

# OPINION



- Columnists
- Letters to the Editor

## Sunshine is always right \*\*

By Jim Zachary; CNHI Deputy National Editor; Editor, The Valdosta Daily Times

Open government is not a political platform. It is a basic American right. The political landscape is more polarized than ever and there seems to be little common ground for conservatives and progressives. Transparency — keeping the light on the people's business — ought to be something everyone can agree on. Instead, conservatives want to reveal the secrets of liberals and liberals want to expose the actions of conservatives. Openness in government is not a liberal, conservative, Republican, Democrat, independent, Libertarian or freedom caucus issue. It often appears that whatever party is in the minority becomes the champion of transparency right up until the time it is in the majority. Politicians stomp on transparency and are all about open access, until they have something they want to keep secret. The need for transparency in local, state and federal government transcends parties and political ideologies. Checks and balances provide few checks and little balance when officials broker deals behind closed doors and conceal documents that contain important information that the public has the right, and often the need, to know. Local government has the biggest impact in the lives of people on a day-to-day basis.



The decisions being made, the dollars being doled out and the records being kept by city hall, the county commission, the board of education or the utility district all belong to liberals, conservatives, Republicans, Democrats, independents, Libertarians and even politically disinterested individuals. All stakeholders have a stake in open meetings and public records and should care about transparency issues. The lack of and need for true government transparency should be about the most bipartisan cause that exists. Any elected official who truly cares about public service in a real and meaningful way and fully understands what a representative form of government is all about, should not only champion openness in government, but should be the most effective watchdogs, looking out for the public trust. Sadly, those kinds of elected officials are hard to find. The press tries to keep an eye on government and expose clandestine actions and in response

Whether it is in the form of property taxes, sales taxes, business taxes, state-shared dollars or federal grants, loans and funding, local government is 100 percent taxpayer-funded. The public has the right to know how its money is being spent.

journalists are often ridiculed, belittled and even threatened for just doing their jobs, as they work to keep government honest by making use of access laws. But, the public needs to understand that access to government documents and actions is not just a media right. It is your right.

## I am an American first

Guest Editorial by Emily Weathers Kennedy



We all have labels—words we use to define who we are. I am a writer. I identify with this occupation, though it is only a part of me. I am also a woman, a wife, and mother, but they only describe more pieces of myself that arise from my gender. Some describe themselves by their religion, their hobby or craft, or maybe their politics. I can do this also, but again, those are only pieces of who I am. If we live within the confines of Lawrence County, we call ourselves Lawrence Countians and Tennesseans. These identities acknowledge that as human beings, we are a part of a culture larger than each of us individually. Further, if we live in the United States, we call ourselves Americans. And, with all that is at stake in this day and time, this is the identifier that deserves our unified loyalty and defense, the leveler of the playing field. Recent events have shaken this democratic republic in recent months. For the first time in our history, people

in power have apparently consorted with the most dangerous of our adversaries in ways only imagined here in nightmare scenarios. In countries like many in Africa, Central America, or the Middle East, such collusion with adversarial states is not uncommon. But, here in America, there have been checks and balances to power that have prevented “cheating” to game the system. During the Nixon administration, members of Congress, impressed with the findings of investigators, forced the president to resign before impeachment. Criminal conspiracy with a goal of obstruction of justice felled the Nixon Administration. The system worked because people in Nixon's own party chose the health of America over party. The findings of Special Counsel Robert Mueller have not been disclosed, but the wake of the investigation thus far has left enough of the stench of corruption and conspiracy that people in this country should be highly alarmed. Yet the president's own party remains seemingly mute. There are things we know thus far. One, Putin has a plan to destabilize the West. His FSB (formerly the KGB) has targeted Europe and the United States, in particular, with cyber attacks to sow

discord and threaten democratic systems. Make us fight against each other. And, boy golly has his mission worked! Two, KSB operatives at the behest of Putin have spread massive misinformation. Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms allowed these Russians to buy ads and spread false news on fake sites—in Rubles no less! Their objective was to harm Hillary Clinton's electoral chances and install Trump as president. Three, KSB operatives have also focused on destabilization through direct interference in our elections. States' voting systems were hacked! Somehow these operatives knew exactly which states to target, and it is only a matter of time before their American abettors are uncovered. Four, our intelligence community surveilled Russian operatives and HEARD their conversations. In fact, these conversations (and those heard by our allies overseas) were what prompted concerns about the Trump Campaign in the first place. Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, was marked as an easy target to use for Russian influence. It doesn't take a very large stretch of the imagination to smell offal as Kushner lied about meeting after meeting and then re-worked his security clearance form to admit them. Five, with proof from our top intelligence agencies and indictments and pleas from conspirators already, the State Department has done nothing with the \$120 million appropriated by Congress to combat the STILL-ACTIVE Russian cyber attacks against this country. With sanctions approved against Russia by Congress, this president has done NOTHING to impose those sanctions. He has said not a word against Putin, has offered no rebuke or punishment. This, my fellow Americans, should chill us all to the bone. The Trump Administration is functioning like a Jenga set or a house of cards. With each arrest and each plea, the whole stack threatens to come tumbling down. It's time for us all to decide who we are first, partisans or Americans. I am an American first. I want my country's healthy democratic republic restored. I want the rule of law restored and nepotism eliminated. I want to trust in open and fair elections again. I want no person to be above the law. And, I want our government to go back to protecting us from our adversaries not consorting with them. And, I want to hear patriotism and loyalty to country again without people's own self-interests drowning out the sound. Emily Weathers Kennedy, a Loretto native and a graduate of Vanderbilt University, is a freelance writer and photo stylist. You can read more of her work and contact her at emilyweatherskenedy.com.

## Plastic Packaging: Is this the beginning of the end?

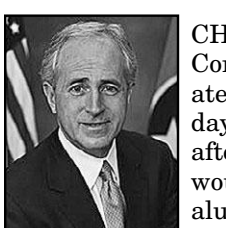


**Tyrades! by Danny Tyree**  
“There's a great future in plastics. Think about it? Will you think about it?” That advice, delivered to Dustin Hoffman's character in the 1967 movie “The Graduate,” enjoyed a good five-decade run; but it may be nearing the end of its shelf life. According to the Washington Post, the Ekoplaza organic supermarket chain in the Netherlands has opened a pilot store (in Amsterdam) with an unprecedented aisle dedicated to 700-plus products that use absolutely no plastic packaging. We're not talking about a return to the days of grocery store pickle barrels and cracker barrels; but Ekoplaza's special aisle does boast products enclosed in glass, metal and cardboard – as well as a plant-based biofilm that will break down within 12 weeks in a home composter, instead of clogging a landfill for centuries. In conjunction with the British environmental group A Plastic Planet, Ekoplaza hopes to make it easy to identify and promote “green” products that don't rely on petrochemical packaging. Like the dieting mantra “A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips,” Ekoplaza wants to show the shortsightedness of inhaling a candy bar and casually leaving the wrapper for your great-great-great-great grandchildren to deal with. Across the globe, people use more than one million plastic bottles each minute (mostly for water), according to Ekoplaza's website. Fewer than nine percent get recycled. (Ironically, progressivism is an obstacle to further growth in recycling. Increasing the recycling rate involves begging, “Pretty please, with sugar on top.” But that is seen as a microaggression against ugly people, a capitulation to Big Sweetener and a veiled assertion that the “pretty please” is subordinate to the sugar.)

In my day job, I see a mind-numbing amount of shrink-wrap and other plastic packaging. It doesn't get much better when I'm off the clock. Doesn't it help you sleep better at night knowing that a serial killer can hacksaw through prison bars quicker than you can unpackage a new cellphone to call 9-1-1? Look under “wretched excess” in the dictionary, and you'll see a picture of packaging designers – assuming you can get the dictionary out of the wrapper! The Ekoplaza initiative has intrigued consumers in the European Union and Great Britain, but expect pushback in the good ol' United States. Hipsters – as well as ordinary folks disgusted with plastic garbage killing fish and other wildlife -- will embrace the movement; but ornery traditionalists will double down. (“The Founding Fathers secured my right to keep and bear plastic jugs of milk! And the store won't put my groceries in a plastic bag? Fine. I'll just stand here and block traffic until they start laminating the ‘Enquirer’ and the ‘Star’ in the checkout lane.”) Unless they switch gears and get in on the ground floor of biofilm and other wrappings, we can expect a protracted battle with the plastics industry. (“I'm all for sustainability – like sustaining my corner office and my bonus!”) Encourage American manufacturers, retailers and legislators to investigate new options. We could enter a golden era of choice, innovation and socially responsible behavior. Just don't oversell the composting aspect. Composting fanatics can see it as a magic bullet for every problem. Alas, they forget the fate of the dinosaur who saw an asteroid hurtling toward earth and shouted to his friend, “Quick! Fetch me a wheelbarrow and mulch! I think we can fix this!” ©2018 Danny Tyree. Danny welcomes email responses at tyreetyrades@aol.com and visits to his Facebook fan page “Tyree's Tyrades.” Danny's weekly column is distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons Inc. newspaper syndicate.

discord and threaten democratic systems. Make us fight against each other. And, boy golly has his mission worked! Two, KSB operatives at the behest of Putin have spread massive misinformation. Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms allowed these Russians to buy ads and spread false news on fake sites—in Rubles no less! Their objective was to harm Hillary Clinton's electoral chances and install Trump as president. Three, KSB operatives have also focused on destabilization through direct interference in our elections. States' voting systems were hacked! Somehow these operatives knew exactly which states to target, and it is only a matter of time before their American abettors are uncovered. Four, our intelligence community surveilled Russian operatives and HEARD their conversations. In fact, these conversations (and those heard by our allies overseas) were what prompted concerns about the Trump Campaign in the first place. Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, was marked as an easy target to use for Russian influence. It doesn't take a very large stretch of the imagination to smell offal as Kushner lied about meeting after meeting and then re-worked his security clearance form to admit them. Five, with proof from our top intelligence agencies and indictments and pleas from conspirators already, the State Department has done nothing with the \$120 million appropriated by Congress to combat the STILL-ACTIVE Russian cyber attacks against this country. With sanctions approved against Russia by Congress, this president has done NOTHING to impose those sanctions. He has said not a word against Putin, has offered no rebuke or punishment. This, my fellow Americans, should chill us all to the bone. The Trump Administration is functioning like a Jenga set or a house of cards. With each arrest and each plea, the whole stack threatens to come tumbling down. It's time for us all to decide who we are first, partisans or Americans. I am an American first. I want my country's healthy democratic republic restored. I want the rule of law restored and nepotism eliminated. I want to trust in open and fair elections again. I want no person to be above the law. And, I want our government to go back to protecting us from our adversaries not consorting with them. And, I want to hear patriotism and loyalty to country again without people's own self-interests drowning out the sound. Emily Weathers Kennedy, a Loretto native and a graduate of Vanderbilt University, is a freelance writer and photo stylist. You can read more of her work and contact her at emilyweatherskenedy.com.

## Corker statement on Administration's tariff announcement



CHATTANOOGA – U.S. Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, today released the following statement after the administration announced it would impose new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. “While I share the president's concerns regarding Chinese steel overcapacity, I am disappointed by the administration's approach to this problem and ultimate decision to use a rarely used national security provision to implement new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports,” said Corker. “A better way to level the playing field for American companies would be to rally our friends and allies to advance a robust, targeted effort to ensure that only those responsible for excess global capacity pay a price. Unfortunately, I fear this announcement could have far-reaching unintended consequences that will put

at risk the hard fought economic gains U.S. businesses have seen over the past year. Hopefully, the president will come to realize this possibility and further narrow this announced policy.” **Corker on North Korea** U.S. Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), released the following statement after President Donald J. Trump accepted an invitation to meet with Kim Jong Un at a place and time to be determined. “While U.S. policy toward North Korea has failed for decades, it is clear that a series of sanctions recently put in place by Congress and the administration are having a real impact,” said Corker. “As the administration begins to work through the important details of such a meeting, we must continue to apply maximum pressure to the regime in Pyongyang. Skepticism and caution are critical as these discussions continue.”

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