



SUBMIT LETTERS TO:
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OPINION/COMMENTARY

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was a budding fly fisherman, I backslid and depended on a spinning rod and a little silver spoon to catch my trout.

Dad went up stream, while I went down. In the first 10 minutes of casting, I got off to a great start. Two fish, both of nice keeping size around 10 inches, except for the fact that they were musky fingerlings, not trout.

Worse yet, clouds of mosquitoes descended upon me, so thick I could barely see three feet ahead of me. I had no bug dope, so I tried smearing some reel oil on my face, hands and arms. No good. My next and only oth-

er weapon to try was a bottle of dry fly dope. That didn't work either.

Very quickly I retreated to the car. Dad beat me there, whipped as badly as I by squadron after squadron of mosquitoes. It looked like our trout fishing excursion would be a bust.

We drove down FF, getting nearer to Butternut when we spied a country tavern that was open. A beer for Dad and a soda for me raised our spirits somewhat. They were raised considerably more when the bartender produced his last container of 6-12, the only bug repellent available back in those days. Our expedition was saved.

Back to Swamp Creek we went, the bartender about

50 cents richer from the sale of the 6-12, along with a 25-cent tip from my dad, which was probably a sizeable tip back in 1961.

Back at the creek, we both went upstream, as I had no desire to catch more 10-inch muskies downstream.

The trout did not cooperate upstream either. An hour later, our catch total was zilch, and if Dad, a fly fisherman who once taught a Green Bay Packers defensive back how to cast flies, couldn't catch trout, I figured no one could.

Then magic struck. At the lower end of a deep pool below a stretch of fast water I had a hit. The fish had no chance. In seconds I had landed it, a whopping 11-inch walleye! Huh! Two

more casts produced two more fish, each about the size of the first. Two more walleyes.

A fine trout stream it was. Dad, cussing the rascal who gave him the fishing tip, suggested maybe we should fold our tents and go home.

I readily agreed, especially since the mosquitoes, apparently a biologically advanced breed, began swarming us again, not in squadron numbers, but more like battalion formations. Even the 6-12 couldn't hold them off.

I learned two things from that expedition. One, if you get a hot fishing tip from a yokel you've never met before, stick a 12-gauge barrel under his nose and see how fast he runs, and two, never, ever forget the bug dope.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

K-12 referenda passage rates fall

By WISCONSIN POLICY FORUM

While still passing in sizable numbers in the April 2023 election, local ballot referenda to allow school districts to exceed state property tax limits passed at the lowest rate since 2010.

The decline comes after years in which such measures were passed in record numbers and amounts.

Of the 83 referenda seeking to increase local property taxes for K-12 schools, 46 were approved by voters, or 55.4%. Referenda to finance capital projects passed at a higher rate than the two types of measures to finance districts' ongoing operations.

All three types, however, passed at lower rates than last year, and the overall passage rate represented a notable drop from last year's approval rate of 80.1%.

Taking a longer-term view, since 2010, a Wisconsin Policy Forum analysis found larger shares of urban and declining enrollment districts have approved operating referenda. A larger share of low-income districts also approved such measures relative to high-income districts — raising concerns about which communities feel the most pressure to pursue ballot measures.

Since 1993, K-12 school districts in Wisconsin have been subject to state-imposed limits on the amount of revenue they can raise from state general school aids and local property taxes combined. Since 2011, these per-pupil revenue limits have not kept pace with inflation, and in the current 2021-'23 state budget they were frozen for both years.

In recent years, that has prompted a groundswell of school referenda in which voters have opted to increase district spending and their local property taxes by more than what the revenue limits would otherwise allow.

Also on the April ballot

were referenda to increase municipal, town, or county property taxes beyond state-imposed caps. The state generally limits these yearly property tax increases used for operations to the rate of increase of net new construction within each jurisdiction. Voters have also been voting in increasing numbers in recent years on local referenda to exceed these limits.

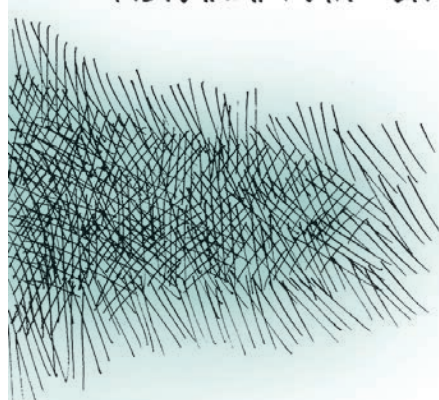
Of the 25 referenda on the ballot to increase levy limits for towns, villages, cities, and one county, 10 passed, or 40%. Eighteen of the 25 referenda said the funds would be used at least in part for police, fire protection, and other public safety services, with emergency medical services and streets being the next two most common purposes. For years, the Forum has warned that a heavy reliance on referenda to fund local services could exacerbate disparities between wealthy communities (whose residents can afford to approve them) and other communities that cannot.

Wisconsin Forum does not advocate specific policies, but we've noted the state's massive surplus represents a "golden opportunity" to tackle big issues. We've also pointed out some of the ways the state might incentivize local governments to find efficiencies by working together to share services.

This information is 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 wispoli- cyforum.org.

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NO MAN STANDS TALLER THAN WHEN HE STOOPS TO HELP A CHILD
 - ABRAHAM LINCOLN



Joe Heller ©2023 HELLETTON.COM

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things to demonstrate fealty to their Republican base: try to impeach Biden, drag Hunter Biden through muddy hearings, pass bills prioritizing freedom of religion above all other values, even flirt with a national abortion ban.

Their hearings will get lots of play on Fox News and Newsmax, but they'll lead nowhere, and their bills will die in the Senate.

2. Biden's quiet diplomacy is working, at least for now.

Biden didn't try to rally the public behind him. He might have told the nation why the very existence of the debt ceiling was an affront to both the Constitution and the

nation's standing. He could have threatened to use the 14th Amendment and publicly invited the Supreme Court to rule on it.

But this was not Biden. In his 50 years of public service, he has never delivered a speech with the power to alter the public's understanding of a major issue.

Over the next 17 months, Biden won't take on MAGA Republicans openly and vociferously, no matter how outrageously they act. Instead, he'll quietly work away at implementing his infrastructure, technology, and climate legislation.

3. The Trump factor wasn't in play, but it will be.

As in Sherlock Holmes's mystery "The Dog That Didn't Bark," silence was a big part of the story — in this case, that of Donald Trump during the critical final weeks of negotiation.

Had Trump weighed in loudly against it, House Republicans would not have gone along.

Biden's behind-the-scenes strategy of compromise will work less well closer to the election, as America is subjected to full-bore Trump. And it's certainly no match for a growing White Christian Nationalist movement that Trump has enabled, which threatens the very essence of American democracy.

Some commentators argue that the debt-ceiling deal begins to "reestablish a broad bipartisan political center."

Rubbish. There can be no center to American politics as long as most Republican voters support Trump and most Republican lawmakers follow Trump's lead. There's no "center" between democracy and authoritarianism.

4. The debt will continue to soar, but that may not be a problem.

The debt agreement will cut expected increases in federal spending by \$1.5 trillion over a decade, mainly by freezing some funding and limiting spending to 1% growth in 2025.

Yet the national debt as a percentage of the total econo-

my will continue to grow.

This is largely due to the inevitable demographics of baby boomers — who will be retiring and collecting Social Security and Medicare.

Republicans will almost certainly take their debt savings as an invitation for more tax cuts on the wealthy and big corporations, just as they turned savings from their 2011 deal into the 2017 tax cut.

Democrats should resist this and continue to demand that the rich pay their fair share of taxes. Democrats must also advocate for more generous safety nets and public investments.

There's no good reason the U.S. remains the only rich nation without paid family leave, paid vacations, universal health care, affordable college, child and elder care. These are all hugely popular with voters. Make them issues for 2024.

As to the debt itself, neither party really cares about it. Although it has doubled from \$15 trillion in 2011 to \$31.4 trillion now, it has not had any obvious negative effect on the economy.

5. The federal budget will become little more than Social Security, Medicare, and defense.

Perhaps the biggest single shift in Republican strategy as revealed in the debt deal is the GOP's newfound willingness to protect Social Security and Medicare.

Think how far we've come from 2005 when George W. Bush tried to privatize Social Security. This time around, MAGA Republicans went out of their way to wall off these popular programs. (Trump warned MAGAs not to touch them.)

In a few years, if present trends continue, the federal budget will essentially be Social Security, Medicare, and national defense — with a few odds and ends tacked on. Non-defense discretionary spending has been falling as a share of the economy for several years, and it will now fall even farther.

I don't want to minimize

the significance of what just occurred. America has dodged a lethal bullet. Biden played it about as well as it could have been played, given who he is and who they are. Had the debt ceiling not been lifted, we'd be facing economic Armageddon within days.

But in terms of the factors contributing to that lethal bullet, little has changed. The MAGA Republicans have been stymied for now, but they're still dangerous as hell.

(Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of "The System: Who Rigged It, How We Fix It." Read more from Robert Reich at <https://robertreich.substack.com/>)

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when he gets a label maker. **Rule 13:** It's hard to beat a really good wheelbarrow or an aluminum extension ladder. Never buy a real man a stepladder. It must be an extension ladder. No one knows why.

Rule 14: Men love ropes. It takes them back to their cowboy-playing origins, or at least the Boy Scouts. Nothing says love like a hundred feet of 3/8-inch manila rope. No one knows why.

A few good Father's Day thoughts: A good father is one whose only reason for putting down a laughing baby is to pick up a crying one. The Rev. Billy Graham said: A good father is one of the most unsung, unpraised, unnoticed, and yet one of the most valuable assets in our society.

Sometimes the poorest man leaves his children the richest inheritance. And a dad is someone who wants to catch you when you fall. Instead, he picks you up, brushes you off, and lets you try again.



BUSY BEE — Crab apple blossoms are not only eye-catching in the spring, but also draw the attention of pollinators like this busy bee that visits the flowers. Pollen gets picked up

on the insect's furry body, then it is deposited on other blossoms as it travels from plant to plant.

—Staff Photo By MICHELLE DREW