

Lessons found in the scorched earth

There are certain concepts about which all of us, hard right, hard left or anywhere in the middle, should be able to agree. Here are 10 of them:

Getting out the vote is a long-held ideal and it should be as easy as possible to every eligible voter to cast a vote.

War is bad and should be avoided whenever possible.

We should not kill, lie, steal or cheat.

We should not say untrue things about others, especially in a way that is harmful to them.

People holding power should not use their influence to gain money or advantage for themselves.

The Constitution says Congress and Congress alone has the power of the purse.

Our founders asserted that the government is of the people, by the people and for the people, not the reverse.

Difference of opinion is a good thing, and it's a bad thing when those in power seek retribution against those who disagree with them.

The economy works best and is most productive when it is fair, free, open and protected from the whims of politicians.

Fuel efficiency and conservation of resources are important.

Passing Dreams

By Steve Andrist



Once upon a time, politicians agreed with these 10 concepts, and many others.

Today, it seems, politicians disagree with agreement.

Bipartisanship has been replaced by contempt. If you agree with "the other side," you are un-American, a loser, weak, a clown, a dummy, vermin or fake.

That's the tone that has been imposed from 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Who in their right mind would want to expose themselves to the possibility of gross belittlement by the president of the United States?

It's got nothing to do with President Trump being Republican or conservative. It's that he's a dreadful human being devoid of many of the character assets we want in our role models.

Where's the compassion, the humility, the altruism, the selflessness, the thoughtfulness, or many of the other character assets that Americans value in their leaders?

Certainly he's no Ronald

Reagan, the former president and bastion of conservative ideals who famously said, "There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit."

He's no George W. Bush, who proclaimed, "Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them."

He's not even James Garfield, a Republican who opined, "Ideas are the great warriors of the world, and a war that has no ideas behind it is simple brutality."

Even George H.W. Bush spoke often of leadership beginning with selflessness, civic responsibility and moral courage, not bravado.

"There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people," the elder Bush proclaimed.

Each of these presidents would have found value in the 10 agreeable concepts. The current administration seems to view them with contempt.

No one saw much, if any, fraud in our elections until Trump began repeatedly referring to elections as "stolen." More than 60 lawsuits proved him wrong, but Republicans nevertheless are pushing new legislation that

would make voting more difficult, especially for women and minorities.

Once a self-proclaimed "anti-war" president, he's become a warmonger. He wants to take oil and property that belong to others, and he's forever unleashing untruths aimed at hurting reporters, educators and political opponents, loudly exclaiming recently that he was glad former FBI Director Robert Mueller died.

He has waged a war of retribution against TV networks, newspapers, universities, lawyers and dozens of other "opponents," even as questions about his personal profiting from the presidency.

Republicans had better options, candidates with similar policy views but also with character. They hitched their wagons to the one perceived to be the best able to deliver votes, character traits be damned.

They're finding already that each policy "win" leaves scorched earth in its wake. Hopefully it's a lesson they'll only have to learn once.

Steve Andrist, *Bismarck, is a former publisher of The Journal and the co-chair of the North Dakota News Cooperative board of directors.*

When growing up gets hard to do

Several years ago, my in-laws took the family to Florida to experience a Disney vacation. This was a time in our lives when Chad and I were not parents yet, but we took our roles as aunt and uncle to our young nieces and nephew very seriously. On this trip, that meant that we moved ahead of the group, made plans and schedules for the next rides, secured fast passes and kept everyone as hyped as 5-, 7- and 9-year-olds and their parents could possibly be after the initial wow factor wears off and everyone's hot, hungry and overwhelmed in a sea of people.

The family trip lives in my memory as one of my favorites despite a few setbacks. Like the unseasonably cold Florida weather and a theme park sold out of sweatshirts. And getting stuck in a tiny boat in "It's a Small World" for longer than any human being should have to listen to that song on repeat in German. And the look of terror in my nephew's eyes while he screamed, "Get me outta here!" on the Jungle Cruise ride when the fake hippo came launching out of the water looking too real. Oh, and the one incident I'll never live down where I used my 5-year-old niece as a shield to the whale's wave in front of all of my in-laws.

You know what the kids remember all these years later now that they are teenagers and grown adults with jobs?

Swimming in the backyard pool at the Airbnb in 60-degree weather. Which is typical, and also a bit of a relief knowing that whale, hippo and the animatronic dancing people didn't scar anyone for life.

Last week, I watched my daughters flip and splash and jump and chatter in a similar pool in Florida with their cousins. The sun had gone down, lighting the water up dramatically, which was perfect for the dolphin, whale, narwhal and squid show they were putting on for everyone after supper.

My parents treated the entire family to a spring break trip to the beach in Florida, and it was our last night of six days spent watching these kids swim in the warm pool, despite -- again -- the unseasonably cool temperatures that had us all shivering on the beach in double sweatshirts. A few days before, we wandered around an aquarium and watched a dolphin show, so they were recreating what they learned to much applause.

That week, we offered up arcade trips and go-carts, beach walks, shopping and ice cream outings, but when the sun came up, before breakfast or the first pour of coffee, those kids were in the pool, and that's where they stayed. It's all they wanted

Coming Home

By Jessie Veeder



to do. They swam so much their skin turned raw and I had to slather them in Aquaphor and coax them out for a sandwich and a drink of water before they turned around and cannonballed back in.

This trip had a sort of heaviness to it as we tried to forget that waiting for us on the other side was weeks of disruption to our lives as I relocate for cancer treatments in Rochester. Despite my best efforts to pretend that it wasn't inevitable, that sort of thing sits lodged in your chest until it's over. And it was on my daughters' minds too as they would grab me in passing and say quietly, "I don't want you to leave." I'd give them a squeeze, and then they'd be off. Turns out a 90-degree pool is good medicine for lingering dread.

I type this at my kitchen table back in the real world. My packed bags are all splayed out open on the floor of my room after our first plan to leave was suddenly delayed by insurance issues we're scrambling to resolve. Turns out even the best-laid plans for the worst reasons aren't set in stone, and I'm left feeling like my nephew on that jungle ride screaming, "Get me outta here!" Or my niece stunned and shivering after a big whale's splash, unprotected. Treatment will happen soon, one way or another. Hopefully, in time, I'll only remember the swimming part.

I close my eyes and think of my 10-year-old daughter, the last to leave the pool on the last night of our vacation. She asked her dad if she could stay in a little longer to spin and dive and sing on her own while the younger girls got ready for bed and the adults packed up to go home. She wanted a little more time to play, a little more time before facing the thing coming that will be hard. A little more time before growing up.

"Watching her swim out there by herself, it makes me choke up," my husband said that night as we got in bed. "She's just so innocent, and it goes so fast."

"Remember when all you wanted to do was swim?" I said, tears lodged in my throat.

I continued folding my sandy clothes.

Jessie Veeder is a musician and writer living with her husband and daughters on a ranch near Watford City. She blogs at veederranch.com. Readers can reach her at jessieveeder@gmail.com.

Public notices are part of access, transparency in state government

North Dakota lawmakers have voted at least three times in the past two sessions to continue printing public notices in newspapers.

Voters across the state overwhelmingly support printing municipal meeting minutes in their local newspaper each time the question appears on the ballot.

Despite this evidence of public support, the state Department of Trust Lands will no longer publish some public notices starting April 1.

As the Monitor's Jacob Orledge reported March 17, the Department of Trust Lands will stop publishing notices of state oil and gas lease auctions in local newspapers. Instead, the department will only publish digital notices of lease auctions on the agency's website and the website of Efficient Markets, the company that runs the auction process for the state.

This change is a bit unusual because other government entities that have (unsuccessfully) proposed similar moves had to bring their proposals to the full Legislature, where they received hearings and votes in the House and Senate.

But in this case, the Board of University and School Lands, which manages state-owned oil and gas minerals, is canceling newspaper public notices through an administrative rule change. The process did allow for public comment and required consent of a legislative committee. But administrative rule changes, which can often be tedious and dry, attract far less attention from the public than a bill proposed during the legislative session. In this case, the public likely would not know about the change if not for the Monitor's reporting.

North Dakota Newspaper

Other Views

By Amy Dalrymple

North Dakota Monitor



Association Executive Director Cecile Wehrman, who submitted comments opposing the rule change, told Orledge she doesn't think the full Legislature would have approved it. I think she's right.

In 2025, the Legislature defeated a bill that sought to eliminate requirements to publish requests for bids on highway construction projects, and another that proposed to cease publication of county commission meeting minutes in local newspapers.

In 2023, lawmakers voted down a bill supported by the state Insurance Department that would have stopped requiring insurance companies to publish some legal notices with newspapers. (I was a member of the North Dakota Newspaper Association board at the time and was among those who worked to oppose that bill.)

Last week, Rep. Don Longmuir, a Republican from Stanley, was one of four lawmakers on the Legislature's interim Administrative Rules Committee who attempted to delay the upcoming change. Longmuir, who represents an oil-producing region, said he feared it would mean less transparency.

"Transparency is letting as many people know in as many ways as you can," Longmuir said in an interview.

A majority of lawmakers on the committee saw it differently, and Longmuir's motion failed. That means the rule change will take effect April 1.

I was curious to learn more

about why the Land Board supported this change.

The Land Board consists of Gov. Kelly Armstrong, Attorney General Drew Wrigley, Secretary of State Michael Howe, State Treasurer Thomas Beadle and Superintendent of Public Instruction Levi Bachmeier. Four of the board members supported the rule change in December, while Wrigley was absent from the vote due to what he described as a "travel snafu" returning from Washington, D.C.

Through a spokesperson, Armstrong said he agreed with the staff assessment that online publication is the best way to reach potential bidders for oil and gas lease auctions, "saving taxpayer money and staff time while still providing public access to the notices."

Beadle told me he saw

the rule change "as a way to streamline the process" and felt it accounted for the recent trend of newspapers closing, merging or shifting to fewer print editions.

Howe pointed to staff arguments that it would save agency time and money. He also said the target market for the notices is oil and gas companies, and people can receive notifications through the Trust Lands website, department emails and the vendor.

Trust Lands staff estimated the department spends between \$30,000 and \$40,000 annually on newspaper public notices, with about half spent on notices for oil and gas lease auctions, though that figure appeared to be an off-the-cuff estimate provided during a meeting. The North Dakota Newspaper Association, which handles public notices for newspapers statewide, said the department spent about \$17,000 annually in the last three years, though that would include all notices. The department will continue to

publish notices of surface land auctions in newspapers.

Bachmeier declined to provide a statement.

Wrigley said he couldn't speak to specifics since he missed that portion of the meeting, but said Land Board members consistently act with an eye toward ensuring public transparency and accountability.

"These are all folks who are committed to transparency, openness," Wrigley said.

Wrigley also said he's open to a continuing discussion about the rule change. That could happen, with the North Dakota Newspaper Association indicating it may pursue legislation requiring the public notices in the 2027 session.

The point of public notices is to inform the public, not industry. These lease notices include the name of the company nominating a tract for auction, information that members of the public deserve to have. If every state agency starts putting public notices on their websites, soon the public would have to hunt for that information instead of finding it in one place. That does not promote transparency.

The Land Board does deserve credit for making recordings of its meetings available to the public on the department's YouTube page, a practice that started last fall. Other state entities that don't already post meeting recordings online should take note. (Ahem, State Investment Board.)

Amy Dalrymple is editor-in-chief of the North Dakota Monitor, a nonprofit, nonpartisan source for trusted news, commentary and insight into statewide policy and critical issues affecting the Peace Garden State. Follow at northdakotamonitor.com. Republished with permission.

Thank you, Jays, for a great season

Eric Viall, Ray

I want to say a big "thank you" to the players, coaches, stats, cheerleaders and parents for a great season of Ray Jay basketball!

Your dedication to the goal gave the rest of us a hell of a show. I haven't felt our community so connected in many years. I've had misty eyes and a lump in my throat for a week thinking about the excitement that you all have stirred in the soul of our town.

Letter to the Editor

You reminded me about the meaning of sport. It's not a distraction from our problems, but a reminder that we can all rally around a common good. We can celebrate and commiserate over a broken heart. Your efforts extinguished a case of sports-centered cynicism that had taken root over

the past couple of decades. I wish I could go back and live the whole season with the feelings of hope, pride and joy that arose in March.

Thanks for making 2026 an especially memorable winter. I will be sitting in the bleachers next year ready to cheer on another season.

The Journal encourages letters to the editor. Readers can submit letters on our website at journalnd.com, by email to journal@crosbynd.com or

by mail to P.O. Box E, Crosby, ND 58730. Letters should be no more than 450 words and include the writer's city and phone number for verification.

Letters should pertain to articles or commentary that recently appeared in The Journal or to other local topics. Letters about national or international issues should have a direct tie to the local area or be in rebuttal to commentary that recently appeared in The Journal.

EST. 1986

Brad Johnson
INSURANCE

will be closed
Friday, April 3 & Monday, April 6

FFA AWARDS Banquet

Thursday, April 9, 2026 @ 5:30 p.m.

Divide County High School Auditorium/Commons

Meal Provided
Open to public
Everyone Welcome!

Download the JournalND app