

OPINION

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The fourth estate: our last leg standing



By Emily Weathers Kennedy

Our government was formed with checks and balances in place in case one branch or another was to fall under tyrannical rule. Say a despot-wannabe engaged with a hostile foreign power to sway an election, in this day and time by hacking into voting systems and falsifying outcomes or pouring money into social media accounts to sway voters erroneously. In the case of Nixon, who resigned in disgrace after his participation in Watergate, the Congress stepped up and forced his hand, including members of his own party. In other words, Congress, the second branch of government, prevented an illegal breach into America's political process by the Presidency, the first branch.

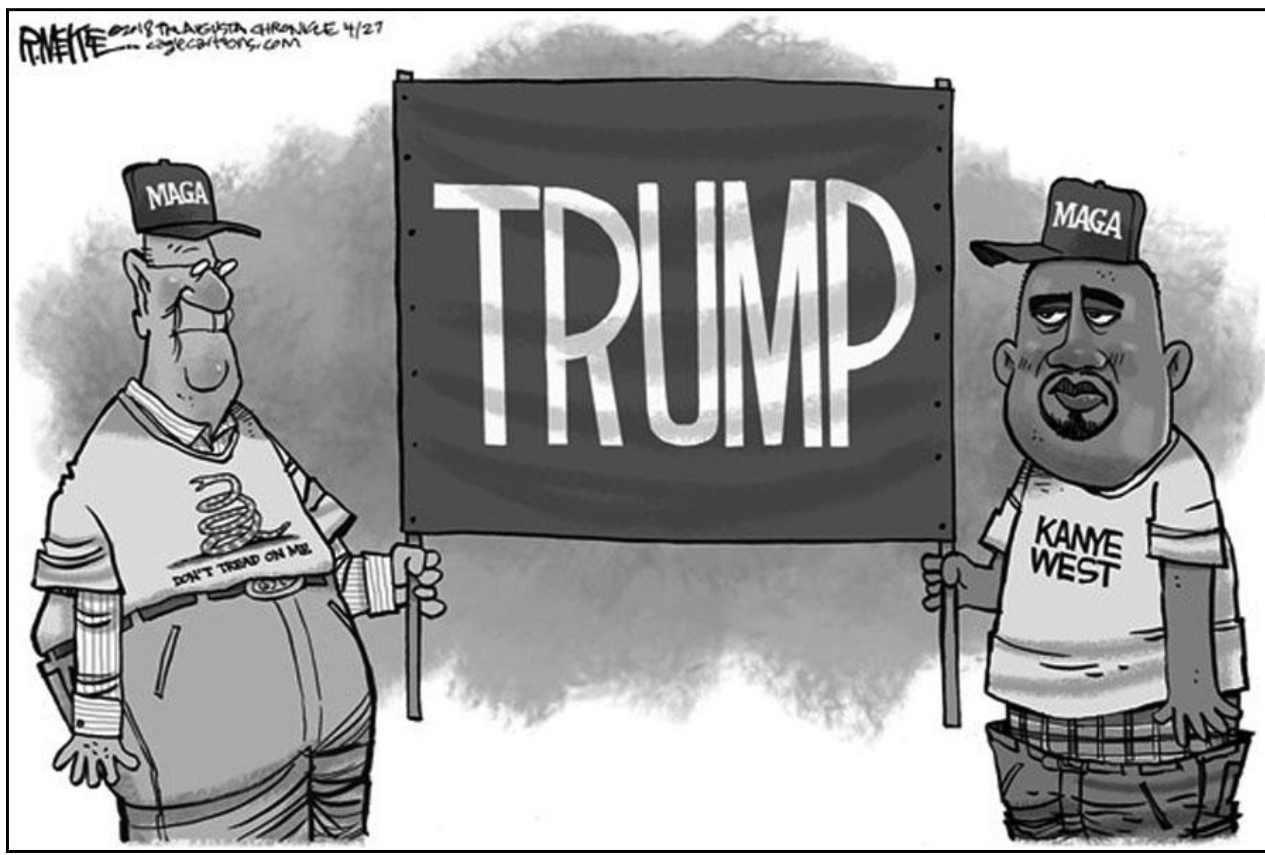
But what if the party of a candidate (then president) was complicit, and the minority party in Congress had no legal recourse? That would mean that yet another branch of government must keep the Republic democratically healthy.

But go one step farther. What would happen if the third branch of government were compromised? What if the president and his majority party in Congress also strong-armed the last and final check—the Supreme Court? What would that scenario mean for the health of the country?

Although not considered one of the three branches of government formed in 1787 when the Constitution was created—the Presidency, Congress, and the Supreme Court—the fourth estate, or the FREE PRESS, has been around for centuries. First in Europe and later in America, the free press has guaranteed people true checks and balances with independent oversight and a commitment to keeping the operations of government transparent.

I doubt the Founding Fathers foresaw a scenario where even the fourth estate were threatened, but these are strange times indeed. Who, in his or her right mind, would ever have imagined a president who called the free press the “enemy of the people” and why would he do this?

In a meeting leading up to a November 2016 interview with CBS' Leslie Stahl, Trump revealed his purpose. Stahl asked when he planned to stop attacking the press. According to Stahl, “I said, you know that is getting tired, why are you doing this — you're doing it over and over and it's boring.” Stahl continued, “He said you know why I do it? I do it to discredit you all and demean you



all, so when you write negative stories about me no one will believe you.”

Now, two years into his presidency, Trump's continual harsh rhetoric against the press has wider repercussions. Whether intentional or not, reporters around the globe have been threatened and killed. In June 2018, five reporters were shot to death at the Baltimore Sun's Capital Gazette. In August 2018, a man was arrested after making 14 calls to the Boston Globe after the news organization led a campaign against President Donald Trump's assault on the media. Robert D. Chain allegedly called the Globe the “enemy of the people” and threatened to kill employees.

Most recently the Turkish government revealed that Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist and Washington Post reporter living in Virginia with a Green Card, was brutally murdered and dismembered in the Saudi

Embassy in Turkey. The Turkish government reports that his murder was caught on their audio and video surveillance. Most intelligence sources believe the reason for his death was his criticism of the Saudi royal family, namely Mohammad bin Salman, the Crown Prince. The question becomes—did the Saudis read the president's disdain for the press as “the enemy of the people” as a green light to eliminate a journalist? The president has stated that US moneyed interest with Saudi are not threatened even with Khashoggi's death, so any punishment will be painless.

Once journalists are threatened, jailed, or killed, citizens of the world have no last line of defense, no investigative powers to make sure authoritarians don't seize power with impunity. It is UNHEALTHY for any country to have no reins on power. Apparently, no one can stop the president from his irresponsible rhetoric, but on November 6, citizens of this country can restore the checks and balances on this president, his complicit congress, and their stacked Supreme Court by VOTING!!!!

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 emilyweatherskennedy.com.

Swift breaks political silence by declaring for Bredesen, Cooper



In an Instagram post Sunday, October 7, superstar Taylor Swift vowed to vote for two Democratic candidates: former governor Phil Bredesen for the Senate and Rep. Jim Cooper for reelection. She also acknowledged her past reluctance to address political issues but said that had changed in the past two years:

“I always have and always will cast my vote based on which candidate will protect and fight for the human rights I believe we all deserve in this country,” she wrote. “I believe in the fight for LGBTQ rights, and that any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender is WRONG. I believe that the systemic racism we still see in this country towards people of color is terrifying, sickening and prevalent.”

Swift also blasted Rep. Marsha Blackburn, Bredesen's Republican opponent, for having voted against those values. “As much as I have in the past and would like to continue voting for women in office, I cannot support Marsha Blackburn,” Swift wrote. “Her voting record in Congress appalls

and terrifies me.”

Swift implored her followers to “please, please educate yourself” on local candidates and to vote.

“For a lot of us, we may never find a candidate or party with whom we agree 100 percent on every issue, but we have to vote anyway,” Swift wrote. “So many intelligent, thoughtful, self-possessed people have turned 18 in the past two years and now have the right and privilege to make their vote count.”

President Trump, who has hailed Blackburn as an “outstanding person & great supporter of mine,” brushed off Swift's Instagram post Monday night.

“I'm sure Taylor Swift doesn't know anything about” Blackburn, he said. “Let's say that I like Taylor's music about 25 percent less now, okay?”

In Tennessee, where Swift is registered to vote, Vote.org tracked 2,144 new voter registrations in the 36 hours since the singer's post, bringing October's to-date total to 7,554 — a sharp increase from 2,811 registrations in September and 951 in August.

Tennessee ranks 40th in the nation in voter registration and last in voter turnout. More than 838,000 adult Tennesseans are not registered to vote. Early voting starts today. Please exercise your vital privilege and right as a citizen - vote!

False accusations clarified

By Martha Rose Woodward; Leoma Native

During the Kavanaugh drama a question floated around the Internet. “Have you ever been falsely accused of something you know you didn't do?”

If you will think about it for a few minutes I'd say you have been. Whether it was about something highly important or for something simple like taking the last piece of pie at a family gathering, most of us know how this feels.

To answer this question I recalled a humorous event that happened to me and wanted to share it.

From 2007 until it closed in 2014, I was a free-lance reporter/writer for a local newspaper. During those years I saw 1,150 of my articles in print. I wrote about everything from trials in courts, governmental and club meetings, businesses openings and closings, accidents, and more. Along the way I met numerous interesting people and made several friends. One such person is Ronnie Miller, a forty-something, disabled, retired veteran, who uses his amazing talent to entertain as an Elvis Performance Artist.

One day Miller phoned me to say he was in the area of my home and wanted to stop by and give me a CD and a video he had made of his music. I went out on my front porch and took a seat in the rocking chair I was given when I retired as a school teacher. Miller phoned me to make sure he had the correct directions and I was talking to him on my cell phone while waiting.

At about this time, a neighbor, we will call him Mr. D, arrived home next door and walked up the steps to his house. I waved at him and he spoke to me, asking, “What are you up to today?”

I replied that I was “waiting on Elvis” in a humorous way, thinking he would ask me what I meant, but instead he headed straight into his house with a smirk



Ronnie Miller (“Elvis”)

on his face.

I did not know it at the time, but after he went inside, he immediately phoned our neighbor across the street and told her to look out the window because, “Martha Woodward has gone completely daffy. She is talking to herself and says she's waiting on Elvis.”

The neighbor he had phoned said she stepped to the window, pulled back the curtain and immediately saw this long, sleek, white Cadillac pulling into my driveway. The driver looked like Elvis in sunglasses. When he stepped out of the car he was wearing a white jumpsuit with blue jewels. She told me she said to Mr. D, “Maybe you ought to look out your own window because Elvis just arrived.”

I am reminded of a quote by Winston Churchill, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.”

Church “Ladies Day”: Now needed more than ever



Tyrades! by Danny Tyree

As I type these words, my wife is eagerly anticipating the annual Ladies Day at the country church we've been members of for the entirety of our marriage (and which I've attended since I was six days old).

I know the word “ladies” sticks in the craw of some segments of the unchurched (as well as the ultra-progressive church). They see it as a lingering, condescending vestige of oppressive patriarchy. They imagine a Ladies Day lecture sprinkled with scriptural references such as “The Mansplaining on the Mount” (their terminology) and the chauvinistic effrontery of someone holding the Pearly Gates open for them.

They divide all church women into either cowering doormats or abrasive, self-righteous biddies like Dana

Carvey's Church Lady on “Saturday Night Live.”

While most nonreligious motorists can pass a Ladies Day marquee without a knee-jerk reaction, some sigh with a mixture of pity and contempt. They have a pre-conceived notion of the attendees and can just picture the women (even octogenarian Mrs. McGillicuddy) fighting over door prizes. (“Yee-ha! Nail clippers and Chinese herbs! I get to stay barefoot and pregnant! Eat your heart out, Betty White!”)

But in a world of selfishness and vulgarity, I rejoice that we are still blessed with women who have some measure of self-control, decency and modesty. I am proud my wife is part of a broad cross-section of women (stay-at-home moms, career women, retirees and spiritually minded teens) who share a reverent goal while retaining their own hobbies, personalities

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Music Modernization Act signed into law

U.S. Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) released the following statement after the Music Modernization Act was signed into law by President Donald J. Trump. The legislation, which was authored by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and cosponsored by Corker, will help ensure songwriters are paid fair market value for their songs.

“Tennessee is blessed with a vibrant music industry composed of talented songwriters, skilled musicians, and countless small and large businesses,” said Corker. “Over the years, the industry has transformed with advances in technology and new platforms providing access to music, but modernizing the way music creators are compensated for their work has been long overdue. I am pleased the president signed our legislation into law so we can move toward a 21st century music marketplace that works not only for consumers but also the people who bring to life the music we enjoy each day. I thank Senators Alexander and Hatch for their leadership on this issue and have been proud to work with them to make this a reality.”

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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