

Opinions

Everybody has one...

We Go Forward

Horrified. Shocked. Dismayed. This is the family of feelings every American should be experiencing after the Jan. 6, 2021, raid on the U.S. Capitol Building. The attack was a dark day in our history, an assault on our democracy. A full accounting must take place, with all actors directly involved held maximally responsible for their terrible actions. Yet the question remains: where do we go from here?

As an optimist, I believe the answer has to be, we go forward. Fortunately, our republic is infinitely more robust than the aims of a small group of would-be insurrectionists, who took hold of and shook a pillar of our democracy but utterly failed to make it fall. In my mind, this is compelling evidence that our system is working.

Dozens of arrests have been made and a rhetorical reckoning is sweeping the American political system. Unmoved by whatever nefarious purpose these rioters were hoping to enact, freedom won the day. Electoral votes were counted, the presidential election was certified, and the sitting president conceded. All this was inevitable, and now, it is time to move forward.

To accomplish this, Americans of every political persuasion must put aside their wagging fingers, their accusations, their I-told-you-so's. Every American. Just as we cannot place blame for the actions of a few radicals at the feet of millions who clearly do not condone such behavior, we must also be honest about the role each of us has played in allowing such tensions to rise.

Sadly, we are locked in a longstanding culture war that has escalated on both sides. What each side fails to acknowledge is that we are largely talking past one another, causing more conflict and preventing resolution. As self-segregated disparate tribes, our camps have been operating on different sides of the same battlefield, combatants glaring with increasing intensity across enemy lines. This has left everyone with a one-sided view of the war.

I ask again: where do we go from here? I say we swallow our pride collectively, individually, and march toward our supposedly sworn enemies, approaching the middle from both sides. As we walk closer to common ground, realization will dawn — our enemy is actually our fellow American. Only in this shared space of understanding may we get a full view of the battlefield, of the complicity of both sides, and from here, we may begin to heal together.

From the Editor's Desk

Shaun Jarrard



Right Side of History

A U.S. physician became alarmed by his elderly mother's observations. She spoke from her experience resisting communism's early advances and as a political prisoner in Eastern Europe. Rod Dreher recounts the story in his book, "Live Not By Lies." Recent stories of "cancel culture" in the U.S. alarmed the lady and recalled her history. Similar to that 20th century movement, a damaging ideology is pitched today as something good, even in a religious way. Don't get caught in that net.

Dreher describes it like this: "It masquerades as kindness, demonizing dissenters and disfavored demographic groups to protect the feelings of victims in order to bring about social justice. The contemporary cult of social justice identifies members of certain social groups as victimizers, as scapegoats, and calls for their suppression as a matter of righteousness." Unless you are one of the oppressed classes, you may not speak. It's about levers of power and redistribution of wealth. It even brands religious freedom as bigotry.

You cannot dismiss this as campus wokeness. It does exist in education, but also in politics, business and the media. It brooks no dissent and divides people into two classes: oppressed and oppressor. It affirms its adherents in anything they feel or believe, even if it is self-destructive. It knows nothing of repentance and reconciliation, only retribution. It self-defines righteousness. It rejects the basis of equality, that all people are created in God's image. Can such defects yield true justice? The prophet Habakkuk wrote about this some 2,600 years ago. "Strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored, and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out confused" (Hab. 1:3-4).

So how do Christians face any ideology that denies truth? Christianity is more than a set of beliefs and behaviors. It is more than a worldview. It is a relationship with the Creator who forms your new identity in Christ. We are people who love God and neighbor, as Jesus said. So trust God's Providence to accomplish his purposes regardless of people who live as though he doesn't. "The righteous will live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4), not by hate,

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Residents of Union County have varying opinions about the adoption of local ordinances. Though we don't encourage a culture for dictating how people use their property, we do find it necessary to consider how one person's decisions impact others.

Q. Why do we have a Billboard ordinance?

A. This ordinance came about as a result of a proliferation of billboards being erected along Hwy 515 several years ago. While it is very understandable that property owners simply want to have the opportunity of collecting rent and the billboard people just want to make a living, there has to be a limit. Because, over time, the general public does not accept the fact that a few can negatively impact the view for everyone, and state law agrees. Almost every county has some type of billboard ordinance. In Union County, an ordinance was passed limiting the number and locations of billboards so they would have a minimal impact in the future. I still allow an adequate number for advertising.

Q. Why did we adopt an RV Parks ordinance?

A. Similar to the billboard situation, we faced an issue regarding RV parks. RV Parks were being built with little consideration for how they would impact a neighborhood and possibly negatively affect property values. So, we created an ordinance that regulates where they can be located and how many can be built in a specific area. Again, we are not eliminating RV Parks, but limiting their impact on the general public!

Q. Why did we adopt a junkyards ordinance?

A. Many of the people of Union County, over time, have sold their property to people moving to this area from out of town. When land prices were under \$5,000 per acre, it was not such a big deal if your neighbor put in a junk yard or had a few junk cars. It would impact you, but not a lot of other people. However, now that property values have escalated to well over \$20,000 per acre in many cases, and the population density is increasing, the impact on a neighborhood is much greater. The public will not continue to accept the degradation of their community by this type of business. None of these ordinances prevent billboards, RV parks or junkyards, but they limit where they can be placed and how they

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



ISO Survey

Union County Fire Department serves the community in many ways. We respond to emergency calls involving fire, rescue, medical, and a variety of other emergencies. The department also has many other duties that do not involve responding to emergencies. Some are related to maintaining or improving our Public Protection Class (PPC™) commonly referred to as the ISO rating.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



The PPC™ is one tool that insurers use for underwriting and to calculate fire insurance premiums for homes and businesses. It is based on Insurance Services Office (ISO) Fire Suppression Class Schedule (FSRS). ISO uses the FSRS to evaluate the major elements of a community's fire protection system. They then assign a numerical grade called a Public Protection Classification (PPC™) or "ISO rating". The PPC™ ranges from class 10 (worst) to class 1 (best).

The major elements of the FSRS include

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Letters to the Editor

Dedicated Workers

Dear Editor,
The Union County Board of Elections would like to express our thanks to all the dedicated workers who served during these trying times.

In March, each veteran and new poll worker had a four-hour training session on all the new machines with updated training before each election. We have had four elections in this cycle from June, August, November and back to January 2021.

The registrar's office/staff set the standard for the preventive measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19. The poll workers took this model into the county voting locations. To my knowledge, we have had no cases/outbreaks stemming from our onsite voting.

A poll worker's requirement is to serve the citizens of our county in the most courteous, efficient and safe manner possible! These workers arrive in the dark of morning on Election Day and work a 14 to 17 hour day before leaving in the dark of night. They do this because they

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Paying the Price

Dear Editor,
"We love you. You're very special. Go home."

With the whole world watching, that is the message Donald Trump chose to give to the thousands of right-wing terrorists who barreled their way into the Capitol Building, flying Confederate flags and wearing shirts saying "Civil War" and "Camp Auschwitz."

This isn't a surprise -- Trump spent YEARS inciting his base to violence while the Republican party simply looked on. And now we're paying the price for it.

Saying this is a disgrace to our nation and our democracy is an understatement. Respectfully submitted,

Jim Morris

Biblical New Year Resolution

Dear Editor,
We just celebrated the birth of our Savior, the baby Jesus and how He was born of a virgin by the Spirit of God and how this baby Jesus grew to be the Savior of the world.

Whether you believe in this story or not will determine where you go when you die, but folks I have good news for you, if you will come as you are and accept Him as your Savior and

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Letters to the Editor

Angry Americans

Dear Editor,
America is bigger than Trump supporters and America is angry! I was horrified to see the assault on our nation's capital. I wish I had the ability to express all that is in my heart and to express my outrage more eloquently, more powerfully, but I don't, so these meager words will have to suffice.

I'm mad. I'm hurt. I'm fearful for our future, and I'm disappointed at and disillusioned with the Republican Party and every so-called patriotic American who supported and enabled Donald Trump.

It's disheartening to know that millions voted for a man so obviously unpatriotic, a man so infantile, so psychologically disturbed that he could not even handle the truth of his own failure; a man so desperate to hold onto power that he was willing to burn down our democracy for his own selfish ego. The wreckage of what happened at the Capitol Building lays at the feet of every single Trump supporter. Especially those who voted for him because their 401(k) went up! I hope you guys are happy now.

What happened laid bare a couple of facts. It showed the entire nation just how much the Republican Party has eroded and the mentality of the many supporters who have been brainwashed and misled with lies through Twitter, Parler, Facebook, QAnon conspiracy theorists and Fox News (which had the audacity to claim that the mob at the capitol were BLM and Antifa protesters dressed up like Trump supporters!). Second, it brought clearly into focus the entire premise of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The BLM protests were mainly peaceful demonstrations. They didn't wear riot gear or carry assault weapons. They didn't use tear gas or pipe bombs. Yet they were met with unparalleled brute force. We saw cracked skulls, mass arrests and law enforcement pepper-spraying their way through a peaceful demonstration for a presidential photo op. In contrast, the mob/gang that desecrated our Nation's Capital, armed, wearing body armor, carrying tear gas, using pipe bombs, organized, violent and causing the death of four people, were freed out of the building, not in handcuffs, but free to carry on their day. Some even stopped for photo ops with police officers. One woman was even helped down the steps of the Capitol Building by a "kind" police officer who offered her a hand.

Many have denied that such disparity or brutal treatment of Blacks by law enforcement even exists. Many have called BLM supporters

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Asiphidity

I became interested in plants due to a story about my Grandmother which you have read in this column. Granny became deathly sick. The Doctor told my Papa she would not live through the night. My Great-Grandparents administered some type of herbal tea each day for six months, and Granny lived into her 80s, all because Big Papa was taught about plant medicine by an old Cherokee. This story gave to me an appreciation for plants at an early age, and at 62 years old, I am still fascinated by plants and their uses.

When my parents were young there were no vaccines in common use. So, you may ask what did they do to help prevent influenza and other diseases? My Dad's cousin relayed the following story to us regarding something called "asiphidity." Asiphidity was used as a poultice to ward off everything from disease to haints. Different concoctions were used at different times of the year for the prevention of different maladies. The idea must have come from the old country, because there are records of Middle Eastern people using the Giant Fennel Plant to make the stuff. Sap from this plant was used to make a salve, which was placed in a cigarette tobacco bag that would be pinned to one's underclothes. The stuff smelled terrible, and the idea was that germs of polio or the flu could not live around the asiphidity bag.

During the 1940s, a fellow named Bill Hawkins was getting up in years, and his beloved wife of many years passed away. Bill had become disabled in a farming accident and was no longer able to complete his household chores. So, Annie Wells would go to his house a couple of times a week to clean his house and wash his clothes. But, Bill had only a scrub board to wash his clothes. So, Annie decided to take his clothing to her house to use her brand new washing machine to wash Bill's clothing.

After cleaning Bill's house, she gathered up Bill's clothing and took them to her home, after which she separated his clothing and threw in some things of her own which needed washing as well. She ran everything through the washer with detergent and then rinsed it. To dry the clothing, she had to run each item through the ringer and then take it to the clothesline to hang for drying. She noticed that Bill's Liberty Overalls wouldn't go through the ringer for some reason. So, she felt of the chest pocket, and sure enough, something was left in it. She opened the pocket and pulled out the asiphidity bag. Bill had forgot the bag and left it in his chest pocket.

You must remember that these asiphidity

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

As we see a spike in COVID-19 numbers in our region, we continue to be grateful for the valiant effort of our frontline health care workers and educators who tirelessly endeavor to keep some semblance of normal.

As local health care officials distribute the new vaccine, we encourage everyone to remain vigilant so that we can reverse the recent surge in cases. The experts had predicted that there may be a spike as the weather turned colder and many traveled for Thanksgiving and Christmas, so now we can look back on these predictions and ask that everyone please wear your mask, wash your hands, and maintain a safe distance.

In light of these challenges, and with careful consideration and consultation with local officials, the Chamber will not be hosting any in-person events for the next several weeks. We are certainly disappointed as our long anticipated Annual Awards Banquet is an event that will

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Radon Action Month

As it is every year, January is National Radon Action Month. This year feels different. Many of us are spending more time at home to keep each other safe and focus on our health. This makes it even more important that we test our homes for radon, a colorless, odorless gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer. This December Lamar Paris, Union County Sole Commissioner, released a proclamation January 2021 would be Radon Action Month in Union County.

In Union County, about 45% of homes have elevated levels of radon. In Towns County, about 34% of homes have elevated levels of radon (data from radon.uga.edu). Over the course of many years, exposure to this gas can cause lung cancer, even in non-smokers. In fact, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Often granite rock naturally has high levels of uranium, which is part of why radon is such a persistent problem in Georgia. The gas seeps out of the soil and rise up through crawl-spaces, foundations, and basements into a home. About 800 Georgians die annually from radon-induced lung cancer.

Fortunately, testing for radon gas is simple and inexpensive. A short-term radon test is hung in the lowest level of the home for three to seven days before being mailed to the laboratory. The laboratory will then send the homeowner results after it processes the test kit. Tests can be obtained from the UGA Radon Program website at radon.uga.edu or a hardware or big box store. We also sell them at the Towns and Union County Extension Offices for \$10. During the month of January, Georgians can receive \$5 off their online radon test kit order at radon.uga.edu by using the code NRAM2021 at checkout.

If the radon level in your home is high, you can install a radon reduction system. A radon reduction (or radon mitigation) system reduces high levels of indoor radon to acceptable levels. The system most frequently used is a vent pipe system and fan that pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside. We also have curated a list of people who are certified radon mitigators and do radon mitigation work in our area that I would be happy to share with you.

Radon exposure from drinking water is primarily a concern in private wells. In Georgia, wells drilled into granitic crystalline rock aquifers, usually in the northern part of the state, are at risk of naturally occurring radon contamination.

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Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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