

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Reader feels bad we published a letter to the editor and is anxious to see if his is published as well

### To the Editor:

I realize *The Lakeland Times* does not publish every letter that is submitted. However, I was curious why *The Times* decided to publish one in the July 6 edition that was from someone who decided to no longer be a Democrat.

The person stated their age (83) and wrote about their displeasure with the Obama Administration, a drag-show performance at an LA Dodgers game, and among other things, a rainbow flag that was flying at the white house, as well as “strippers” — really? Strippers? Get real! They also emphasized quite strongly, how all of it contradicts their religious beliefs.

I’m wondering why someone’s religious views would affect which political party they choose to identify with, when our wonderful nation, is founded with religious freedom and not Christianity.

Does the writer understand what the term “democracy” means? I’m also wondering if they realize that being democratic relates to the principles of democracy.

The whole letter that the author wrote, reminds me of rhetoric from someone that is a faithful follower of a famous TV entertainment channel (that channel recently had lost a huge legal case because of the lies it portrayed and as a result lost its certification as a reliable news source).

I feel bad that the 83-year-old is bitter about people’s freedoms and the support that drag queens and the LGBTQ+ communities are finally receiving. It has been a long, painful, bloody, and sad journey that people like myself have had to endure.

I also feel bad that you published their letter. Doing so, contributes to their bigotry and lack of knowledge.

I do wonder if the mentality of the “Former Democrat,” is one that you want to portray. I certainly hope not. I’m anxious to see if my letter will be published as well, in order to show support for a truly free nation!

Jonathan Borth  
Park Falls

## Thanks for a successful book sale

### To the Editor:

The Minocqua Public Library Used Book Sale was held August 4 and 5. A special thank you goes to the Town of Minocqua for the use of



the Community Gym for the donation days, set-up, and two-day sale. Many thanks to our crew of volunteers who put in many hours helping to make this year’s sale a success.

We appreciate the community support including those individuals donating to and attending this annual event. We are grateful to the library staff for their helpfulness

during the sale.

The annual book sale is a major fundraiser for the Minocqua Public Library Foundation whose mission is to enhance the services and facilities of the Minocqua Public Library. We are looking forward to another successful book sale in the summer of 2024.

The Minocqua Public  
Library Foundation

# OPINIONS

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## Blowin’ smoke: Hunter’s hubris heightens GOP hooley

Just to compound the other serious mistakes he has made in his life, Hunter Biden made the mistake last week of overplaying his hand. Afforded the opportunity to plead guilty to tax crimes committed while addicted to crack and other drugs, the president’s son held out for a commitment by the Justice Department that it would never prosecute him for anything else. This was a commitment the Department could not and would not make — and it was a commitment that any practical person mindful of his past misconduct would have known wouldn’t be made.

The younger Biden’s demand that the Justice Department declare that it was absolving him of any further criminal jeopardy left Department lawyers with no choice but to tell him to pound sand. And it left Attorney General Merrick Garland, whose fealty to the rule of law exceeds that of all of his congressional critics combined, with no choice but to appoint a special counsel to investigate anything and everything Hunter Biden related. And speaking of fealty to the rule of law, the man Garland appointed was David Weiss, the United States Attorney for Delaware, appointed by none other than former President Donald Trump and asked by President Joe Biden to stay on precisely so that the criminal investigation of his son could be completed by a federal prosecutor installed by his Republican predecessor, not by him. When it comes to integrity, not all presidents are created equal.

As special counsel, Weiss will not

only have the unquestioned authority to follow the trail of any evidence of Hunter Biden’s misconduct but



Jeff Robbins  
COLUMNIST

also to write a report documenting that evidence. The decision by Hunter Biden and his legal team to play “chicken” with the Justice Department may bring other adverse consequences home to roost. At a minimum, it means Biden will face extended uncertainty about his legal fate, and the Department probably will feel

obliged to seek jail time for charges on which it had previously offered him probation.

How dumb was that?

Very. Not only for him, but for a Biden family that has already suffered badly from the terrible choices he’s made. This includes a father who, like most loving fathers would, has done everything he could to demonstrate his love for a son not only bent on self-destruction but prepared to hurt his family as well as himself. Naturally, MAGA World has made the usual untethered accusations about Biden Senior. Their hero, of course, is already facing 78 felony counts handed down against him by three separate grand juries, with a fourth grand jury set to boost that number to 85 by the end of the week.

The GOP’s claim that they have “evidence” that incriminates President Biden has not withstood scrutiny, to put it mildly. House Oversight Chairman James Comer’s absent “star witness” against the president, one Gal Luft, turns out to be an international fugitive. Indicted

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## Can you vote for a third party? Take the test

The idea that third parties are spoilers is a baseless conspiracy theory on par with the Loch Ness monster, the man on the grassy knoll, and Pizzagate. But what if you’re worried, like many Democrats, that voting for a third party like the Greens’ Cornel West or, if they ever get their act together, someone from the No Labels Party, might improve Donald Trump’s chances of returning to the White House next year?

Given just how bizarre, manic and exhausting Trump’s four years were, I don’t blame you for being paranoid. It was a rough time for Democrats, more so than under previous Republican administrations. You’re traumatized. You’ll do just about anything to stop that from happening again!

(Those of us on the Actual Left, not Democrats, found Trump’s time in the White House more amusing than dispiriting. Sure, he mostly did stuff that we didn’t like. But so did Biden. Anyway, it’s not about us ... not this week.)

Don’t worry. We’ve got this.

You may very well be able to vote your actual conscience, assuming that you have one, and vote third party without increasing the odds of a Trump restoration by one iota. Take my hand and let’s find the answer to your burning question: Can you safely vote third party?

First Filter: Do you live in a swing state?

In 48 states, the victor in the popular vote wins all that state’s electoral votes. Coupled with the fact

that many states are lopsidedly either majority Republican or majority Democrat — by a lot — the electoral college’s winner-takes-all scheme ensures that votes for a small minority third party can only (theoretically) change the outcome in a “swing state” where the vote could go either way.

For example, the Democratic presidential nominee, whether it’s Joe Biden or Robert F.

Kennedy Jr. or a rutabaga, will win New York, where I live. New Yorkers like me, therefore, can happily vote for Dr. West or my cat or No Labels secure in the knowledge that they will not be doing anything to help Trump.

There will be four swing states in 2024: Georgia, Wisconsin, Arizona and Nevada. If you are one of the 92% of American voters who do not live in one of these four swing states, your vote is 100% guaranteed to have no impact whatsoever on the election. Vote, don’t vote, vote red, vote blue, vote green, makes no difference — your state will fall into either the red or blue column. We already know which. Nothing can change the result.

Maine and Nebraska assign their electors proportionally. In one of these two low-population proportional-voting states, you could theoretically affect the assignment of a single electoral vote. However, the closest legitimate electoral-college margin was 23 votes, in 1916. (Bush beat Gore by 5, but that followed the

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Ted Rall  
COLUMNIST

# OPINIONS

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## THE LAKELAND TIMES • OUR VIEW

Our views represent the institutional voice of The Lakeland Times.  
They are researched and written independent of the newsroom.

GREGG WALKER, Publisher | RICHARD MOORE, Columnist

# The Vampires of S. Oneida Avenue

It's time to ask Oneida County some tough questions, and we'll start with the biggest one: When are the overlords in the county courthouse on S. Oneida Avenue in Rhinelander going to start giving taxpayers and residents in the Lakeland area their fair share of county services, based on the amount of property taxes they pay?

The answer is: Don't hold your breath. For decades the city of Rhinelander and its adjoining towns have all but sucked the tax blood out of our veins. If Oneida County was a horror movie — and we're not too sure it isn't — it would be called the Vampires of S. Oneida Avenue.

If they aren't taxing us and shorting us of services, they are busy trying to dictate how we live our lives with oppressive rules and regulations, many of which the residents of Rhinelander don't even have to abide by.

Just for starters on the fiscal side, the town of Minocqua alone provides about \$4 million in property tax revenue to the county, the Lakeland area in whole much more. How much of that does everyone think we get back in the form of services?

For those answering 'not much,' you get a ribbon. What do you want to bet that if some enterprising newspaper undertook an actual accounting of revenues versus services coming back this way, the net outflow to the Rhinelander area would shock the conscience of the most callous among us. Boris Karloff himself likely never dreamed of such a vast river of blood money.

On the regulatory side, the latest egregious example of the county's unacceptable treatment of the Lakeland area was its refusal to deny the conditional use permit (CUP) for Kirk Bangstad's Minocqua Brewing Company, and to give him more time.

This despite Bangstad's ongoing violations for a year and a half. This despite his failure to live up to his own agreements as conditions for his administrative review permit (ARP). This despite a well thought out and formulated recommendation from the town, written by Minocqua town chairman Mark Hartzheim, that articulated the substantial reasons why the CUP should be denied.

This despite another well reasoned presentation by county board member and Minocqua supervisor Billy Fried. Most of the details about this

matter are reported in last Tuesday's edition, but we'll just note one fact that Fried raised.

That fact is, the county ordinance declares that "an applicant's failure to demonstrate, by substantial evidence, that the application and all applicable requirements in this ordinance and conditions established by the county relating to the conditional use are or will be satisfied shall [emphasis added] be grounds to deny the conditional use permit."

In fact, the committee had just revoked Bangstad's ARP because of multiple violations and failure to live up to his word, all of which constituted substantial evidence he could not be trusted to live up to his CUP.

The county attorney, Mike Fugle, obfuscated the code's language, saying that evidence of failure to comply was just one reason to deny a permit, advice that contradicted the plain language of the ordinance that such evidence shall be grounds to deny.

As we reported Tuesday, the county attorney went on to shut down the meeting, we believe illegally by ignoring parliamentary procedure and state law. But whatever the final legal judgement, make no mistake, this was a county attorney out to do whatever he could to make sure the committee that day would not deny that CUP. That means he made sure the zoning committee did not follow the county code. It means Fugle and ultimately the committee turned its back on the town and its residents.

The committee always makes a big deal about following town recommendations except in the rarest and most extreme circumstances — mostly when towns go rogue and stray from the county code — but apparently that doesn't apply to the town of Minocqua. In this case, the town was pleading with the county to follow its own code, but the answer to that plea, which should resonate far and wide among law-abiding residents and business owners (some of whom have been shut down for far less) was: Drop dead.

It's a familiar refrain broadcast this way from the county.

We must emphasize that we do not hold Fried, or members of the zoning committee at the meetings (committee chairman Scott Holewinski, or supervisors Mike Timmons or Bob Almekinder) responsible, though they have to be cited in the

process, if any are issued. That's because they were following legal advice, bad legal advice to be sure, but legal advice nonetheless.

They are solid public servants. No, the fault lays at the doorstep of the corporation counsel, who decided to swap principle for so-called legal strategy. That never turns out well for the people, only for lawyers, and it's always sad when it happens.

The only thing the zoning committee supervisors are really guilty of is not having a stiff enough spine to resist Fugle's advice. It speaks to a major issue in this country — the undue influence of attorneys, who often run government under the guise of giving legal advice that can't be ignored.

Well, lawyers love to lawyer, and so the county attorney ruled the day: The carnival barker sided with the snake oil salesman and conned the committee. The people of Minocqua and the rule of law were the losers.

All that said, no one should mistake the Bangstad situation as our only grievance against the county. It's merely a quintessential example of how the county treats the people of the Lakeland area — as subjects to the royal kingdom housed under the Tiffany dome.

We'll get to the brass tacks in an upcoming series of articles, but here are a few short examples of what we are talking about.

First, we are old enough to remember, and so will other long-time residents, when Oneida County circuit court held regularly scheduled court sessions in Minocqua, saving many people with minor business before the court from always having to drive to Rhinelander.

And then, poof!, it was gone, just like that. Something about budget cuts, despite the fact that the Lakeland area's contribution to the county's tax base was significantly growing as a share of total revenues at the time. Funny how that happens!

Then, too, a few years back, the county came up with the bright idea to tax property owners an additional \$1 million a year for 10 years to pay for county roads. They quickly scheduled a referendum. The thing is, the town of Minocqua doesn't have any county roads, except for a short stretch of Hwy. J.

So the county essentially wanted the residents of Minocqua to cough up \$250,000 a year to maintain a couple of miles of road. It would

have been a massive subsidy to the rest of the county, particularly the Rhinelander area. They must have been laughing out loud in the county courthouse, at least until voters showed them they weren't suckers and defeated the referendum.

Also a few years back, there was a major attempt to build a new highway department. As we editorialized then, a new highway department wasn't needed, but — if they were going to build one — do you think proponents ever talked about relocating the department to the Lakeland area?

Of course not, but one wonders why not, what with the growing movement to decentralize government offices and spread them around to redistribute power, infrastructure, and resources fairly.

Really, when you think about it, what services do we get from Oneida County anyway, other than snow plowing? Complaints have been lodged for years about the unequal flow of economic development dollars to the Rhinelander area, to cite just one more example.

It's time to do the math. Actually, the only thing the county has generously provided is a zoning office. But don't be fooled. That's for the convenience of their staff, not residents. The zoning code is an overly restrictive ordinance that seeks to restrict property rights, and how nice of the county that the one county office it gives the Lakeland area is a regulatory and enforcement office.

Gee, thanks. Meanwhile, when a zoning matter comes before the county board — a rezoning in the Lakeland area or a proposed shoreland code change — county board supervisors from Rhinelander weigh in on matters they shouldn't be talking about, much less voting about.

It's even worse when supervisors who represent Rhinelander run their mouths and vote on matters related to the shoreland zoning code, which does not apply to the city of Rhinelander or to their constituents.

It's the perfect example of how Rhinelander wants to control the regulations and rules by which Lakeland area residents live their lives, just as they want to control the revenues and expenditures of Lakeland's property tax dollars — all to the detriment of the Lakeland area.

It's time for an accounting. It's time for the Vampire Reign to end.

## Robbins

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earlier this year on a slew of federal charges, Luft was arrested in Cyprus and jumped bail while awaiting extradition. He's in hiding somewhere.

A real gold-plated witness, worthy of the Republicans' gold-plated

investigation.

Then there was Fox News' Peter Doocy, who confronted President Biden claiming that Hunter's former business partner had testified to Congress that the elder Biden was frequently "talking business" with his son's business associates. Except that the former partner had actually testified that he had not heard any such discussions.

The GOP response to

Weiss' appointment as special counsel captures the moral quality of their Say Anything caucus. Last year 33 Republican senators wrote Garland demanding he appoint Weiss as special counsel. Sen. Ted Cruz, dubbed "Lyin' Ted" by someone who is not one to talk, now denounces Weiss as "a wildly inappropriate person to be a special counsel." Sen. Marsha Blackburn, another signatory, has

gone full Stalin, denouncing Weiss as a "collaborator." Sen. Ron Johnson, very nearly certifiable, now says Weiss "is probably the least independent person that Merrick Garland could have appointed."

In other words: just another day of hooey-spewing in the Grand Old Party.

Jeff Robbins, a former assistant United States attorney and United States delegate to the United Na-

tions Human Rights Council in Geneva, was chief counsel for the minority of the United States Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. An attorney specializing in the First Amendment, he is a longtime columnist for the Boston Herald, writing on politics, national security, human rights and the Mideast.

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# NORTHWOODS POLITICAL DIGEST

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## PSC opens broadband infrastructure program grant round

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) has announced that the Broadband Infrastructure Program grant round is now open.

Under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the U.S. Department of Treasury awarded Wisconsin \$42 million through the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) to administer the Broadband Infrastructure Program and invest in broadband construction and deployment that will provide high-quality internet to locations that lack access to adequate, affordable service.

“We have come a long way to connect more homes and businesses to affordable, reliable internet service since the beginning of the pandemic, but barriers still exist for many in our state,” said PSC chairwoman Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “The Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program supports the Evers administration’s ongoing work by investing in projects that improve access to high-speed internet for communities that were most impacted by the pandemic.”

The CPF is designed to address the barriers to internet access that existed before, but were made worse by, the Covid-19 pandemic. Broadband Infrastructure Program grant funds will be used to make necessary investments in broadband infrastructure designed to provide consistent, reliable, and high-performance broadband service to areas most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in Wisconsin.

Eligible entities for the competitive grant program include internet service providers, telecommunications utilities, co-operatives, local governments, and for-profit and non-profit organizations. The funding is available to construct broadband infrastructure projects to deploy reliable internet service that will meet or exceed 100/100 Mbps symmetrical speed internet service and include at least one low-cost option for work, education, and health monitoring.

The deadline to apply is Tuesday November 7, 2023 at 1:30 pm. More information on the Capital Projects Fund can be found on the Capital Projects Broadband page on the PSC website.

## Wisconsin bear hunters disappointed in revised wolf plan

Wisconsin bear hunters are disappointed in the state’s revised wolf plan, according to Carl Schoettel, president of the Wisconsin Bear Hunters’ Association (WBHA).

“Unfortunately, we would have liked the DNR’s 2023 Revised Wolf Plan to have utilized better science to account for all the wolves in Wisconsin,” Schoettel said. “Wolves have significantly recovered in our state. We support a population goal of 350 wolves. Without a lower goal, the DNR’s revised plan continues to push off an effective hunting season.”



Schoettel said a harvest season would allow for proper management, especially in the northern parts of the state, which are most affected by wolves.

“Containing the size of this population is essential for the safety and success of our rural communities,” he said.

Schoettel said WBHA will continue to advocate for the safety of hounds, sportsmen, farmers and all those affected by wolf depredations and plans to continue to seek additional wolf management options, including working with the Department of Natural Resources to fix the process used to count all the wolves in Wisconsin.

## Gallagher, Beyer introduce bill to reassert Congress’s voice in trade policy

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wisconsin) and Rep. Don Beyer (D-Virginia) have re-introduced their Congressional Trade Authority Act.

The bipartisan bill would require the president to submit to Congress any proposal to adjust imports in the interest of national security under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

“Congress’ penchant for ceding its constitutional authorities to the executive branch has left the institution weak and the country increasingly governed by executive fiat,” Gallagher said. “This bipartisan bill takes a step to reverse this trend by restoring our voice in the tariff process and what constitutes a national security threat under Section 232. Whether it’s spending, war powers, or trade, it’s far past time for Congress to reassert itself as the dominant branch of government and claw back its Article I authorities.”

Beyer said that Section 232 national security tariffs were historically used sparingly and strategically, but that changed under the previous administration, showing the need for Congress to reassert its constitutional prerogatives to provide oversight of U.S.

trade relations.

“This legislation will ensure that future administrations do not abuse national security authorities to impose tariffs without clear objectives and without Congressional approval,” Beyer said. “Tariffs are a powerful tool to combat unfair trade practices, but they impose significant costs on American consumers, and Congress must have the ability to weigh in on any future 232 trade actions.”

Under this bill, members of Congress have a 60-day period following submission to review the president’s proposal. A joint resolution to approve the proposal would qualify for expedited consideration in both chambers. The requirement would apply to all future Section 232 actions, in addition to those taken within the last six years.

The bill would restore the national security intent behind Section 232 by transferring national security investigatory authority from the Department of Commerce to the Department of Defense.

In 2022, the National Taxpayer Union (NTU) named the bill one of 10 “No Brainer” bills for Congress to pass, which meant it had bipartisan support and provided a common-sense solution to a real problem facing taxpayers.

Johnson reveals defense agency, Georgia Tech may have targeted RNC, DNC

This week, U.S. Sens. Ron Johnson (R-Wisconsin), the ranking member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), the ranking member of the Committee on the Budget, wrote to Dr. Stephanie Tompkins, director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), regarding a recently uncovered email that exposed a project targeting Republican National Committee (RNC) and Democratic National Committee (DNC) networks.

The senators uncovered a Sept. 25, 2020, email between a Georgia Institute of Technology researcher and DARPA employees suggesting a plan to target the DNC and RNC networks. A DARPA employee referred to the project as “sensitive stuff . . . worth doing.”

Further, the email appears to suggest that the examination was to be conducted without the prior knowledge of the RNC or DNC, the senators wrote.

“This email exchange raises questions about the work of the [Enhanced Attribution] program and government employees responsible for it,” the senators wrote in their letter to DARPA director Tompkins. The letter follows the senators’ April 28, 2022 letter to DARPA about its reported collaboration with Georgia Tech related to the 2016 DNC server hack attribution.

DARPA has failed to fully respond to this inquiry, the senators wrote.

On May 12, 2023, special counsel John Durham referred two DARPA-related matters to the Defense Department Inspector General and the Defense Intelligence Agency for further review – one involving a Georgia Tech contract and one involving “irregular conduct in 2016 of two former employees of the Department of Defense.”

## ACLU opposes what it calls non-inclusive sports bills

The ACLU of Wisconsin has criticized a pair of bills introduced by the Wisconsin Legislature that would exclude transgender students in elementary, high schools, and public colleges and universities from participating in sports teams consistent with their identified gender.

“Transgender students participate in sports to challenge themselves and be part of a team — the same as their peers,” Dr. Melinda Brennan, executive director of the ACLU of Wisconsin, said. “The opportunity to participate in sports results in positive outcomes for students, including better grades, greater homework completion rates, higher educational and occupational aspirations, and improved self-esteem.”

Lawmakers should tackle the real issues with gender parity in sports, including unequal funding, resources, pay equity, and more, Brennan said.

“Promoting baseless fears about trans athletes does nothing to address those fundamental problems,” she said. “Excluding trans students from participating in sports teams consistent with their authentic gender identity is unfair and discriminatory. School sports should be inclusive for all students.”

Gov. Tony Evers has vowed to veto any bills passed by the legislature this session that target transgender Wisconsinites.

## Murphy to introduce highway setback legislation

State Rep. Dave Murphy (R-Greenville) will introduce legislation this week that he says will give Wisconsinites more access to their own property.

The bill, which is currently out for co-sponsorship, limits the Department of Transportation’s authority to apply setback restrictions from roadways. Specifically, it changes the setback area from 100 feet to 50 feet.

“This bill will protect property owners’ interest in the free use of their property,” said Murphy. “You’ll be able to use more of the land you already pay property taxes on.”

With the stroke of his pen, Murphy said, Gov. Evers can sign the bill and create more wealth in the state by giving property owners more use of their own land.

After the co-sponsorship period ends, Murphy will submit his bill to the Assembly chief clerk for official introduction.

## Rall

From page 8

Supreme Court’s awarding of Florida to Bush. The 1876 Tilden vs. Hayes race is officially listed as having been won by one elector, but was decided by Congress in an insanely racist corrupt deal and is universally considered to have been illegitimate.)

If you’re in the 8% of the population who live in Geor-

gia, Wisconsin, Arizona and Nevada, please continue below.

If not, stop here. CONGRATULATIONS! You can vote third party!

Second Filter: OK, you’re a resident of Georgia, Wisconsin, Arizona or Nevada. What is the likely margin between the Republican and Democratic votes for president?

Note this number.

Third Filter: As a resident of Georgia, Wisconsin, Arizona or Nevada, how many votes do you personally con-

trol?

If you are a political power broker like Democratic Party boss James Clyburn of South Carolina (but not actually him since South Carolina is not a swing state), this number may be high — in the thousands, or even hundreds of thousands. Otherwise, because you can only control your one single vote when you go into the voting booth, this number is one. Note your number.

Fourth Filter: Subtract the answer in the Third Filter

Question from the answer in the Second Filter Question.

If the answer is greater than zero, CONGRATULATIONS! You can vote third party!

If the answer is zero or less, STOP. You may not vote for a third party. As a Richard Daley-style political boss, or election machine hacker, or whatever scary person you are that allows you to control zillions of other people’s votes, it would be reckless and irresponsible for you to cast your many votes for a third

party instead of Joe Biden, since your swing state might fall into the Trump column as a result.

Ted Rall (Twitter: @tedrall), the political cartoonist, columnist and graphic novelist, co-hosts the left-vs-right DMZ America podcast with fellow cartoonist Scott Stantis. You can support Ted’s hard-hitting political cartoons and columns and see his work first by sponsoring his work on Patreon.

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