

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A Year in Review - 2023 Responses

Union County Fire Department and Emergency Management Agency are continuously busy preparing, educating, training, and responding to emergencies. Each year seems to be busier than the last, and 2023 was no exception. We would like to provide a review and breakdown of the calls that the department responded to in 2023.

During the year, the department responded to 2,097 calls for service, with 202 of those calls in the City of Blairsville. The breakdown of these calls hasn't changed much over the years. Of the 2,097 calls in 2023, approximately 57% were medical calls. The national average for fire department medical call response is approximately 64%. These calls are where the fire department responds to assist the Union General Ambulance Service on major medical calls. This number does not account for the numerous "First Responder" calls that were run by the volunteer firefighters who were also assisting the ambulance service.

The remaining 43% is broken down into fires, rescues, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous materials responses, and other activities of the department. Fires accounted for approximately 5% of the calls, which is slightly higher than the national average. The calls include all types of fires ranging from brush fires to car fires to large structure fires.

Rescues of all types accounted for approximately 10%, including searches, rescues, extrication and motor vehicle accidents. Hazardous materials accounted for approximately 3%. These calls involve chemical spills, gas leaks, or any other hazardous materials release. Approximately 6% of the calls for service are public assistance or public education. These are smoke alarm installs, CO monitor installs, assisting other public safety organizations, and public education.

Another 6% of our calls were false calls or fire alarms. These responses can be residential or commercial fire alarms where the fire department arrives but there is no fire or emergency. These can also be smoke investigations where someone sees smoke and calls 911. The remaining 13% were calls where the department was dispatched but cancelled in route.

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Forgiving Debtors

Uwe Holmer didn't mean to have a moment of fame. He was simply a German Lutheran pastor who lived his faith in a way that astounded his fellow countrymen.

As a college student in 1953, Holmer bid his family goodbye as they escaped East Germany. He stayed behind because he knew communist control of the country would precipitate a shortage of pastors. During the ensuing decades, Homer married, had 10 children, and served as pastor and teacher. Because of his Christian convictions, the communists denied his children access to higher education. The Stasi security apparatus placed him under surveillance. The man in charge of security at that time was Erick Honecker.

Honecker was instrumental in the construction of the Berlin Wall (1961). He claimed responsibility for giving the order to shoot anyone trying to escape to the West. As a result, 300 people died grasping for freedom. In 1971, Honecker became leader of the communists and the government. But instead of following the reforms of the Soviets, Honecker sided with North Korea and Cuba in holding to hardline communist dictates.

The people wouldn't have it. In 1989, they ousted the despised Honecker. He fled to Moscow, but Germany extradited him to face trial for human rights abuses. It was to be a high profile proceeding against a cruel communist. But it didn't happen because doctors diagnosed Honecker with terminal liver cancer. By this time, the government had confiscated his property and assets. He and his wife had no place to go.

Here's what happened next, in the words of Pastor Holmer. "They were a helpless, desperate couple. We felt that we should not start the new era with hatred and contempt, but with reconciliation." So Holmer made room in his home for the Honeckers, who stayed for months until they could travel into exile. It was meant to be a private act of forgiveness, but journalists and protesters learned about it. The public was astounded.

Holmer cited the words of Jesus to explain his actions. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Jesus taught us to pray (Matt. 6:12). The heart transformed by the love of Christ Jesus is a heart familiar with charity and forgive-

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. I know that a new system went into effect in 2023 for licensing short-term rentals (STRs). How many do we currently have in Union County?

A. Union County currently has 551 short-term rentals licensed to do business. This does not mean that all properties are being rented; it simply means that they are licensed to do so. Some properties are still under renovation and will begin renting when the weather warms up.

Q. Isn't there some kind of "cap" on the number of STRs allowed in Union County?

A. Yes, but it is an annual floating cap. At the beginning of July each year, the Tax Assessor's Office will provide the total number of housing units in the County. The cap will be 5% of the total of those housing units. Each year the cap is expected to change to adjust to those numbers. For example, for 2023/2024, the total number of housing units was reported at 15,197. Five percent of that number is 760. Therefore, the total number of STRs permitted in Union County for 2023/2024 is 760. At this time, there are 209 STR licenses still available.

Q. Am I required to get a Short-term Rental License if I rent out my basement?

A. Yes, the State of Georgia defines a short-term rental accommodation as any overnight accommodation rented to guests for 30 days or less that provides shelter. This includes some of the less conventional types of accommodations such as tents, yurts, and individual bedrooms and basements.

Q. What about RV pads? If I have an RV pad that I rent to visitors, do I need a short-term rental license for that?

A. If you rent the pad only - without providing the RV (shelter), you do not need a short-term rental license for that location. However, if you intend to offer more than two RV pads for rent, the property may qualify as an RV Park. Those types of locations need to be registered with Building & Inspections as there are specific guidelines for properties that offer more than two RV pads for rent.

Q. In the past, I used a property management company to handle the details of my short-term rental. Am I able to

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Celebrating Life

January 22nd marked the 51st anniversary of the Supreme Court's horrendous Roe v. Wade ruling, which legalized abortion - the murder of unborn babies - in all 50 states.

Over 60 million innocent lives have been terminated under this unconstitutional ruling.

Thankful-

ly, the victorious Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision dismantled Roe - saving countless lives. Yet we cannot forget the millions of lives lost to the evils of abortion.

Last year, I introduced a resolution to recognize January 22nd, the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, as the Day of Tears to memorialize the unborn victims of abortion. Each and every life is precious, worth saving, and made in the perfect image of God. Therefore, we must honor and mourn the loss of these unborn children.

Please know that I remain a champion of life in Congress. In fact, due to my voting record

See Clyde page 5A

United States Congressman
Representative
Andrew Clyde



Chamber of Commerce

As Valentine's Day approaches, Downtown Blairsville is gearing up for a delectable celebration that promises to delight both locals and visitors alike - the Chocolate Walk. This event is a perfect blend of sweet treats, great shopping opportunities, and an abundance of love in the air.

The Chocolate Walk invites participants on a journey through local shops and businesses, each offering a unique chocolatey treat. From handmade truffles to rich cocoa-infused pastries, the array of sweets is sure to satisfy even the most discerning sweet tooth. Let's take the time to explore the diverse range of shops from our local boutique clothing stores to antique shops, as Blairsville offers a treasure trove of shopping opportunities. Find the perfect Valentine's Day gift for someone special or treat yourself to something while you enjoy our North Georgia hospitality.

Blairsville is not just about chocolates;

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

Our Living Democracy

Dear Editor,

A new year, 2024, is here, offering a time for reflection as well as hopeful resolutions for the days ahead. The nightly news could dampen one's spirits with news of continuing wars in Ukraine and the Holy Lands, volcanic eruptions in Iceland, earthquakes in Turkey and Afghanistan, and unresolved immigration issues not only on our southern border but around the globe. Authoritarian governments are gaining strength and democracy is being threatened at home and abroad.

Rather than despair, this is the time for Americans to reflect on the freedoms we have enjoyed under a democracy created "of the people, by the people and for the people." In this book "Healing the Heart of Democracy," author Parker Palmer writes, "Like all things human, democracy begins in the human heart. We

See Cordier, page 5A

Staying in Power

Dear Editor,

As we enter another election year, the unanswered question to address how does a political party stay in power. Most people think that this is accomplished by winning elections. The Republican Party follows this thinking by putting forth candidates that are interested in solving citizens' concerns and issues, therefore being voted into office. This is the Republican Party way to stay in power.

The Democrat Party, on the other hand, has no interest in addressing the concerns and issues of citizens. The Democrat Party way to stay in power is by manipulating the existing system of government. The following examples back up this view.

The first is the use of the legal system to

See Burch, page 5A

Alternate Universe

Dear Editor,

Does it ever feel that our elected officials are living in an alternate universe? Our State Senator, Steve Gooch, wrote a wrap-up of the budget meetings for 2024 and 2025 in last week's paper. He bragged that Gov. Kemp emphasized his commitment to electric vehicles and allocated a \$3 million for implementing the EV Charging Program. Mr. Gooch himself sponsored legislation that provided framework for regulations on EV equipment. We attended a GOP meeting a while ago where he talked of nothing else. He states this is a "rapidly expanding sector of our economy." Really? Where did he get his facts?

See Campbell, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Border Crisis

Dear Editor,

In a letter to the editor last week, a "Concerned Citizen" wrote about the continuing crisis at our borders. They made one or two good points on their way to lambast our Rep. Andrew Clyde. First of all, the crisis at our Southern Border HAS been going on for quite some time. Secondly many foreign governments have opened their prisons and sent their criminals here. "Concerned Citizen" cites Mexico, whereas I remember The Mariel Boatlift back in Florida in the early 1980s where Cuban Leader Fidel Castro opened up all his prisons and sent those people across the Florida Straits to the U.S.

The Funny thing is this "Concerned Citizen" can't comprehend how our present situation is totally the fault of Joe Biden. I hope I can clear that up for them. On almost day 1 of his administration, Joe Biden signed Executive Orders that pretty much got rid of each and every one of President Trump's Border Policies. That was from The New York Post dated Feb. 2, 2021. President Trump's Policies had led to an historic fall in Illegal Immigration. So basically what President Biden did by reversing those policies was throw the door open and say,

See Rains, page 5A

The Lonely Person

When loneliness occurs, the person may feel isolated by loved ones or even co-workers. This can be quite painful. The lonely person may tend to seek out others or even situations so as to increase his or her happiness scale. The individual may become desperate. The person is frightened to become isolated from his or her arena in which the individual exists. It is definitely not a happy situation to be in.

The individuals don't own up to themselves that it is perfectly normal to feel lonely sometimes. There is a difference between being lonely and feeling loneliness. It is healthy for lonely people to open up honestly with someone of how they feel or what they are facing. However, the lonely individual has to trust that particular person, and secondly, the lonely person has to feel comfortable in sharing one's thoughts and feelings. The individual must value his or her self-worth in order to do so!

Sometimes you need to be alone. Not to be lonely, but to enjoy your Free time being yourself.

See Ashurst, page 5A

Successful Mental Health
Dr. James Ray Ashurst
PH. D.



Rounder

I am not sure when the term "Rounder" originated, however, my Papa used the term to signify a person which was into or up to something all the time. And by the word something, I mean mostly a person who was up to no good. During the past few years while doing some genealogical research,

I have found that many of my ancestors were "Rounders," so to speak. My paternal grandmother's side of the family were from Dawson County. Some of the family were Cherokee Indians and others came over from England and settled in the coastal areas of Virginia and North Carolina. But before the United States was founded, the Hyde Family had a rich history in the affairs of men.

Lawrence Hyde was born in 1562 in the area of Wiltshire. He entered school at Oxford and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts in 1580. He was elected as a member of Parliament at least three different times during his life and became Attorney-General to Queen Anne of Denmark which was the wife of King James I. He was knighted and became Sir Lawrence Hyde in 1614. I have read that he had 11 children, many of whom rose to significant positions. I am not sure what is meant by the word significant, because my direct ancestor is not mentioned with those who rose to significance. However, he, his son and grandson all rose to significance in their own lives.

One son of Sir Lawrence was Henry. He accompanied Charles II to the American Continent, but upon his return to England was beheaded in 1650. Another son was named Richard, who was born in 1610. He must've immigrated to America in the mid 1640s, possibly with the brother that was later beheaded. He married Judith in 1646 in Surry County, Virginia. He was significant in the fact that he was the first Hyde in my ancestral line that lived in America.

His son was also named Richard. There were three consecutive generations where a father named a son Richard in the Hyde family. The middle Richard II must have led a very adventurous life. I was able to piece together the following story from information I found about Richard Hyde II.

He was recruited by a fellow named Edward Teach to become a privateer for the British during the War of the Spanish Succession, and a little later, his son Richard Hyde III was also recruited. The two Hydes must've joined Teach in the early 1700s. By 1716 this man Teach had become known as a pirate by the name of Blackbeard.

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Brood Cicadas

Cicadas are in the news again, because there are going to be two broods emerging this year. Some of you may recall the cicadas that we had emerge in 2021. Let's talk about cicadas and what you can expect from the emergence this year.

Cicadas are an insect that feeds off of plant roots for most of their life. Most of their life is spent underground in the nymph stage. We actually have cicadas every year. These are called annual cicadas. Annual cicadas will spend three to five years underground feeding. Brood cicadas only emerge every 13 or 17 years depending on the species of cicada that they are. Cicadas do not eat the leaves off of plants and cause the whole tree to become defoliated. Some people think that they do, but generally they are getting cicadas confused with plagues of locust. A cicada's mouth is really more like a needle. They stick it into the roots of the plants while they are underground and suck the juices out of the plant.

Cicadas will emerge from the ground once soil temperatures have reached 64 degrees Fahrenheit. For us that usually happens at the end of April or beginning of May. When a cicada emerges, it is in its adult form. At that point their main goal is to mate to ensure the survival of the next generation. After cicadas mate, the females will lay their eggs in the tips of branches of trees. Those eggs will hatch and the nymph cicadas will drop to the ground and work their way into the soil. They'll spend the 3 to 17 years of their life underground feeding on plant roots, before they emerge again. The sound that you hear when the adults are out is the males looking for a mate. They have a special organ that allows them to make their sound.

When the eggs hatch out of the tree branches it will cause damage to the tree. Typically, the damage is not too severe. However, I have seen damage on fruit trees that needed to be pruned out because the tips of some branches had been killed. Cicadas prefer hardwoods over evergreen trees. My observation from the 2021 emergence was that white oak was the preferred tree species.

2024 is a special year for cicadas because it is not very often that we have more than one brood emerging in a year. There are 12 broods of 17-year cicadas and three broods of 13-year cicadas. In 2021 we had the brood X emerge. All broods are designated by a Roman numeral. This year we will have the brood XIII and XIX emerging. The last time that both of these broods emerged in the same year was in 1803. It is likely

See Williams, page 5A

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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The North Georgia News is an independent and nonpartisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 (Union County) - One Year \$45 INCLUDING UNION COUNTY CUSTOMER REQUEST MAIL SERVICE. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$10. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 24, 1988, at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

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Paris... continued from Page 4A

continue using my company?

A. Yes. Licenses are required to be in the owner's name, but the regular management of the rental does not have to change. A property management company can create a login on the new system and connect to each property they manage. A property management company can then pay excise taxes; they can schedule reservations as they have in the past; and they can handle any maintenance types of issues just as they have in the past. The only thing that will change is that they will renew licenses as well as pay/report excise taxes using the new online system.

Q. What exactly is a Local Registered Agent?

A. The Short-term Rental Ordinance states that each short-term rental owner is required to identify a Local Registered Agent. This person is the local responsible person in case of an emergency. It is also the first person contacted if there are questions about the rental property, its rules and

regulations, or concerns by guests, neighbors, or anyone else who might be impacted by the renting of the property. The Local Registered Agent can be anyone local to Union County who agrees to be on-call to address anything relating to the rental property. It can be a property management company representative; it can be the property owner; or it can be a rental property neighbor or anyone who agrees to be the initial contact for the rental property.

Q. Where can I find resources needed to make application for a short-term rental and to maintain current on a short-term rental?

A. The Union County Government website at union-countyga.gov contains everything you need to know to register a property for a short-term rental license. The path to the STR Portal can be found by mousing over GOVERNMENT > COMMISSIONERS OFFICE > BUSINESS/STR LICENSE > SHORT-TERM RENTALS RESOURCES.

Cordier... continued from Page 4A

decide on the answers to the questions that either set us in a democratic direction or not." Terry Tempest Williams, author and environmental activist, so eloquently writes, "The human heart is the first home of democracy, it is where we embrace our questions: Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinion? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up, trusting our fellow citizens to join us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?"

As we enter 2024, an election year, it is wise to reflect on Tempest-Williams' questions in pursuit of a liv-

ing democracy. If there is ever a time when Americans need to come together, working towards the betterment of all, it is now. Is it possible to be equitable and generous towards others who may be different from us? Can we become good listeners, offering our attention rather than our opinions?

Can we be relentless in our resolve to carefully study the positions of those who would run for public office, regardless of their political party, to determine who will best serve the people and support our democracy?

The freedom we cherish is worth the effort needed to preserve it. Working together, from the heart, is the only way forward.

Jennifer Cordier

Burch... continued from Page 4A

limit who individuals can vote for in the Republican Primary. At this time there are legal challenges in 29 states attempting to limit who can be on the Republican Presidential Primary ballot. For most of these attempts the Democrat Party is using John Anthony Carter, a Republican Presidential candidate as the plaintiff. This provides the plaintiffs standing, and the cases can move forward. In addition, at least four state or federal prosecutors are using untested legal theories in an attempt to convict one candidate of actions that would prevent them from seeking the office of President.

The second example has to do with the election process. The election process for the United States House of Representative and for the President of the United States starts with the U.S. Census Bureau. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census to determine the number of people living in the United States. Notice, the census determines the total number of people, not the number of citizens. The Democrat Party has an open border (invasion) policy to manipulate future census. By increasing the population of traditional Democrat states with illegal migrants, it ensures that the number of representatives remains high even if citizens move to other states. An illegal migrant that crosses the border and gets a court date of 2031

for an asylum hearing (which is happening) will be counted in the 2030 census. When illegal migrants are asked where they want to go in the U.S. with a court date it is nearly always to a Democrat stronghold. Some Republican state leaders help this Democrat manipulation of the system by sending busloads of illegals to these strongholds. They hope to force local Democrats to pressure national Democrats to do something about the border, but they do not, and that is the plan. Some Senate Republicans also are working with Democrats to carry out this manipulation by talking border deals.

The manipulation of census population is also for the power of the Executive Branch of government. The Electoral College determines who the President of the United States will be. Since the allocation of Electoral College votes is based on the two senators and the number of U.S. Representatives for that state, keeping the Democrat State population high keeps the electoral votes high. As long as the Democrat Party, White House have an open border (invasion) policy to manipulate future censuses, they can be the party that allows illegal migrants to help keep the Democrat Party in power rather than the citizens of the United States of America.

George Burch

Campbell... continued from Page 4A

Ford is losing something like \$40,000 per car. GM is delaying its production of EVs. Car lots are full of EVs, and 90% of car buyers are buying gas-powered cars. I don't think 10% of car buyers is a rapidly expanding sector. Do you? This is the modern day Edsel, and our elected officials are blindly unaware of this.

Wouldn't it be awesome

if our elected officials would assure us they have made plans to protect us in a calamity? Or fight against Kemp's Executive Order to turn over all our medical records to "other agencies?"

How about simply finding a way to remove forever chemicals from our drinking water? That would be amazing.

Lisa Campbell

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

A harmful thing a lonely person does is to isolate oneself from the society in which he or she lives. Lonely persons have set themselves up to combat loneliness in an ugly form. Because of such, the sadness one is feeling becomes aimed unfairly at innocent individuals.

The lonely person usually nurses a self-perpetuating "pity party." The individual's sadness is so powerful to the extent that the individual finds it impossible to be nice and open to even one's best friends. The lonely person is trapped in a miserable state of existence.

Because the lonely person is in such a fix, the individual feels incapable of taking care of oneself. Just taking care of one's responsibilities is a heavy burden, so such tasks or

chores may be left undone and unprepared. The lonely person longs to have someone else take over the responsibilities.

The loneliness you feel is actually an opportunity to reconnect with others and yourself.
-Lagrace

Clyde...

continued from Page 4A

and legislative efforts, I earned an A+ rating on the Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America's 2023 Scorecard! I'm honored to receive this recognition, and I remain resolute in the fight to protect the precious unborn.

After all, our first and most fundamental right is the right to LIFE.

Soli Deo Gloria,
Andrew S. Clyde

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

In 1717 his crew captured a French Merchant Ship and converted it into a 40-gun warship named Queen Anne's Revenge.

His crew of pirates began to terrorize shipping along the coast of North Carolina and Virginia. It is said that the pirate even had a prize-sharing agreement with the Governor of North Carolina, Charles Eden. He established his base at an inlet in that state.

However, the Lieutenant Governor of the Virginia Colony dispatched a British Naval Force which after a hard fight killed and decapitated Blackbeard. The father and son retired from their pirate lives after their leader was killed by the British.

The father went to work as a packhorse driver and guide. He was hired to escort the Superintendent of Indian Affairs through the Creek Indian Territory. I assume that

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

that we will have cicadas from brood XIX. Brood XIII will emerge further north in Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Iowa. There will likely be some overlap between the two broods in Illinois and Iowa. It's not really clear if this emergence will be a similar size as the one from 2021.

In most cases you don't need to do anything to protect yourself from cicadas. The damage that they cause will most likely just be cosmetic. They do not harm people. They will only be around for a couple of weeks and then they will return to the ground.

If you have questions about cicadas contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

it's also a haven for food enthusiasts. The town's restaurants and eateries are ready to elevate your dining experience during the Valentine's Day weekend. From cozy cafes to upscale dining, there's a culinary delight for every palate. Be sure to call to confirm your reservation for that special spot.

Take time to enjoy a romantic dinner with your loved one in a candlelit setting, enjoying exquisite dishes prepared by our local chefs. Blairsville's restaurants add a touch of culinary magic to the Chocolate Walk, creating an unforgettable experience for couples and food connoisseurs alike.

Chocolate and Valentine's Day make Life Better in Blairsville!

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

ness. It does not suffer self-harming bitterness by clinging to past offenses. Life is too short. It is you who benefit from forgiving others because it allows you to heal, move forward, and be like Jesus.

Holmer's actions motivated by his faith follows this thought: "Live such good lives among the (non-believers) that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us" (1 Pet. 2:12). Uwe Holmer did that. In 2023, he left the land of the dying for the land of the living. He was 94.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

There are many different types of calls and incidents that the department responds to. This is a brief review of the calls and activities of the department in 2023.

We are very fortunate to have dedicated men and women, both career and volunteer, who respond to these emergencies and make safety their mission.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Wouldn't it feel great to finally graduate?

If you never graduated from High School, now is your chance to accomplish your goal. Come see us at the North Georgia Technical College Adult Education Center and finally get it done! We offer in-person classes to prepare you for the GED test and beyond.

Come by 38 Blalock Street in Blairsville or call us at (706) 439-6342 to register and get your real life started!

Rains... continued from Page 4A

we don't care who you are or what you've done in the past, come on in. To date, over 8 million illegals have crossed our borders since Old Sheriff Joe became President.

Here's another interesting fact. The Democrats, and I don't know why we even bother calling them "Democrats" anymore since most of them at this point are pure Marxists, always maintain that we must have Comprehensive Immigration Reform to fix the current problem. The President himself has said this on many occasions. It takes Congress to do that.

Here's what the "Democrats" are hoping YOU won't remember. Both Barack Obama and Joe Biden had Democratic majorities in Congress for the first two full years of their presidencies. Hmm. That kind of begs the question: If Comprehensive Immigration Reform is SO important, WHY didn't both Obama and Biden push for it when their party controlled Congress?

Here's what the "Demo-

crats" hope YOU don't realize. Over the past years, the Democrats have seen their support by minorities shrink steadily. Both Blacks and Hispanics are moving away from the Democratic Party, realizing that Democrats don't really care about them and are only using them to maintain power.

Democratic voting bases are SHRINKING. So how, if support for the party is shrinking, do Democrats make sure they can stay in power? Simple. Let's let unprecedented numbers of people into the country, give those people FREE EVERYTHING, then when those people can vote, they'll vote for Democrats because Democrats are the ones who gave them free everything.

Yes, it is just that simple and just that despicable! In other words, for Democrats, the problem at the border is ALL about staying in power.

I could go on but it's a small newspaper and others have things to say also.

Claude Rains Jr.