

Whitmer’s party should learn from what she did in Oval Office

Kudos to Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. She managed to generate the most negatively iconic photo of a Democrat since Michael Dukakis wore a helmet atop a tank.

Whitmer, long considered a promising presidential prospect by Democratic insiders, was at the White House to discuss state business. But when President Trump’s aides whisked her into the Oval Office, it was not for the planned one-on-one with the president, but for a photo op during which Trump signed (outrageous) executive orders targeting two perceived political enemies for criminal investigation. Realizing that she was in a political tiger pit, Whitmer opted for the Ostrich Maneuver. Lacking sand to stick her head in, she hid her face behind some binders.

The photo perfectly encapsulates Democratic dysfunction. Her White House visit was wholly defensible, but because she was in the room when Trump was doing something indefensible, she’s being vilified by her own side for enabling Trump, generating more “Dems in disarray” drama in the process.



JONAH GOLDBERG

Of course, the Dems really are in disarray.

If you just go by the topline 2024 presidential election returns, it’s not obvious they should be. Kamala Harris lost by 1.48% of the popular vote, the fifth closest election since 1900.

And yet, Democrats are a mess. In March, the party hit its all-time low in popularity. Last week — a bad week for Trump — Quinnipiac released a poll finding that voters are evenly split — 33% to 33% — on the question of which party cares more about them and their problems. Democrats had led on that question by double digits, going back to 1994.

“This to me is the most shocking pieces of poll data that I truthfully have seen this year, maybe in any prior year,” CNN’s polling guru Harry Enten exclaimed.

The main driver of the Democrats’ plight is that the party

that likes to see itself as the party of the little guy is perceived, not inaccurately, as the party of urban and coastal elites by the largest chunk of the electorate: white voters without a college degree. More broadly, voters remain profoundly distrustful of elite institutions, and progressives have dominated most of those institutions for decades.

What the Democrats can do to fix themselves and voters’ perception is the subject of intense internal debate. At least four options have emerged.

The first is to replay the “Resist!” theatrics of the first Trump term. The second is the “Fight the Oligarchy!” tour headlined by Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, which made a splash in California over the weekend. Both approaches are psychologically appealing to Democrats because they require no philosophical introspection or political self-correction.

Not so Option 3. “Abundance” is the buzzword and book title for a technocratic theory of “supply-side liberalism” that seeks to clear away the red tape and interest-group

NIMBYism standing in the way of government planners who want to expedite the delivery of public services — housing, high speed rail, etc.

This course has the most to recommend it. But it has three political weaknesses. First, the bureaucratic bottlenecks that the abundance Dems want to circumvent are closely guarded by progressive constituencies. If you want to bulldoze through the Clean Water or Endangered Species acts, you won’t be picking fights with a lot of Republicans. You’ll be antagonizing well-heeled Democrats and a liberal-dominated media that reflexively casts such efforts in a negative light. Second, national Democrats are powerless in the Republican-controlled House and Senate. So absent a truly courageous governor, they can’t demonstrate the efficacy of their ideas. Last, it essentially represents a bunch of elite eggheads saying, “Trust us, we’re different now,” when no one trusts them.

Ironically, the fourth option is symbolically close to what Whitmer did: Hide. Or, as James Carville puts it, “Play dead.” Keep your head down

and powder dry while Trump self-immolates.

I think this is, by far, the wisest course in the short term. Trump’s approval, most notably on the economy, is plummeting. A majority — 54% — of Americans think Trump’s policies are responsible for the state of the economy. If trends continue Trump will lose support from the groups that believed he could deliver on his economic promises.

The problem is the long term. Our politics are broken because both parties have given up on the idea of being majority parties. When out of power, they rely on turning out their bases and the unpopularity of their incumbent opponents to squeak out narrow victories, only to squander power on fan service to their bases once elected. This cycle can be broken only by a party that, when elected, opts to build a majority from the center out. I see no sign of that happening anytime soon.

Jonah Goldberg is a national columnist whose work is published weekly in the Grand Forks Herald. ©2025 Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Legacy isn’t about being remembered

BY JOE COZART
Grand Forks

To the editor,
If life has a meaning, I think it’s hidden in the quiet work we do when no one’s watching. It’s in the love we show without ceremony. In the words we don’t say, but live.

Fatherhood taught me that. Not in big moments, but in the way my children looked at me when they didn’t know I was paying attention. It’s humbling to realize how deeply we are seen by the people we raise – and how much of us they carry forward.

Legacy isn’t about being remembered. It’s about what lives on in others. A way of handling pressure. A soft look during hard times. A steady hand that someone remembers long after they’ve grown.

I’ve come to understand peace not as the absence of trouble, but the absence of regret. It comes when you’ve made enough mistakes to know what matters – and what doesn’t. It’s knowing you’ve done the work of loving people

as they are, not as you wish they were.

Pride, for me, has become something quiet. I feel it when I see my children thriving, not because of me, but because something through me helped build their strength. That’s enough.

And friendship? It’s rare. It’s the people who don’t need anything from you but still show up. Who carry your name gently when you’re not in the room. I’ve had a few. That’s more than most.

The meaning of life, I think, is to leave peace behind. Not money. Not monuments. Just peace – in people, in relationships, in memory. To have shown up, paid attention, and loved well. That’s all.

If something happens tomorrow, I know I’m in a good place with those I love. And that may be the clearest meaning of all.

The US is on the road to tyranny

BY JUDY HAGER
Grand Forks

To the editor,
With the lack of response by the Republican-controlled

Congress to the financial, political blackmail and total disregard of the rules of law and order, the Constitution, and the attending to the three equal branches of government by the Republican administration, the U.S. is now on the road to tyranny.

What James Madison, one of the Founding Fathers, declared, “The accumulation of ALL powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.”

One truly feels for the generations of Americans that will come after this period of time, *if* there continues to be a truly American, patriotic, nonpartisan lack of response based on our Constitution, our history and our laws by our legislative branch. The courts, even though controlled by the Republicans, have answered, e.g. the notice on Garcia; it is time for the legislative branch to answer! Unfortunately because of a Supreme Court decision in 2024, the only answer is impeachment!

The war on ethics is now underway

BY DAVID SCHWALBE
Bismarck, North Dakota

To the editor,
Since 2018, when Article XIV became part of the Constitution, there has been a mad scramble by North Dakota politicians to do away with the Ethics Commission by passing unconstitutional legislation to make it unable to carry out its constitutional duties. Article XIV clearly states the Ethics Commission must be adequately funded. It has never been. The sessions in 2021 and 2023 were no better with the leadership of the Legislature using the same underhanded techniques to hamstringing the Ethics Commission.

Now we are in the 2025 legislative session and the anti-ethics people are working overtime. There appears to be an organized attempt by the governor, attorney general and Legislature to kill the Ethics Commission. They are refusing to adequately fund it and give it the power to investigate, subpoena or prosecute.

The governor personally testified along with 12 people from the attorney general’s office to kill HB 1360 which would have greatly improved the powers of the commission. A legislative committee is now working on legislation to give legislators immunity from prosecution for violating the ethics rules. Wow! They are finally admitting they are crooked. It made the Boston news. Once again, we are the laughingstock of the nation.

The Holmberg case has not been adequately dealt with by our Legislature, attorney general or governor. The Ethics Commission should have been involved in investigating the email scandal, but it was given to the Montana attorney general instead.

The people spoke when they passed Article XIV. Who are our legislators representing? It certainly isn’t the people. Do we have to do another petition drive to protect the Ethics Commission from unconstitutional attacks and adequately fund it? The legislature is forcing us to act. If they didn’t like the first initiated measure, they sure as hell won’t like the next one.

EDITORIAL CARTOON



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— First Amendment of the United States Constitution

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