

VIEWPOINTS

EDITORIAL

Candidates should tell public their plan

Shouldn't candidates for public office use their campaign advertising to tell the public what they will do to make their corner of the world a better place?

This is not a new thing, but think about the campaign advertising being shown everywhere right now in advance of November's elections for governor, Congress and other offices. It seems as though every one of these ads was made with the same template which is to criticize, attack and condemn their opponents.

Unfortunately, nothing said here or anywhere else is going to change that. In all likelihood, candidates are running these ads because studies and data show they work. This could be a case of chicken-or-the-egg: What came first—negative election ads creating an electorate which no longer cares about issues, or an electorate which does not want to bother with discussing issues causing candidates to focus only on the negative? Either way, at least equal concern should be placed at the feet of the electorate as it is these candidates.

The candidates will respond, "If people want to know how we stand on the issues and what our plans are for fixing them, they can go to our websites." That might be true, but how many people are doing that versus simply basing their election choices on the handful of attack ads they are hearing?

Actually, most people are basing their election choices on the political party to which they "belong" either formally or informally. It really does not matter who the candidates are or whether or not they have a good plan (or any plan) to do anything—all that matters is whether there is a "R" or a "D" after the candidate's name.

To a large degree that is understandable as the major parties each stand for certain things and the public lines up behind those beliefs. That is the way politics has worked forever in this and other countries, and there is nothing wrong with that.

It just would be nice to every now and then hear a candidate get real specific about what they are going to do to make things better. For example, how many people planning to vote in November know the answers to these questions and others like them:

■ Senator Ron Johnson, what specific things will you try to implement to help curb runaway inflation in this country?

■ Senate candidate Mandela Barnes, what is your plan for handling the continuing influx of migrants across America's southern border?

■ Governor Tony Evers, workforce shortages are the biggest problem facing Wisconsin businesses today—what are you doing about it?

■ Gubernatorial candidate Tim Michels, as abortion is now a states issue, what laws would you like to see in State Statutes concerning this issue?

The candidates do have answers to these and dozens of other issue-based questions, but is the public hearing them? Instead, every hour of every day is filled with "Don't vote for him, he's a bad guy" ads.

It would be refreshing to hear a candidate actually say what they plan to do—just don't expect that to happen anytime soon. —Mark Sherry

LETTERS POLICY

The Tri-County News welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed and names (first and last) will be printed. An initial in place of a first name will not be allowed. Bona fide local organizations may use their organization name as their signature if submitting a letter, although an individual's name must be submitted (but will not be printed) for verification purposes. All letters submitted must have a contact phone number which will not be printed in the newspaper but is needed to verify authenticity of the letter. The Tri-County News reserves the right to edit or reject letters over 500 words, and/or for libel or accuracy concerns. Letter writers are limited to one letter per month unless prior permission is received from the publisher or editor of the Tri-County News. Letter writers wishing to write letters which exceed the length and/or frequency policies of the Tri-County News may take out paid advertising space to state their views. "Thank you's" are considered paid advertising and will be treated as such. Letters should be submitted by 1 p.m. Mondays for inclusion in that week's News. E-mail to msherry@wisconsinmediagroup.com or mail to or drop off at the News office, 606 Fremont St., P.O. Box 237, Kiel, WI 53042.

COLUMN

On the level of pond scum

I try to do my best to treat people with the respect they deserve, but there are certain individuals whose chosen profession puts their required level of respect somewhere around that of pond scum.

I'm talking specifically about those people who choose to try to make their money by scamming other people, especially our elderly population.

Con artists and scammers certainly are not going away, and I don't know if they ever will. The state's Better Business Bureau (BBB) just put out yet another press release of reminders for people to help their friends, family, clients, or patients avoid fraud by knowing the signs of current or impending fraud.

I actually have some sympathy—perhaps more than I should—for people who might be coerced or strong-armed into making these phone calls. Who knows what strange or sick things are happening behind the scenes in some of these places. But for anyone who willingly works to scam elderly people, my sympathy tank is empty.

That is why my wife and I enjoy watching the regular YouTube entries of Kitboga, the internet name of a man who specializes in scam baiting. He actually seeks out these telephone scammers and engages them in conversations, disguising his voice and acting like an elderly man or woman. His goal is simple—to tie up a scammer for as long as possible so that person cannot be scamming some innocent old man or woman. Along the way, of course, Kitboga's characters say and do some hilarious things which drive the scammers crazy. Kitboga has been successful in multiple ways—keeping scammers occupied for hours at a time while also racking up YouTube views in the millions and netting himself a good income. I say good for him.

Personally, I don't answer the phone if I don't

BEHIND THE FRONT PAGE

By Mark Sherry



recognize the number or it does not pop up with the name of someone I know. While I trust myself to not be scammed, I simply don't have the time to find out what I need to do to cash in on a great resort stay which I supposedly just won.

I do know someone who answers all those calls and—similar to Kitboga—tries to mess with them for at least a little while. The calls usually end up with a click on the other end, but on occasion they end with the scammer voicing a few obscenities—just like Kitboga hears quite often. By the way, Kitboga started doing this about five years ago when he found out that his grandmother had fallen victim to many scams designed to prey on the elderly, both online and in person.

According to the BBB, many victims don't ask for help until it is too late. They might be embarrassed or confused. That is why all of us need to look out for our family, friends and neighbors.

BBB says that incoming junk mail (illegitimate sweepstakes offers, etc.) or receiving frequent calls from people offering valuable rewards or asking for charitable donations are signs that fraud could easily occur or may have already occurred. Checks written or payments made to unfamiliar or out-of-state companies should be a red flag.

Make it your goal to not let the scammers win.

COLUMN

Milestone birthday reached

My husband turns 65 this month. Wow! Suddenly I'm married to an old guy. Just kidding. I'm only three years younger. Still, 65 is such a milestone birthday—Medicare, Metamucil, you get the drift.

Rich probably won't celebrate with a cake—he likes big decorated chocolate chip cookies best. If he did have a cake with all those candles to blow out, he might wonder where that tradition originated. A quick Google search revealed that the first well-documented event of candles placed on a birthday cake took place back in 1746 Germany. Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf held a fancy birthday bash at his home complete with a large cake with candles corresponding to his age.

While the horrors of COVID have caused many to rethink common practices of shaking hands and hugging, I often wonder if people will still blow out birthday candles in the future. It is a tad gross to think of little Leroy blow/spitting out his candles and then the whole family scarfing the frosting a few minutes later. The Journal of Food Research did a 2017 study which determined that blowing out candles on a frosted cake resulted in 1,400 percent more bacteria compared to those that were not blown on. Who knew? Probably everyone!

Ever wonder where the tradition of the cake itself took hold? Birthday cakes originated in Germany in the Middle Ages. The Germans liked to celebrate children's birthdays with cake, calling it Kinderfest. Special cakes were given to kids on the morning of their birthday with candles (one for each year and one for the future) staying lit all day. At dinnertime the candles would finally be blown out.

Along with cake and candles, most folks honor the birthday boy (or girl) with a loud, key-of-Z rendition of "Happy Birthday." The 1998 Guinness World Records called "Happy Birthday" the most recognized song in the English language. The base lyrics of the song have been translated into at least 18 languages. So, who penned the catchy tune? Some claim American sisters Mildred and Patty Hill wrote "Good Morning to All" in 1893 for Patty's kindergarten class in Kentucky. Mildred was a pianist and composer and that melody turned into the Happy Birthday song we all know and love.

DAR'S DABBLES

By DARLENE BUECHEL



So, with candles, cake and music, the next order of birthday business would be presents. I'll probably take Rich out to eat for his big day, but if I were giving a gift, I'd be following a tradition the Romans started over 2,000 years ago. Romans would celebrate by leaving wine, cake and incense on the domestic altar of a friend marking a birthday.

While American birthday traditions glorify the above-mentioned cake, candles and gifts, folks around the world have more unusual ways of marking the time it takes the Earth to revolve around the sun. For example, your birthday feast in South Korea might include seaweed soup for breakfast. Nix the cake in Russia—you would celebrate with a personalized pie. This homemade delicacy (either sweet or savory) would have a message carved into the top crust.

In China folks eat oodles of noodles on their big day. This symbolizes a long life. Want to feel like royalty on your birthday? You can enjoy a Princess cake in Sweden. This yummy layer cake of sponge filled with marzipan is topped with whipped cream, green fondant and powdered sugar.

If you'd rather have spicy than sweet, head over to Ghana in West Africa for a big dish of Oto. This delicacy is a mash made of yam and eggs fried with onions and palm oil. Folks cook a huge pot and serve the birthday boy and the whole family for breakfast.

Since my husband is a steak and potatoes guy, he'll probably celebrate with a ribeye and baby reds—along with his big, chocolate chip cookie. While I might tease Rich about turning 65, I think he should celebrate this milestone birthday and not worry about his days of Medicare and Metamucil.

In the words of Mark Twain, "Age is a case of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." Happy 65th Rich!