

READER OPINION: “Political hypocrisy is the biggest threat to this country!”

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“It is astounding and amazing that so many voters, politicians and legislators are aroused and mortified at the possibility that Joe Biden, in collusion with his son Biden, may have enriched himself with foreign funds relying on his prominence in government.

And if that is provably true then there should be considerable consequences legally and politically. But these same critics stood by for many years observing Trump and his cronies, and family, ostensibly committing continuous criminality, fraud and blatant hucksterism without uttering condemnation or taking appropriate investigative action. The hypocrisy is demoralizing and immobilizing to those who have been following unbiased news with corroborating documentation.

How do you reconcile the enormity of Trump’s malfeasance, criminality, deceit and vitriol that hasn’t disenchanted his ardent supporters, but causes them indignation, and in some cases violence, when Biden is accused of far less serious corruption and unethical behavior?

The hypocrisy is in some ways more disconcerting than the Trumpian antics, as so many have come to realize that he may be psychologically incapable of controlling his deviant behavior but his followers are not sufficiently disturbed or alienated to apply the same standards to his conduct.

The willingness to accept, or ignore, Trump's atrocious allegations, racial disparagement, misogynistic actions, destructive lies and sexual misconduct, while having fits of outrage at the Bidens is what has fueled the heartache, dread and fury for so many voters who are justifiably fearing the upcoming election."-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.

OPINION: South Coast man shocked at electric bill more than doubling in spite of no change in usage

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"Subject: Concerns and Issues with National Grid's Services

Dear Editor,

I am writing to bring attention to ongoing issues I have experienced with National Grid. Despite residing in a small 500 sq/ft studio apartment in Fall River, MA, my electricity bills have been extraordinarily high. A recent bill for the period from 11/02 to 12/05 reached \$535.29, a significant spike from my usual \$200 range. This increase is alarming, especially considering the apartment's size and my usage pattern.

Furthermore, despite multiple visits from electricians and a National Grid technician, no thorough checks were conducted on the calibration or accuracy of my analog power meter, which dates back to 2004. This lack of detailed inspection raises concerns about the meter's accuracy and reliability.

I believe this situation may resonate with other residents facing similar issues with their utility providers. It's crucial to highlight these concerns for community awareness and to seek a resolution from National Grid.

Sincerely,
Ollie"

OPINION: "Neither of the Bidens committed treasonous actions, but Trump did"

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"Proportionality does not matter to the MAGA supporters and their craven representatives.

The MAGA supporters who have never wavered in their devotion and adoration of Donald Trump are gloating as the travails of Hunter Biden and the possible impending impeachment of Joe Biden provide them their rationale to re-elect the most corrupt grifting narcissist to the presidency.

Whataboutism will bolster Trump supporters who no longer have to rely on frivolous and specious arguments to justify their unabated love of Trump. When their opponents question them about the greed, nepotism and criminality of Trump and family they can now point to the Biden family as similarly flawed. However, even from the most plausible and easily proven accusations none compare to the alleged treasonous actions of Donald Trump regarding the January Sixth attack upon the Capitol, conspiracy to overturn the 2020 election and the retention and sharing of classified documents.

Just as Trump is about to be convicted of criminality and civil fraud the multi count indictment of Hunter Biden, and impeachment inquiry of Joe Biden, grabs the headlines and the MAGA crowd can have their sign of relief and recruitment of more voters and donations of more campaign cash.

Hunter Biden is a drug addict who unquestionably committed tax evasion and led a dissolute existence for many years. And that Joe Biden probably enabled his criminality and cringe worthy personal behavior and may even have benefitted financially from his son's dealings with foreign entities, it has never been suggested that either committed treason or put the United States at risk.

There is no moral or criminal equivalency here, but that will not matter to millions of voters who are rejoicing and can unabashedly cast their ballots for Donald Trump. Proportionality as a defense may not save this country from the oncoming Trumpian autocracy.”-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.

OPINION: “Voters who stay home negatively impact elections, send country on backwards trajectory”

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“When not voting is a vote!

All the disaffected Democratic voters who will choose to stay home on November 5, 2024 must get beyond their disappointment with Joe Biden and vote for him, or any other Democratic nominee for the presidency in 2024, as a second Trumpian presidency may be the last truly unrigged vote in America.

Undoubtedly if Biden, or any other Democratic candidate wins the election, Trump and his coterie of opportunistic

legislators, MAGA diehards and unethical lawyers, will cry foul once again and the battles will begin anew. But the Democrats have a better shot at maintaining a democracy, even in the face of autocratic state legislatures, when they control the presidency and one of the houses of Congress.

Not voting in these times is not a protest statement of any value and it has enabled unqualified non-democratic contenders at the state and federal level to win elections. Small cities and towns are experiencing the results of disinterested residents sitting out elections thus empowering book banners, voter identification proponents, sexists and racists.

And at the state level there has been unabating gerrymandering, enabling of anti reproductive freedom advocates and a host of equality opponents.

Thoroughly disenchanted and cynical voters who remain at home on election days will have a greater impact on many crucial elections that will truly send this country on a backwards trajectory and they will be the most blameworthy for the disastrous results.”-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.

OPINION: “U.S. is no longer a beacon of Democracy, but a beacon to the far-right, MAGA regime”

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“For many decades, especially after World War Two, the United States was seen as a beacon of democracy by many nations struggling to achieve a similar form of government and freedom and equality for all.

Even though the United States, in reality, did not measure up to the attributed equality, the concept was aspired to by many Americans and politicians. And undeniably there was some modicum of equality achieved by minority groups, women and immigrants.

However, during the Trumpian MAGA regime and subsequent empowerment of right wing unmuzzled legislators, politicians and grieving supporters, many hard won protections were erased. And publicly proclaimed hatred for others was encouraged and acted upon.

Trumpism became the new beacon for many previously democratic nations that have now turned the voting majority into right wing nationalists and xenophobes. Denmark’s newly elected leader is the most disheartening example of a previously democratic and humane nation mimicking the Trumpian model.

The United States is slowly providing the template for extreme nationalism, which all too frequently became the root cause of barbaric wars.”-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.

OPINION: In support of Umass Dartmouth Chancellor Mark Fuller

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By Massachusetts State Representative Christopher Markey.

The most challenging part of public service is saying “no” to the people you like and care for. Authentic leadership in public service regularly leads to these difficult situations. Making those tough decisions is uncomfortable and challenging. Yet standing up for what is right, regardless of personal consequences, earns you respect. Chancellor Mark Fuller and his handling of the Star Store situation earned my respect and confidence.

The decision Chancellor Fuller inherited in the Star Store was undoubtedly difficult and hurt good people, but it was carried out for the betterment of the University. Since then, he has faced unrelenting criticism that is without an appreciation for the circumstances or reasoning behind the closure.

He made a choice I wish he did not have to make. A decision was thrust upon him with few options and even less time. It was a decision that would never make everyone happy, but ultimately, it had to be made. We have entrusted Chancellor Fuller with the health of our University, and he has

distinguished himself as a worthy caretaker.

The circumstances surrounding the Star Store closure have been utterly unfair to students, and my deepest sympathy is with the members of the CVPA program. We must commit ourselves to providing these students with the support and education they paid for. With growing confidence, the University is working towards solutions that will give the CVPA students the facilities they deserve and require.

However, the facts matter when discussing the program and the University's future. Frankly, I have been disgusted with the quality of discourse surrounding the Star Store closure. The blame for this situation does not fall squarely at the Chancellor's feet. It was a situation brewing for 24 years.

Warning signs have been present since the creation of the Star Store campus. Please don't take my word for it; take the word of the Inspector General. He is quoted in a September 30, 1999, letter to Commissioner Hines of the Division of Capital Asset Management:

".....it is important to point out that in 1996, this Office [Office of Inspector General] had strongly recommended that Governor Weld veto the legislation that created the entire process [the redevelopment of the Star Store]. Therefore, this letter should not be interpreted to mean that the public interest is protected in this transaction."

The last several chancellors did not create this concerning deal; it was dropped in their laps. Regardless, the Chancellor did his part to try to preserve the Star Store campus by advocating for the \$2.7 million rent in the state budget. Unfortunately, when the funds did not appear in the state budget in mid-August, he was left with little choice and less than a month before the start of the fall semester.

UMASS Dartmouth was forced to weigh the benefits of taking on a damaged building and all its liability against the needs of

7,457 students studying at a school with over \$600 million in deferred campus maintenance. Assuming ownership of the building would cost the school \$3 million in upfront maintenance costs. That equates to an additional and unexpected \$25,000/ student in the CVPA program. The assumption of ownership is a high-stakes investment that could jeopardize the fiscal well-being of the University. Given the circumstances, Fuller chose the thousands of students who tied their futures to UMASS Dartmouth.

Given UMASS Dartmouth's resources, Chancellor Fuller has demonstrated a unique skill to maximize the University's strengths and value to the community. Mark Fuller has an acute understanding of the promise and opportunity at UMass Dartmouth. Under the leadership of Chancellor Fuller, the University has enjoyed a renaissance that has attracted some of the best students in the world looking for a diverse and enriched on-campus experience.

UMass Dartmouth currently provides 61 majors and 42 master's degree programs. It has students from 51 countries and 46 states, and over 80% of its students call Massachusetts home. It provides top research education in mechanical engineering, marine science, business, and nursing. The University produces skilled professionals in the industries essential to the economic well-being and future of the South Coast.

Of these future professionals 38% are students of color and 57% are first-generation college students. Furthermore, UMASS Dartmouth ranked as the third-best Massachusetts school on the Social Mobility Index. Education is the single greatest creator of wealth in our society. UMASS Dartmouth provides an affordable education and training to many in our community. This foundation has allowed thousands of individuals to excel in business, engineering, science, medicine, and the arts.

Rest assured; the importance of this mission is not lost on the Chancellor. Mark Fuller is a first-generation college

graduate who has dedicated his professional life to working for the betterment of the higher education system. He rescued the Eisenberg Business School, raised millions of dollars for public universities, and brought positive and focused leadership to UMass Dartmouth.

UMASS Dartmouth's leadership team has turned around a campus experiencing a consistent decline in enrollment and retention. Between 2010 and 2019, enrollment at UMass-Dartmouth fell 16%. Yet hope is on the horizon as the class of 2026 is the largest enrolled at the University in 3 years.

An energized spirit on campus exposes students to cultural activities, school sporting events, and thousands of community service hours. The campus community is thriving; we should all be excited about that. While I appreciate the emotion attached to our current situation, there is a larger community for which Chancellor Fuller is responsible.

The Star Store campus was undoubtedly essential to the school's connection to downtown New Bedford. Our governor, state delegation, mayor, and city council will work with the Star Store owner to maximize the building's use for our community and the arts.

The building's absence is disappointing. However, the closure is not a symptom of the impending collapse prophesized by fearmongers. While Chancellor Fuller is a convenient rhetorical boogiemer for sweeping speeches and hatchet-job editorials, the facts reveal that he was a responsible steward of the University. Simply put, when you need a new roof for your home, you can't spend your money on an addition.

Let's be clear on the purpose and mission of UMass Dartmouth. This public university is tasked with providing cost-effective education in a broad range of fields and professions. Despite recent claims, the Star Store was not a miracle cure for post-industrial economic downturn, years of systemic racial

inequities, or any other ills that plague our society. However, the University can provide a high-quality education to the leaders of tomorrow. Those students are the school's most valuable asset. Those students will continue the march of progress and growth far longer than any brick-and-mortar building. Their access to education is paramount to our community and reliant on the sustained financial well-being of UMASS Dartmouth.

We can all agree that UMASS Dartmouth is the cornerstone of our community. It enriches the lives of our young people while providing our local neighborhoods with skilled professionals. Like anything, the school and its facilities are not perfect. We will continue the work of improving our University and finding solutions to support our displaced CVPA students. As we labor through this unfortunate situation, I hope we focus on solutions rather than fabricating convenient villains to fit our reactionary narratives. Chancellor Fuller is a talented leader who deserves our support as he navigates this difficult moment for the University.

OPINION: “The Fairhaven/NewBedford bridge ignores its own schedule!”

EDITOR: The bridge has never abided by the schedule in the decades I've lived here. It simply is what it is. I don't mind because those guys are busting butt and what to come home after a long trip or want to head out to put food on the table. I never use the bridge if I have a rigid deadline.

Having said that, I can understand someone who looks at the

schedule so they decide to go over the bridge based on that. However, they get there and the bridge is close off-schedule. Now they have to go around with the dozens of other people going around and that alternate route become clogged. Then they are late for work – which can get them in trouble – or late for a medical appointment, Zeiterion show, etc.

In addition, we have heard from several people that were/ar fishermen or know a bridge operator who said that there are a few captains who either offer the operator “shack” to open off-schedule, or even cuss, swear, and threaten the operator if he won’t open the bridge for them. The last time I heard something like that was 2-3 years ago, so I don’t know if the current operators do this or not.

Ultimately the bridge will be replaced with something modern, quicker, more efficient and with fewer breakdowns. We just have to be patient.

One resident shares her frustration.

“I have a complaint about the #NewBedford/#Fairhaven bridge.

If the bridge is to open on the hour from 6am to 10am and half past the hour from 1115am to 615pm and then on-demand after that WHY is the bridge opening at 5:50am for boat traffic when it clearly states 6am on the website.

I’m sure a lot of motorists will feel the same way. Maybe someone doesn’t know how to tell time. This is absolutely aggravating in the morning to have to turn around and go back to Fairhaven to go the long way around.

Please explain to the MASSDot that they should follow the times stated on the website! This is not the first time that this had happened.”

Tony Cabral promotes “government transparency” after ignoring requests to speak with local journalist

Right now there is much to talk about in New Bedford, good and bad. We are approaching an election, offshore wind is in full swing, the south coast rail is under construction, we are in a housing crisis, the police department is understaffed, and the list can go on for things to discuss.

As a journalist, I reach out to our elected officials, our police department, and our fire department, for comment on issues in the city, it's common practice.

When we reach out to Mayor Mitchell's office with questions, we receive answers immediately. The same goes for the New Bedford Police Department, when a crime happens in the city and we reach out, they get back to us with full transparency.

This leads me to Representative Tony Cabral. Over the past few weeks, I have reached out to speak with him on several occasions via phone and email. The emails have been unanswered and I've never received any call back even after leaving multiple voicemails.

The strange part is these aren't even hostile or difficult inquiries. I've just been asking for his thoughts on the future of New Bedford and other basic questions regarding some hot topics in the area, really not hard-hitting questions.

I hesitated to write this article calling out his lack of

transparency until I saw him posting photos of him speaking in Boston about “government Transparency” on social media.

The fact that Tony Cabral blatantly ignores local journalists in the very area he represents, and then stands at a podium in Boston speaking on “government transparency” is utterly ridiculous.

OPINION: “Laughter, ridicule alleviate inadequacies of Trump supporters lives.”

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“Trump missed his calling as he is never boring before his MAGA audience as he spews brilliant comedic insults, denigrations, whining and revenge. He should have been a stand up comedian.

His audiences alternate between provoked anger at his targets and ridiculing hilarity about their perceived enemies.

Having mastered the one liners he has never had to analyze or familiarize himself with true facts about any issue as he

intuitively understands that which will engage their allegiance and donations to his coffers. Even if his statements lack all credibility they have great comedic value.

No previously revered politician, president or war hero is spared his eviscerating and insulting comments. Destroying all respect for the government, the military, the judiciary, the FBI, and Department of Justice, all that remains for them is to place their trust and money on him.

Rarely has a national figure engaged such fealty and attention for such a long period, and despite well documented criminal indictments. The more beleaguered Trump becomes, the more intensely his supporters lose faith in previously respected American institutions, leaders, representative democracy and clamor for more rallies and public appearances. Laughter and ridicule alleviates the inadequacies of their lives.

He may very well join the pantheon of great comedians, but never of U.S. presidents.”-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.

OPINION: “The Republicans should nominate Liz Cheney for the speakership of the House!”

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Since it is not necessary to select the speaker from the present members of the House, nor even a previously elected representative, Liz Cheney would be a great nominee.

Undoubtedly, a large contingent of Democratic representatives would vote for her and adding a sufficient number of Republicans who are really ethically committed to putting this country back on stronger footing, would join them.

Cheney is no less conservative than Kevin McCarthy but she has exhibited outstanding consistency in her political philosophy and ethical standards. She is also not deterred by standing firm in the face of enmity from the Trumpists who value allegiance to Trump rather than to the constitution or rule of law.

This is a point in American history where unprecedented actions and behavior are glorified and not always for the good. The elevation of Liz Cheney would be a nod from the Democrats that a functioning two party system is far better than an autocracy." -Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.