

Editorial

Enjoy Edgerton's rich history during Tobacco Heritage Days!

By Diane Everson, publisher

Fifty years! As many will say, "my, how time flies!" Tobacco Heritage Days is this weekend.

In the '50s and '60s, communities across the country found economic success hosting community festivals. They brought visitors to town, the visitors spent money and the communities had opportunities to showcase themselves.

Most festivals honor the heritage of their community in some way, often the ethnic origin. In our area, Jefferson celebrates area German ancestry with Gemuetlichkeit Days. Stoughton honors our Norwegian forefathers with Syttende Mai. Syttende Mai means May 17. (On May 17, 1814, the Norwegian Constitution was signed, finally granting Norway its own independence from Sweden.) Our Swiss immigrants and cheesemaking are celebrated in New Glarus and Monroe. Fort Atkinson honors Chief Blackhawk's history with Fort Fest.

By the time Edgerton decided to have a festival, our ethnic make-up and Native American history had been taken. What was left was our unique history revolving around tobacco. While tobacco has been so important to Edgerton, celebrating Tobacco Heritage Days over the years has received criticism from outside groups. They assert we are "promoting tobacco and its use."

Celebrating our tobacco heritage is just as important as celebrating Native American history and our ethnic and area cheesemaking heritage. Yes, we know cheese doesn't have a warning from the Surgeon General on its packages. Even so, if someone wants to smoke or chew, it is their choice; just as it is a choice to eat cheese.

While tobacco may have a negative connotation, it is a part of our rich heritage. Heritage is one thing, actively promoting smoking and chewing is another.

Native Americans used tobacco in their peace pipes and ... did you know ... that today, research is being conducted on how tobacco may stem some neurological diseases.

In the meantime, we should honor the hard-working tobacco farmers, the entrepreneurial tobacco businessman and the community that fostered their growth. That growth was responsible for the community we enjoy today. It is important to honor it.

This weekend offers so much for everyone in the family. There will be a car show, arts and crafts sale, ice cream social, ball games, live bands, the Pottery Festival's Edgerton Clay Day, a parade and a host of other activities. Enjoy and be proud.

The Edgerton Reporter editorial reflects the opinion of publisher, Diane Everson and the legacy perspective and worldview of Harland and Helen Everson.



INSIDE WISCONSIN

"Court's EPA decision aside, markets and innovation steadily at work"

By Tom Still

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling rejecting the federal Environmental Protection Agency's authority to reshape the nation's energy grid has been roundly criticized by groups that believe reining in the causes of climate change cannot wait for constitutional niceties such as congressional and state approval.

Whether they hate or love the high court's ruling, those who believe in the urgency of climate change action should now place more trust in three forces — innovation, incentives and market adoption — that can move the dial. Wisconsin can be a poster child for all.

In a 6-3 decision issued June 30, the court said the EPA lacks the power to impose a nationwide cap-and-trade climate policy based on an Obama-era plan to expand such enforcement through the Clean Air Act. In 2016, the court had stayed EPA's "Clean Power Plan," recognizing it might not pass constitutional muster.

While some politicians still deny human activity is altering the world's environment, many private companies and utilities are taking steps on their own within the framework of market-ready innovation, customer acceptance and government "carrot-and-stick" incentives.

Coal-fired plants are being retired in most places in the United States and very few, if any, new coal plants are on the horizon. Even the construction of natural gas plants for electricity generation may be peaking. Instead, alternatives such as solar and wind are on the rise.

That's not because energy company executives have suddenly become Green Party members, but because they want to pursue long-term strategies to keep the lights on while reducing carbon emissions. It simply makes good business sense over time. Here are some examples:

- Wisconsin is poised for more solar energy growth. Solar panel costs have declined over time, even if supply-chain issues persist. Wisconsin has solar energy incentives for users, there are many accredited installers, and many solar projects — large and small — are underway. The state Public Service Commission has a plan to boost Wisconsin's standing among the top solar states. Possible drawbacks over time: A continued dispute over "third-party" solar projects and whether they can tie in the grid, and local opposition to some large solar farms.

- While delayed a year or more over fears of brownouts, some major coal plants are still scheduled for retirement by 2004-25. Alliant Energy and WEC Energy Group recently delayed plant retirement plans by about a year after the regional grid — called the Midcontinent Independent System Operator — announced it faces capacity shortfalls this summer and next in its northern and central regions. Grid operators noted it "will be increasingly reliant on emergency or non-firm resources" to ensure service reliability in those regions. Still, Wisconsin's heavy reliance on coal will diminish sooner than later.

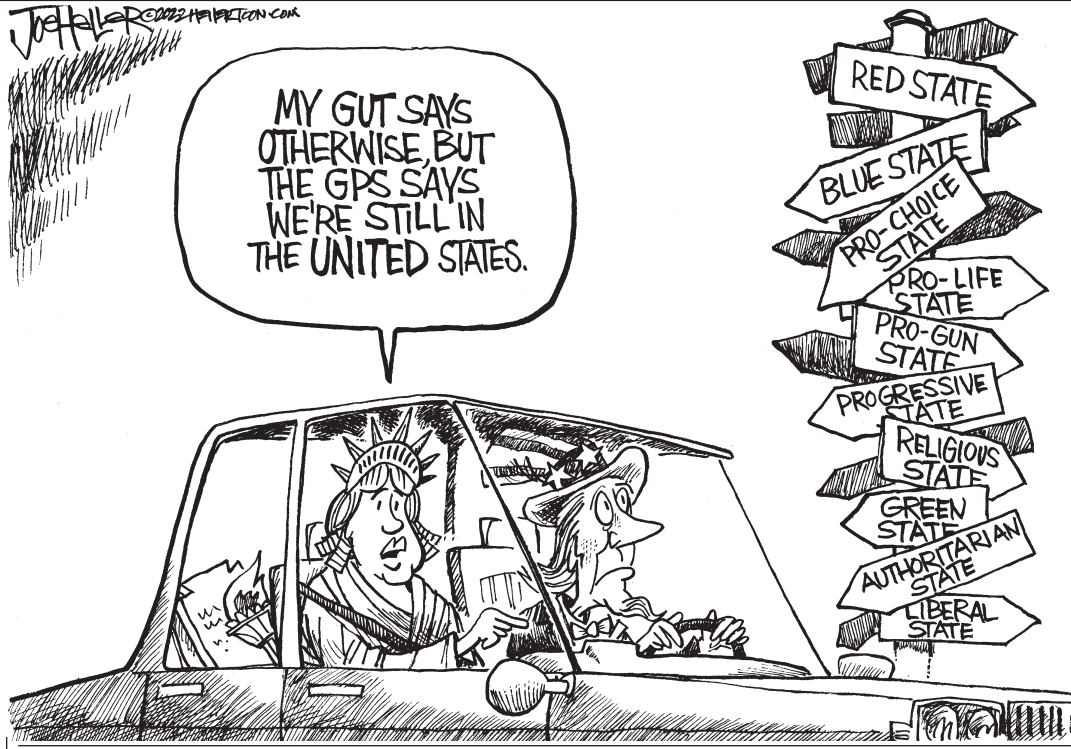
- Nuclear power is also getting a fresh look as "next-generation" plants are being proposed. One such proposal involves Dairyland Power Cooperative in La Crosse.

- Energy innovation is a part of the research and development footprint at most of Wisconsin's major universities and colleges. The UW-Madison is a leader in fission and fusion research, with growing expertise around hydrogen energy. The Wisconsin Energy Institute and Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center on the Madison campus also work with industry. Similar programs exist at UW-Milwaukee, Marquette University and beyond. Sometimes, industry and academic research is not tied to energy generation but other ways to reduce carbon emissions. Examples include battery storage innovation, more efficient electric motors, better control systems and even production of low-carbon cement.

- While many of the "best" wind sites in Wisconsin have been developed, the state still has potential for more than 114,000 kilowatts of wind power. Stackercor.com also reported in 2021 that wind makes up nearly 3 percent of Wisconsin's grid.

With more electric vehicles on the way along with current demands, Wisconsin will need reliable electric power. It will also need cleaner ways to process it. Those solutions will more likely come from innovators and market forces than government fiat.

Still is president of the Wisconsin Technology Council. He can be reached at tstill@wisconsinintechcouncil.com.



Letter to Editor

Dear Editor:

The Edgerton Reporter deserves recognition by Jefferson County citizens for its continued advocacy for transparent government. The Reporter fully supports that governmental bodies provide public records in conformance with state statutes. The Wisconsin Department of Justice states "It is imperative that we recognize that transparency is the cornerstone of democracy and that citizens cannot hold elected officials accountable in a representative government unless government is performed in the open." This may sound fairly 1776 in nature, but 1. It is Wisconsin law, and 2. It is being violated in the Town of Sumner.

We have been involved in asking for records from the Town of Sumner Clerk since June of 2021. The previous elected Clerk complied in accordance with the statutes which allowed residents to become involved in our Town Board meetings and decision making. When the elected Clerk resigned and an appointed Clerk was installed, this all came to an end.

Since December of 2021, records that have been requested have not been provided to those

who have requested them. These are not secret or arcane records. These are documents that would yet be on the desk of the Town Clerk within days of a Board meeting or an election. Literally requested 1 to 3 days after the event. They include: altered meeting agendas, minutes, town budget documents, clerk's account of payments made and finances, election documents, and town legislation. Most record requests would not be necessary if the Town Board and Clerk would make these documents accessible at Board meetings - but that is not the case.

The state statutes define record holders as Municipal Clerks, County District Attorneys, County Sheriffs, and State officeholders among most other governmental employees and elected officials. Please note — this includes Town Clerks who are the statutory record holder of town records — and — has the documents explaining the actions and decisions of our local officials at their fingertips.

The Town of Sumner is a case study in records denial. A recent example is this exact copy of the reply from the Clerk to a March 16, 2022 election record request. "Your inquiry

has been received. Your inquiry is important. We have limited our resources for open records requests. We have numerous open records requests and will respond in the order of which they are received. The timing of the response is undetermined." These records have not yet been received.

We know that records from December of 2021 have yet to be filled. If the Clerk's response truly reflects her approach to filling record requests, simple math indicates the example record request will not be filled until February of 2023!

This letter to the editor is meant to inform readers and to thank Publisher and Editor Everson for her paper's commitment to open government. But more importantly to share our frustration with the Town of Sumner's Clerk and Town Board and their refusal to respect town resident's desire to know and understand the conduct of the Clerk and Town Board, and our legitimate requests for information related to their decisions.

Sandra Hynes, Town of Sumner
Nancy Emons, Town of Jefferson

Guest Opinion

Money in politics is eroding our democracy

By Morris Pearl

The January 6th hearings have shocked the nation with disturbing details about Trump and his allies' plot to overturn the 2020 election. It is clear that they actively worked to tear down the very foundations of American democracy for their own personal gain.

But while the nation's attention is fixated on these hearings, we shouldn't pretend that January 6th was an isolated event. America's democracy has been under siege for decades from a more subtle but equally dangerous force, as many of the same far-right billionaires and legislators who supported Trump and the January 6th insurrectionists have spent years working to undermine the principle of one person, one vote. Thanks to their work, we now live in a system where money equals power, and the wishes of the American public have little to no impact when compared to the policy preferences of the ultra-rich.

Across the country, policies that are supported by an often vast majority of voters, from taxing the rich to raising the minimum wage to marijuana legalization to restricting the rights of teenagers to buy assault rifles are ignored by lawmakers, with virtually no political change taking place to realize those goals. Behind the scenes, the nation's rich and powerful gain enormous access and influence through political contributions that interfere with our representatives truly representing the will of the rest of the people. This is all the direct result of the right-wing crusade to undermine our campaign finance system.

Twelve years ago the Supreme Court took a major step in the wrong direction by ruling in Citizens United that legislation limiting campaign spending by corporations, unions and nonprofits violated the first amendment. This ruling opened the floodgates for corporations and rich people to flood political discourse with their cash. Their ability to fund the campaigns of politicians who support their interests, not the people's, has resulted in the degradation of the average voter's political power. Put simply, in an

America where money is equated to free speech, the money of the rich drowns out the voice of average Americans.

Supreme Court decisions like Citizens United v. FEC, Buckley v. Valeo, and SpeechNow.org v. FEC have asserted that spending money is an expression of speech and that multi-billion dollar corporations can spend limitlessly to fund the politicians of their choice. They've done so with glee. Pharmaceutical companies give millions to block drug price negotiations, firearm manufacturers make contributions to keep gun control laws lax, insurance companies pay to try to prevent Medicare from expanding to cover vision and dental, corporations and the wealthy donate to lower their taxes, and the fossil fuel industry blocks action against climate change.

As a result, we've witnessed lawmakers pass or block bills because that's what their wealthy donors tell them is important, even if those bills are contrary to what a majority of voters want. A study by professors from Princeton and Northwestern University showed that support by the majority of voters has virtually no impact on policy outcomes when compared to the demands of wealthy donors. Former Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY) admitted as much when talking about the 2017 tax bill (that gave nearly \$2 trillion in tax cuts to wealthy individuals and corporations), saying: "My donors are basically saying: 'Get it done or don't ever call me again.'"

I hope that he just forgot that his donors are not all of the people he is supposed to represent, but it is still scary to hear him admit that the threat of withholding campaign donations is a major influence on policy.

Our democracy is out of balance. We're rapidly approaching an oligarchy, with a few wealthy individuals essentially running the show.

Without reasonable limits on campaign finance, politics becomes a competition where candidates scramble to gather as much money from donors,

corporations, and special interest groups. Average Americans don't have millions to spend on candidates who support widely popular policies, leaving them the losers when we allow unlimited money in politics. There are many dangers to our democracy, and not all are as obvious as an angry mob in MAGA hats. They may be dressed differently, but the corporate lobbyists in thousand-dollar suits pose just as much of a threat.

— Morris Pearl is a former managing director at Blackrock, Inc., and is now Chair of the Patriotic Millionaires.

THE GRAMMAR GUY

by Curtis Honeycutt

A handy-dandy guide to reduplicative words

I promise I'm not trying to get this song stuck in your head, but its lyrics illustrate the language term I want to discuss. And I promise I wouldn't bring it up if this 1960 hit pop song's b-side didn't also illustrate the point. However, it's impossible not to get this earworm stuck in your head if I just write, "It was an itsy-bitsy teenie-weenie yellow polka dot bikini." Sorry.

What is it about "itsy-bitsy" and "teenie-weenie"? Not only that, but what was it about singer Brian Hyland's b-side of the single entitled "Don't Dilly Dally, Sally"? In the case of the b-side track, "dilly dally" is yet another "reduplicative," or "ricochet word."

A reduplicative word is a word that is composed of two similar or identical parts. Sometimes the words rhyme, as in "razzle-dazzle," but that isn't a requirement. And, no, not all reduplicative words are hyphenated. I think reduplicative words are fun, so let's learn some more — I promise it won't be a bunch of flim-flam or mumbo-jumbo.

Many reduplicative words have to do with a state of chaos, their repetitive nature intensifying a sense of insanity in your ears. If you do things all "higgledy-piggledy" or "willy-nilly" that means your approach daily tasks in a disorderly manner. Some might even say you're all "helter-skelter." A disorganized, irresponsible person might be called "harum-scarum." If you hear a wild commotion outside, you might either say, "What's all that hubbub?" or "What's the hullabaloo?" Either way, you'd be describing a noisy disturbance.

Other reduplicative words fall into a broad category of personal slights — the kind of words you'd hear second-graders calling each other at recess. I've been called "artsy-fartsy" more times than I can count, but I'm not "fancy-schmancy," nor am I "hoity-toity." A person who is considered too old-fashioned might be called a "fuddy-duddy" or a "goody-goody."

When it comes to reduplicative words with identically duplicated stems, I mostly think of "baby's first words": mama, dada, night night, boo-boo, go bye-bye, that's a no-no, etc. However, others aren't just for babies. For instance, I like my clothes to look coordinated, but I don't want to be all matchy-matchy; that would be cray-cray. Am I right or am I right?

I promise I'm not wishy-washy, but I only have so many words to describe this hodgepodge mishmash of the English language. Even if you think this column is too loosey-goosey, I am of the opinion that it is, in fact, super-duper.

—Curtis Honeycutt is a syndicated humor columnist. He is the author of Good Grammar is the Life of the Party: Tips for a Wildly Successful Life. Find more at curthoneycutt.com.

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Edgerton Reporter established as the Wisconsin Tobacco Reporter in 1874
Active member of America's Newspapers, International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors, National Newspaper Association, Society of Professional Journalists and Wisconsin Newspaper Association

PublisherDiane Everson
Editor, Advertising ManagerDiane Everson
BookkeeperDeena Wettstein
ProductionEllen Knutson, Susan Siemens, Tristan McGough
Contributing WritersJeff Brown, Mary Hookham, Sam Martino, Tristan McGough, Jack McLaughlin, Janice Redford, Carol Stai, Cynthia Swanson, Amy Trees
DeliveryStacy Teniente

Best of Kosh Reader Choice Awards
Laurie Dies, Tristan McGough, Megan Purtell

Office Hours: We are closed to the public due to the pandemic. You may call us and leave items in our mailbox
Periodicals Postage Paid at Edgerton, WI

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
PRINT: Edgerton address \$49 per year, \$26 six months.
State of Wisconsin \$51 per year, \$28 six months.
Out of State \$53 per year, \$32 six months.

EDGERTON REPORTER
Mission: To be the Best Community Newspaper
Published weekly by The Reporter Co., Inc.
21 N. Henry St., Edgerton, WI 53534 • Phone 608-884-3367 • Fax 608-884-8187
e-mail: info@edgertonreporter.com USPS# 167-900