



THE INTELL
OPINION
THE INTELLIGENCER

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OUR VIEW

Putting function
in government

There is much Americans don't agree on when it comes to government. One thing we do agree on, however: Government is dysfunctional. By that we mean it is ever difficult to get things done because compromise is almost impossible to achieve.

Why are our elected representative so unwilling to compromise when the very government they carry on was the result of a "great compromise" reached by the Founders of this nation?

It comes down to one issue: redistricting. That's the process of redrawing congressional and state legislative districts every 10 years, supposedly in keeping with the results of the decennial census. Theoretically, redistricting is supposed to reflect population shifts by moving boundaries in order to keep a relatively equal number of residents in each district.

In reality, boundaries are moved in order to capture more votes for whichever party controls the redistricting process — in other words, the party that holds a majority of seats in the state Legislature. In Pennsylvania, that's the Republican Party, which explains why Republicans, with 3.3 million registered voters, hold 13 House seats in Congress to the Democrats' five, even though there are nearly a million more registered Democrats in the commonwealth.

The same unnatural political complexion colors Harrisburg, where Democrats are outnumbered 122-80 in the state House and 34-16 in the Senate. This contortion of the redistricting process, known as gerrymandering, enables government representatives to pick their voters, as opposed to voters picking their representatives. Bottom line: It protects incumbents from political challenge, leading to extremist politics and a reluctance to compromise. We need to get rid of it.

As we mentioned above, gerrymandering occurs because the majority party controls the redistricting process by virtue of controlling who sits on the panel doing the redistricting. The panel's handiwork can be seen in district maps that resemble ink blots. In fact, the "poster child" for bizarre congressional district configurations is the nearby 7th District, which crosses five different counties and at one point is only 800 feet across.

In a letter published March 12, Solebury resident Ardith Talbott encourages officials in the township to support a resolution backing state Senate Bill 22, which would create an independent commission to draw the state's congressional and legislative boundaries. This is a bill every Pennsylvania lawmaker who values fairness in elections should support.

Bucks County state Sen. Charles McIlhinney, R-10, should get first crack at the measure, since the bill was assigned to the State Government Committee on which he sits. We encourage the senator to stand up for good government and support a bill we believe would restore function to both Washington and Harrisburg.

GUEST OPINION

An attack on Planned Parenthood is an attack on preventive care

By MELISSA REED

Shortly into the new administration and Congress, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan officially said he would defund Planned Parenthood. "Defunding" Planned Parenthood is a misnomer. There is no blank check that Planned Parenthood gets from the federal government, and it's not a line item in the budget. Instead, this type of legislation would prevent millions of women who rely on Medicaid or other federal programs from accessing the health care provider they've been able to rely on for decades.

Federal law already blocks federal funds from going to abortion services. Defunding Planned Parenthood instead blocks people from accessing cancer screenings, birth control, HIV and STI testing, and other

preventive and essential care.

An attack on Planned Parenthood is an attack on the preventive care millions of patients receive at their health centers each year. It's not only of deep concern, it is confusing that ripping health care away from women is one of the first items on the agenda after these issues barely rose above vicious rhetoric on the campaign trail last year.

The false claims made by politicians that other health care providers could serve Planned Parenthood patients continue to be wrong. The idea that other providers could absorb Planned Parenthood's patients has been resoundingly dismissed by experts. In fact, Georges Benjamin, the executive director of the American Public Health Association, has called the idea "ludicrous."

More than six in 10 women who obtained care at a publicly funded center providing contraceptive services in 2006–2010 considered Planned Parenthood their usual source of medical care.

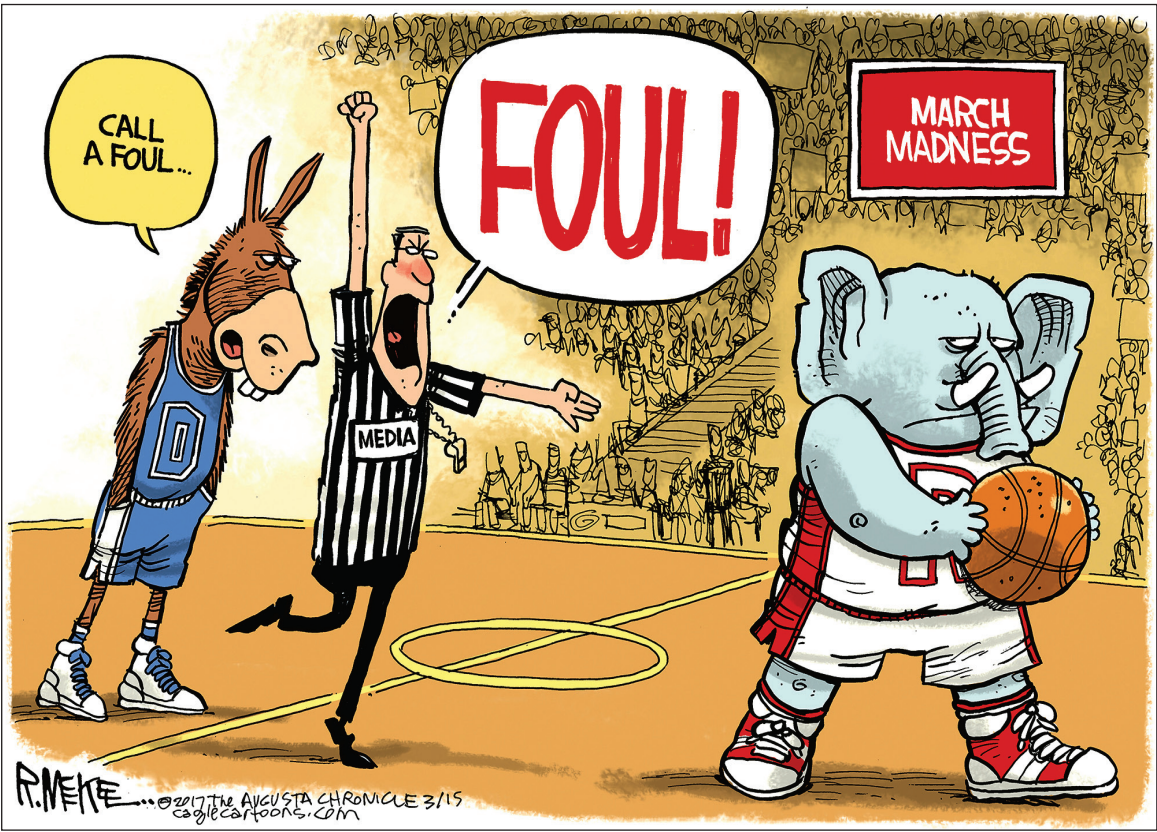
The well-being of millions of women depends on Planned Parenthood health centers across Pennsylvania and around the country. Planned Parenthood is known in the medical community for delivering high quality, non-judgmental care. And we are the only community provider in Bucks County providing this care. If you need family planning care, you can't go to the Bucks County Health Department; they don't provide it. So, there would be an immense void in family planning care if Planned Parenthood weren't available in Bucks County. Americans and Pennsylvanians

have stated loud and clear that they oppose elected officials attacking Planned Parenthood, and nearly half (48 percent) of Donald Trump's own supporters have stated they oppose defunding Planned Parenthood. Women make up over half the population of the U.S. Attacking their ability to access the quality, affordable health care they need defies common sense.

We must rise above ideological politics and preserve access to Planned Parenthood health centers for the many thousands who come through their doors every year.

I urge Bucks County Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick to oppose these attacks on care.

Melissa Reed is the CEO of Planned Parenthood Keystone, which serves over 35,000 patients in Pennsylvania.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Build a solar farm
on former air base

The Willow Grove naval air base was placed on the EPA's National Priorities List on Sept. 29, 1995; 28 "contaminants of concern" were listed. This list did not include the recent contaminants found in the groundwater in Horsham and neighboring community wells. Horsham Township officials, through the Horsham Land Redevelopment Authority (HLRA), have worked feverishly to obtain control of the base property from the federal government and have had illustrative land development plans prepared.

A recent article in this newspaper quoted the Hatboro-Horsham School District superintendent stating the school's swimming pool would not be repaired because the district is planning on building a new middle school on 60 acres it will obtain on the base site, and the new school would have a swimming pool.

So what's my point? First, I am not a greenie, tree-hugger, man-made climate changer or overzealous environmentalist. However, I do think it is time to rethink what should be done with the base property. I propose investigating the feasibility of installing a solar farm on all of it. Note that I said "feasibility." There are other solar farms in Pennsylvania, so I believe it might work on the base.

The solar farm could be constructed and operated with a public-private partnership, whereby it would cost the township nothing. But the township and residents could receive low-cost electricity, and the township might also receive some revenue. Other benefits include some open space and a lot less traffic than the proposed development plans presented by the HLRA.

Realistically, I do not foresee the property being developed for

residential or commercial use due to the contamination. Who would want to live or work on this property?

Daren Miller
Horsham

Immigrants have been
under attack a long time

Last week 75 local residents met in Doylestown to discuss measures to protect immigrants from unwarranted harassment and arrests, which have become epidemic both locally and nationally. Immigrants are under attack by both racist hate groups and by the bureaucracy. The present administration seems to have accelerated this epidemic, but it is important to recognize that it has been going on for some time.

President Obama deported 50 percent more immigrants (3 million) than President Bush before him. He has been called "the deporter in chief." And President Clinton's free-trade deals destroyed Mexico's agricultural economy, causing thousands of Mexicans to come north for their own survival.

I was impressed by last week's meeting for three reasons:

1. The meeting was led by women. The audience was more than two-thirds female, including many young women, and the five presenters were all women. It's important that women stand up and assume their share of leadership in social issues. I think this is a trend that will only grow and is a necessary evolution if we are to create a sustainable society.
2. I did not hear the word "Trump" mentioned even once. We cannot solve the many problems that face us unless we correctly identify the causes. It is a waste of time to vent anger at President Trump, because he is only the latest manifestation of a government that has been neglecting the majority of its people for a long time. It is best, therefore, to focus on issues and not on personalities.
3. Meetings like this one are the best answer to the growing

economic, political and environmental crises that threaten us. There is little we can do to affect the major forces that are driving global and national events today, but we can, and we must, build local organizations and relationships to help each other through whatever dangers may lie ahead.

Gus Linton
East Rockhill

Praise for Trump
for reading a speech

It is a sad state of affairs, and horribly telling of this moment in our great nation's history, when a man is praised as being "presidential" simply because he read a speech (written by a team of professional speechwriters) from a teleprompter. He didn't blow a fuse; he didn't go off-script; he didn't lead any chants. How presidential!

Have we lost our minds? Actually, no, many of us have not. We will continue to highlight the countless hypocrisies of the current administration. For example, how Trump finally — because someone else wrote it for him — acknowledged the acts of intolerance happening across our country, and then went on to speak of opening an immigrant crime agency. And also how he exploited the tragic death of a soldier killed on the first military operation he oversaw as commander in chief, something he berated Hillary Clinton for again and again during the campaign.

How he also insisted, loudly and repeatedly, that he would drain the swamp in our nation's capital. Yet his Cabinet is packed with Wall Street executives and seemingly corrupt politicians. The bar must be set much, much higher for the most powerful leader in the free world.

Let us stop praising Trump as if he is a toddler just learning to follow rules. Let us hold him to the impossibly high standards his current title demands.

Kathy Gosline
Buckingham Voices

Alcohol in moderation
can be good for you

Alcohol can actually be good for you in moderation. Studies conducted in both Norway and Sweden showed that alcohol can be healthy. Dr. Imre Janszky, a professor of social medicine at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, said that drinking a little alcohol every day can be part of a healthy lifestyle. The key word is moderation. In moderation, alcohol does more good than harm.

Here are some findings from those studies:

- Three to five drinks a week lowers the risk of heart failure and heart attack.
- Experts say it doesn't matter if a person drinks wine, beer or liquor.
- Moderate alcohol consumption is part of a healthier lifestyle.

So, this St. Patty's Day, go out and have fun, drink moderately and enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Even that green beer is OK to drink. Make sure you have a designated driver, since drinking alcohol does alter your driving ability. Be safe and drink responsibly.

Dr. Steven Rosenberg
Huntingdon Valley

The writer is a psychotherapist and behavioral specialist with a practice in Elkins Park.



HOW TO GET A LETTER PUBLISHED

The newspaper welcomes letters. Address them to "Your Turn," The Intelligencer, 333 N. Broad St., Doylestown, PA 18901, or FAX them to 215-345-3150.

Letters can also be sent via email to: intell_letters@calkins.com

Letters must be signed and include a home address and telephone number. Short letters are encouraged. No unsigned letters will be published. The editor reserves the right to reject, condense and edit all letters.

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THE VENT

Send your short comments to intell_letters@calkins.com, with INTELL-VENT on the subject line. Comments may also be submitted by mail. Full name and hometown required.

Who was the person who originally ordered the courthouse parking garage to be closed to everybody with concrete barricades like we were expecting a terrorist attack, but leading to borough streets being filled with vehicles and harder to clean?

Janusz Nowak, Doylestown

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Doylestown Borough Councilman Joe Flood for facilitating, and to the county commissioners for granting, access by borough residents to the county's parking garage during this winter storm. Much appreciated.

Eric G. Marttila, Doylestown

It took the Republicans eight years to come up with a health care plan that strips away health care from 24 million people. Imagine if they had a few more years how many more Americans would be considered expendable.

Steve Cickay, Newtown Township