukraine motivates U.S. to leave partisan camps behind

I hope the lawless Russian invasion of the Ukraine can move us, here in the United States, to leave our partisan camps behind and come together to defend freedom and democracy.

If you saw the video of that Russian tank driv-

ing right over the top of a small car in the Ukraine, you must have felt outraged, as I did.

This is what Vladimir Putin is trying to do to the entire country of Ukraine. And Putin has been trying to undermine our own democracy here in

the United States. It’s time to put aside our differences and denounce Putin’s power grab and save our own democracy here at home.

**Susan Hansen
Shell Lake**



Contact us

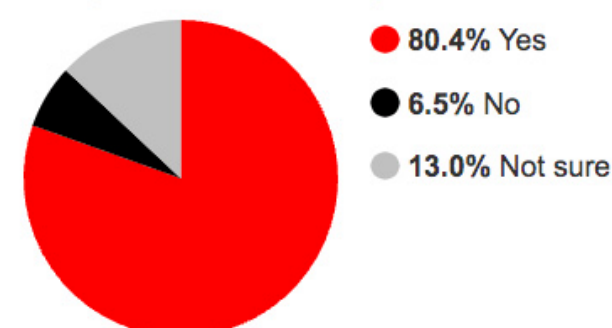
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On-line poll

(Last week’s question and result)

Are you concerned by the Ukraine invasion?



To vote on this week’s new poll question:

Should the west stop buying Russian oil?

go to www.ladysmithnews.com

Fiscal Facts

Wisconsin’s drop in union membership was nation’s largest

By Wisconsin Policy Forum
Since 2000, no state has seen a larger decline in the proportion of all employees who are union members than Wisconsin.

While private-sector union membership in the state has declined for decades, 2011 Wisconsin Act 10 likely contributed to a much steeper decline in public-sector unions in recent years.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data show nearly all states have seen a decline in the concentration of their workforce that is unionized over the last 20 years, but none more so than Wisconsin.

In 2000, 17.8 percent of all employed Wisconsinites were members of a union — the 10th-highest concentration in the country. By 2021, that number fell to just 7.9 percent, putting Wisconsin at 28th among states and below the na-

tional average of 10.3 percent. The 9.9 percentage point drop since 2000 for Wisconsin was the largest nationwide by nearly three percentage points and substantially more than the national drop of 3.1 percentage points.

Forum research finds that a combination of legislation aimed at curtailing public unions’ authority and broader national trends impacting private union membership may help to explain Wisconsin’s drop-off.

As the first state to allow public-sector unions to negotiate contracts in 1959, Wisconsin has long been known as a leader in organized labor trends. Yet the state also has a history of efforts to limit unions’ scope and influence. In 2011, Wisconsin was again at the leading edge of a national trend when state officials repealed most collective bargaining for most state and lo-

cal workers through Act 10. Union influence also has diminished following the loss of manufacturing jobs in the region, which is a particularly crucial industry in Wisconsin.

Going forward, the strength of union organizing in the state may depend on trends that include labor market conditions. A tight market like the current one tends to strengthen the hand of workers. Still, at least for now, unions in Wisconsin and nationally seem likely to play a more modest role than they did in previous decades.

This information is provided to Wisconsin Newspaper Association members as a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at wispolicyforum.org.