

## Standard online reader survey



As recreational marijuana becomes legal in more states, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions says he'd like the government to enforce federal laws which prohibit marijuana.

**Q: Do you think marijuana should be legal?**

**YES or NO**

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Tax reform should not halt charitable donations

Tax reform signed into law by President Donald Trump just before Christmas may be detrimental to many charitable organizations, some analysts insist. It should not make an iota of difference in how we Americans respond to need.

If you make contributions to recognized charities, you may be using them as a deduction to lessen your income tax bill. There had been some concern Congress would eliminate that deduction, which costs the Treasury an estimated \$41.5 billion a year.

But the new law keeps the charitable giving deduction in place.

So what's the problem?

Some analysts worry that tax relief granted to most Americans may prompt some to forego charitable giving because, in essence, they don't need the deduction to reduce their tax bills. For those using the new \$24,000 standard deduction for married couples, there is no reason to resort to any itemized

**The Telegraph  
Nashua, N.H.**

deductions.

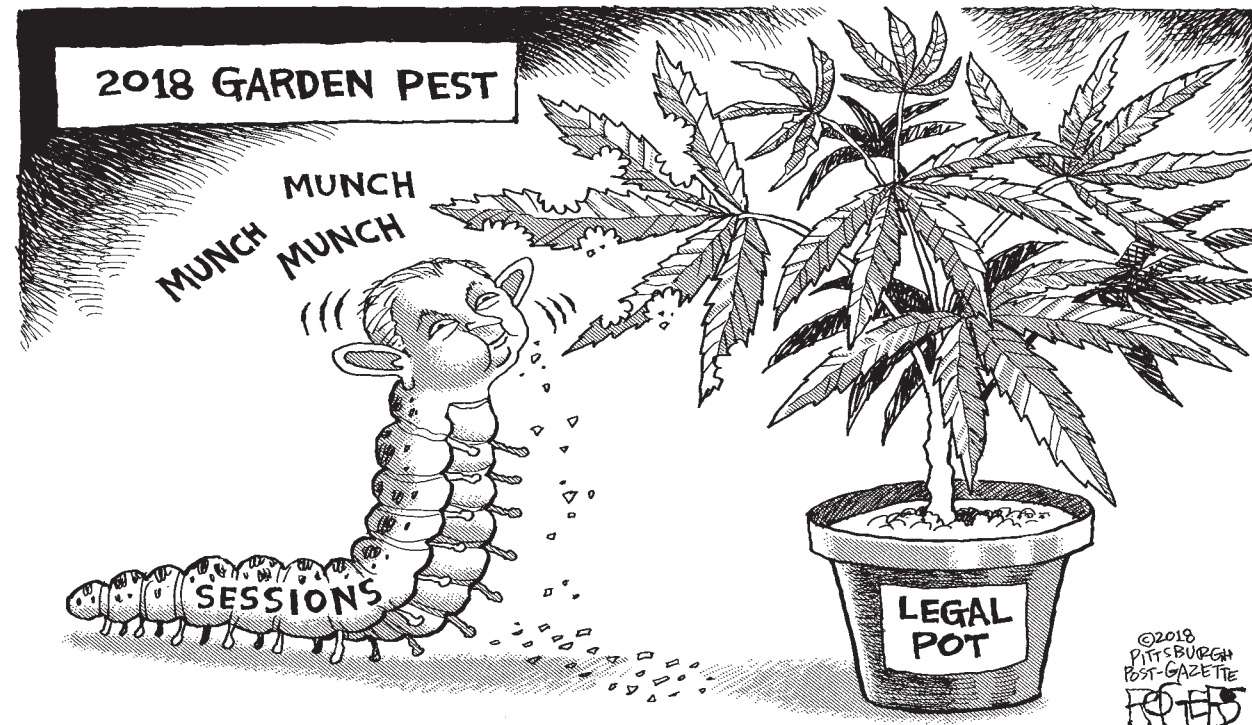
Some people may reduce charitable giving because it no longer helps them. Or so say some commentators.

No doubt that will happen in some situations. But concluding it will be a major problem assumes most charitable giving is not out of a motive to help worthy causes, but for purely selfish reasons.

Americans are better than that. We are confident the overwhelming majority of charitable giving is out of the goodness of donors' hearts, not merely to save them money at tax time.

Here's hoping our theory is proved right by events, starting early this year.

If you know of a need and can help fill it, please do by making a donation to a worthy cause — as soon as possible.



### Bitter battle brewing for 2018

President Donald Trump started his first year in office on a triumphant note. And rightly so.

Against all odds, he had trumped presumptive (and presumptuous) president Hillary Clinton by 303 to 225 electoral votes.

Moreover, his relatively new party of choice, the GOP, controlled both houses of Congress. That's the first time since 2006 a president and his party have enjoyed so much power and influence over politics and policy. The challenge to come would be how to convert electoral victory into effective governing.

President Trump's most far-reaching achievement early on was getting his Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch confirmed by the Senate to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia.

His biggest setback was the failure to repeal and replace the so-called Affordable Care Act aka ObamaCare.

President Trump ended the year on another triumphant note with the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. However, it was a very near thing. The final bill passed the House without a single Democratic vote — and with more than a dozen Republicans voting against it. It barely passed the Senate, 51-48.

Clearly, the 2018 election cycle is shaping to be a bitter battle between Democrats and Republicans for control of Congress. In the House, all seats are up for grabs. If the Democrats can hold what they've got and win 24 more seats, they will be

back in control of that chamber.

There's no doubt they will target the 23 GOP House incumbents who will be running in "swing" districts carried by Hillary Clinton in 2016, plus any others who may become vulnerable along the way.

The Senate situation is a different story. Only 34 seats are in contention, and 24 of them are currently held by Democrats. Adding to their uphill battle is the fact 10 of them are up for re-election in states carried by Donald Trump in 2016.

#### MY TURN

**THOMAS B.  
VAUGHN**



Chuck Grassley, Orrin Hatch, Richard Shelby, Jim Inhofe, Pat Roberts, and John McCain. As of this writing, a total of nine senators (seven Republicans and two Democrats) are in their 80s. Some are hale and hardy, others not so much.

Age aside, one thing is certain. How Americans view their economic lot in life under GOP control of the Senate, House of Representatives, and the White House will largely determine how they vote for Congress in 2018.

Therefore, expect GOP leaders to praise their progress on behalf of middle class Americans, even as Democratic leaders pillory them as "Greedy Old Patricians," who rob from the poor to reward the rich.

Retired Army Col. Thomas B. Vaughn can be reached at [tbvauvni@blomand.net](mailto:tbvauvni@blomand.net).

### Presidential personalities

**CRAWFORD NOTCH, N.H. --**

Standing here — shivering here — in one of America's changeless corners, where the snow-encrusted peaks stand immobile in the face of irrepressible winds and remorseless temperatures, it is sometimes hard to contemplate the changes beyond this low point along a fierce mountain ridge.

Almost every president has been transformed merely by taking the oath of office. But it may be possible to argue that, after he leaves Washington, the presidency may not have transformed Trump at all. Certainly it would be hard to disagree that his first 11 months left the president acting, thinking, deciding and tweeting much the same way he did 11 months before.

Some presidents (William McKinley, Herbert Hoover and George H.W. Bush) went into the presidency fixed in character. Some (Kennedy, Barack Obama, even Franklin Delano Roosevelt) were works in progress. Still others (Truman, Richard M. Nixon and George W. Bush) were transformed by the office.

But none of them was as resistant to change as Trump.

In "The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office," published in September, the University of Texas scholar Jeremi Suri argued that Trump's supporters understood that it "was impossible to lead as president in 2016," and, as a result, they "elected an anti-leader, Donald Trump, whose main qualification was that he had never served in public office and had no desire to act like a traditional public servant."

He hasn't. He has warred with his allies and sparred with, rather than romanced, his opponents. He actually has discredited conventional politics — a sharp departure from every one of

his 44 predecessors, including the great improviser FDR.

But while the presidency has not changed Trump, it is very likely that Trump has changed the presidency.

He has in some ways removed party, and in some ways ideology, too, from the presidency. He was elected a Republican but he has scrambled the political calculus for this decade, and may have changed the notion of conservatism forever.

He has made the presidency less formal. He is not the first president to do so; Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt and Carter all had impulses of informality. Though Kennedy affected informality, he was at home in a dinner jacket, even if his wife pressured him to wear it.

Ronald Reagan, himself an outsider, still had enormous respect for presidential precedent and comportment. Trump does not, although, in fairness, Obama was photographed in shirtsleeves in the Oval Office and, unforgivably for traditionalists, with his feet on the presidential desk built from the timbers of HMS Resolute.

Few presidents — perhaps none besides Jackson, Truman and Nixon — spoke of their rivals with the bitterness and anger of Trump. Truman's remarks seem almost innocent today, the equivalent of saying "heck" in public. But Trump's are vitriolic, at times cruel and crude.

It is too early to know whether the president's style will become a presidential style, employed to some degree by successors. Nor can we say whether it is a reflection of the coarsening of American life or whether it contributes to a further coarsening of our civic culture.

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#### JUST A THOUGHT

**LISA  
HOBBS**



### Our drivers are bad, and have guns

We have some of the worst drivers here in Warren County.

Yes, I said it. I have three instances in the same number of weeks to back up my declaration.

I stopped by Walmart about three weeks ago for one item and took a right onto North Chancery Street. As is my custom, I'm jamming and singing in my car to the radio. My car is my relaxation time. It was 35 degrees outside, so anything that makes you happy as you slowly freeze to death is a must.

My happiness ended at the next intersection. I pulled up behind a car waiting at a red light. As I'm sitting there, the driver gets out of his car. Like a scene from the Wild West, the driver slings the right side of his coat back exposing a gun holstered on his side and he grabs it. As he walked, his hand left the gun but the threat was clear and understood.

He demanded to know why I blew my horn at him. I hadn't touched my horn and that's what I told him.

In fact, I didn't even hear a horn. My music was up. I didn't turn it down until he exited his vehicle.

I asked him why he's scaring me with his gun. Then, I showed him my cellphone and told him I'm calling 911. He left.

Sadly, my efforts did me zero good. The district attorney's office declined to prosecute Mr. Gunslinger, because the incident did not reach the level to be considered assault. When the investigator called to tell me, I was shocked. Apparently, the law falls on the side of gun owners and not unarmed people.

If I had a gun and felt that same fear (I shook for hours and had two panic attacks), that incident could have ended badly. He was old enough to have children. That could have been a terrible Christmas for them. He really needs to understand that his actions could someday get him killed, but I guess he's on his own. According to the law, so am I and so are you.

Incident two was about a week and a half ago. A driver ran a red light at a busy intersection of Red Road and Highway 705 and came within inches of hitting my driver's side. Drivers to his left and right had stopped. He did not. After he slammed on his brakes, he was either yelling at me or the woman with him. One of us should have smacked him.

Incident three was a few days ago. I topped one of the first hills on Viola Road to find a car coming at me. The driver was passing a vehicle on a hill and crossed a double yellow line. I swerved just in time to avoid having a head-on collision.

Three driving incidents in three weeks. I'm feeling like a target for terrible drivers. My nerves can't take much more.

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