

Ohio town owed better from country

Any issue that can put Rosie O'Donnell and Sean Hannity on the same side should get everyone's attention. As people in rural, eastern Ohio staggered through an environmental catastrophe, the federal government shrugged and worried about balloons in the sky. President Biden snuck off on a surprise trip to Ukraine while the smoke was still hovering over East Palestine, Ohio, and railroad officials cowered in their corner offices.

In Our Opinion

Much of the media ignored or downplayed the train derailment and resulting "controlled burn" that sent a mushroom cloud of toxic chemicals over the area and left people confused and fearful.

As it becomes clear that little to nothing is being done to respond to the crisis, people from all walks of life are speaking up, from left-leaning progressive politicians and comedians to conservative Fox News talk show hosts.

That shows this is a crisis of humanity and not politics or ideology.

Just days after the train derailed and the toxic substances were set ablaze, residents were told it was safe to return home, although the governor hinted that if it was his home, he'd drink bottled water for a while and pay attention, just to be safe.

Not helpful. The residents of the East Palestine area are telling anyone who will listen that they are afraid, ill and angry. The general response they got was the definition of the trendy term "gaslighting."

"Don't worry. It's OK. The water and air are safe. Trust us."

Platitudes flew even as thousands of fish died in the rivers and streams and animals sickened or died. People reported rashes, sore throats and more, but were told it wasn't that bad.

The chemicals involved in this debacle are known to cause cancer, so will the people of the affected area still be told nothing is wrong years later when those illnesses show up? Or will that be a chance for the personal injury lawyers to swoop in?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency said it didn't put a response on the ground because this was not in its typical domain. If it had been an earthquake, hurricane or other natural disaster, sure, they'd be right there with a full brigade.

Chemicals burning from failure of a corporation doesn't cut it.

The response has been shameful, and Americans need to demand better before it happens somewhere else. Make them care. Make them respond.

Today in History...

Here are some highlights in world history on Feb. 23:

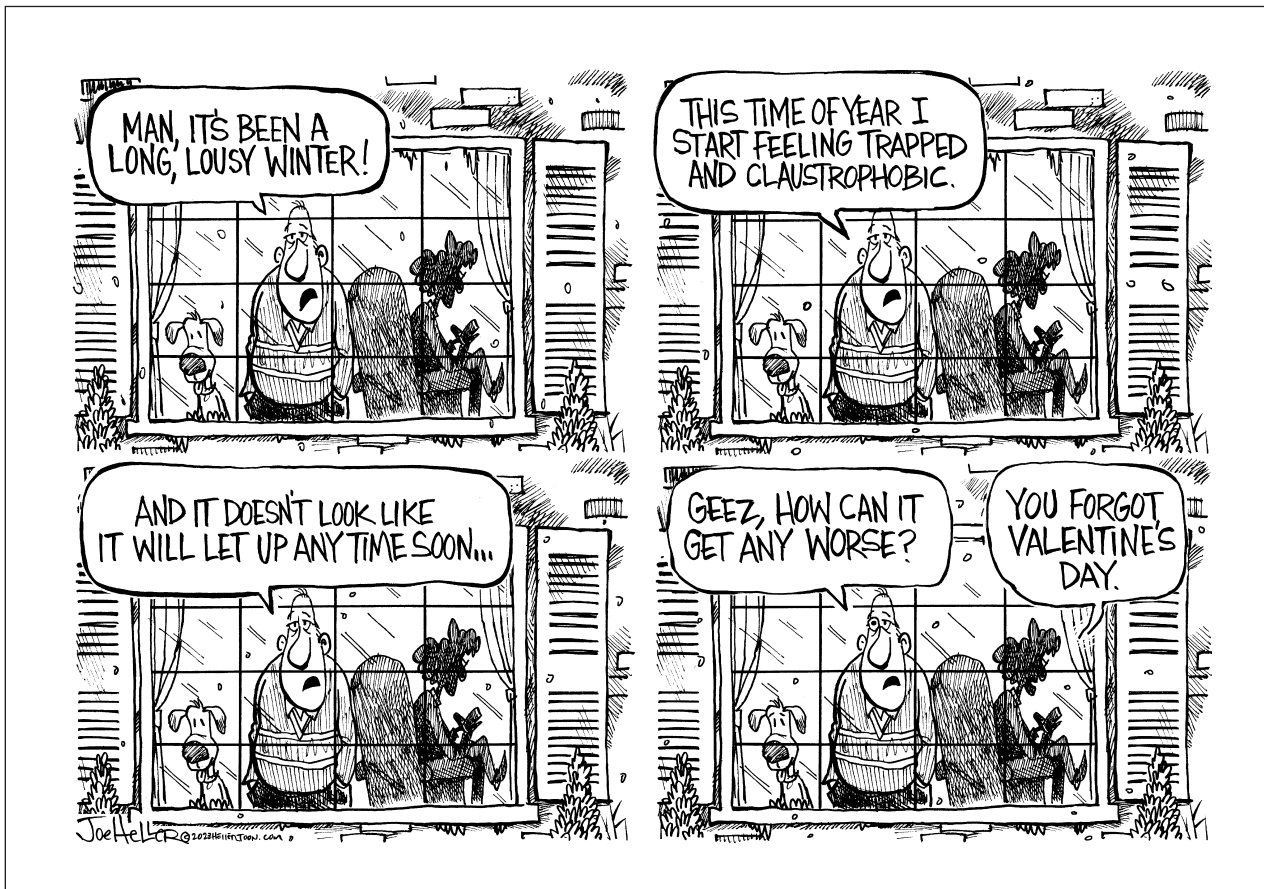
1836—The siege of the Alamo begins in San Antonio, Texas.

1861—President-elect Abraham Lincoln arrives secretly in Washington to take office, following word of a possible assassination plot in Baltimore.

1945—During World War II, U.S. Marines on Iwo Jima capture Mount Suribachi, where they raise two American flags (the second flag-raising was captured in the iconic Associated Press photograph.)

1954—The first mass inoculation of schoolchildren against polio using the Salk vaccine begins in Pittsburgh as some 5,000 students are vaccinated.

2007—A Mississippi grand jury refuses to bring any new charges in the 1955 slaying of Emmett Till, the Black teenager who was beaten and shot after being accused of whistling at a white woman, Carolyn Bryant Donham, for manslaughter.



Legislature, governor plan budget fight

Gov. Tony Evers' first budget after re-election lays out his plans on two big issues—tax cuts and aid to local governments.

Now it will be up to the Republican-controlled Legislature to make revisions to his plans.

The Legislature's Joint Finance Committee, stacked in Republicans' favor, will do most of the heavy lifting in changing Evers' two-year budget plan.

If all goes according to the usual schedule, the Legislature will send a revised document back to the governor around July 4, and then he will decide whether to sign it with partial vetoes or veto the whole thing.

So far, Evers has done the former, not the latter. And with a \$7 billion surplus greasing the skids and the semblance of bipartisan cooperation, many expect Evers to once again sign a budget bill after his line-item vetoes.

Evers has put down his markers on two big issues:

- Evers wants to dedicate 20% of future state tax collections to boost shared revenue by more than \$576 million while also allowing local

governments to levy a higher sales tax of their own.

He backed pleas from Milwaukee officials to allow the county to levy an additional 1% sales tax on top of the 0.5% imposed now. The new revenue would be split equally between the county and the city.

Meanwhile, other counties would be allowed to double their local sales tax to 1%. Besides Milwaukee, about 25 cities with populations of more than 30,000 would be able to impose a new 0.5% sales tax.

In both cases, voters would have to approve the higher sales taxes through a referendum.

Currently, Wisconsin imposes a 5% sales tax, while counties can impose an additional 0.5%. Local governments also raise revenue through property taxes with state-imposed caps on their levies.

"The state must fulfill our obligation to ensure our local partners can meet basic and unique community needs alike, and this historic investment will ensure that we do," Evers said.

■ The Democrat governor

also is proposing \$1.2 billion in tax cuts geared toward the middle class, parents, seniors and students plus two pro-business items: a full repeal of the personal property tax, a move that would save busi-

Capitol Report

By WisPolitics.com

nesses \$200 million in the first year after implementation; and expansion of a research tax credit, which would reduce state revenues \$80.5 million over the biennium.

Meanwhile, Evers is again calling for capping existing tax breaks for manufacturers and investors, items his office said would raise an additional \$995 million over the two-year budget.

Evers proposed similar moves in his last budget proposal only to see GOP lawmakers reject both proposals, knocking them as unnecessary tax hikes that would hurt businesses. The governor pitched his overall plan as an effort to make the state tax code

more fair.

"I've said all along that we'd deliver real, responsible tax relief targeted to the middle class and working families—not spending big on breaks for the wealthiest 20% of earners in our state who don't need the extra help affording rising costs," Evers said, alluding to a GOP plan to move the state to a flat tax.

Evers had already laid out the heart of his income tax cut plan aimed at the middle class during his successful re-election bid. One new component is a call to exempt from state taxes student debt loan forgiveness.

President Biden's move to cancel up to \$20,000 in student loans has been blocked by several lawsuits, and the U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear arguments in two of the cases later this month.

Evers' budget will include provisions that would adopt federal tax changes to ensure those who get debt relief aren't subject to state taxes. According to the governor's office, more than 300,000 Wisconsinites have been approved to have some of their loans
See Battle p. 17

GOP faithful hear from prominent figure

45 Years Ago—1978

—Lee Sherman Dreyfus, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and Republican candidate for governor of Wisconsin, was the keynote speaker at the annual Lincoln Day dinner in Manitowoc. He pointed out the special nature of the United States and the American people, saying preserving the union is still a main concern, calling for a new Lincoln to lead the country to help the nation.

—The Valders FFA Chapter is celebrating National FFA Week this week, marking 50 years of the FFA in the United States. The chapter at Valders High School currently lists 101 members. The chapter is supported by a strong FFA Alumni group, which currently has 47 adult members.

—The Valders boys basketball team ended its Olympian Conference season with a

hard-fought victory over Brillion, 64-59. The game was close the entire way, with the lead changing hands six times in the third period alone. The

Looking Back

By Brian Thomsen

Vikings then made 14 of 17 free throws in the fourth quarter to seal the win. Tom Murphy led Valders with 16 points, and Brian Pritzl had 15.

25 Years Ago—1998

—Valders Police Chief William Riesterer recently proposed to the village board that it consider forming a municipal court to handle traffic and other citations involving fines. He said the court would save the village time and money and make court appearances more convenient for

part-time officers.

—A local boy, Bradley Binversie, 10, has reached the level of AAA Squirt Major hockey, the highest level in the nation in his age group. He recently made the AAA team at the Pettit National Ice Center in Milwaukee and is the team's front line center and leads the team in several key statistics. He is a fourth grader at Valders Elementary School and the son of Mark Binversie and Sarah Binversie.

—Nick Mueller, a senior on the Valders High School wrestling team, qualified for the WIAA Division 2 state tournament by placing second at 160 pounds at the sectional in Ripon. He earned the state berth with a wrestleback victory after losing to the eventual sectional champion. Also for Valders, Phil Lutter was fourth at 112 pounds and Steve Ulness was fourth at 145.

10 Years Ago—2013

—Kelly Isselmann has been selected as the new principal of Valders Middle School and will move into the role in July, replacing the retiring Derrick Krey. Isselmann is currently a first grade teacher at Valders. She will also be the district's athletic director.

—The Liberty Town Board has begun a search for a new town clerk, following the resignation of Angie Vetting earlier this month. She plans to stay on to help the town until a new clerk is found and trained.

—Valders senior Stetson McCulley placed second at 138 pounds at the WIAA Division 2 state wrestling meet in Madison. He lost, 5-2, in the championship match to Mitchell Friedman of Oconto Falls. He finishes as state runner-up with a season record of 44-3, among the best wrestlers in school history.



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