

Standard online reader survey



Q: How much do you typically get from the IRS on your tax returns?

- Under \$1,000 57%
- From \$1,000 to \$2,000 13%
- From \$2,000 to \$3,000 14%
- Over \$3,000 16%

EDITORIAL

U.S. government can't outlaw mental illness

Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control advocacy group, had recorded 18 school shootings on its website for the first 45 days of 2018. That puts the United States on pace for 145.8 school shootings for the year.

Just think, we only have 127 more to go.

Seventeen student deaths on Valentine's Day at a high school in Parkland, Fla., is the latest mass shooting gripping America. That's assuming another mass shooting didn't take place after press time.

In these tragedies, assault rifles are so often to blame. But instead of outlawing these weapons, our elected officials look to place the blame everywhere else.

Tweeted President Donald Trump on Thursday, "So many signs that the Florida shooter was mentally disturbed, even expelled from school for bad and erratic behavior. Neighbors and classmates knew he was a big problem. Must always report such instances to authorities, again and again!"

The problem with this stance is there are always going to be mentally unstable people. The government can't pass a law to make people think clearly.

There are always going to be people with anger issues. There are always going to be people who are fired at work. There are always going to be people having trouble at home. There are always going to be people on medication.

The U.S. government

can't pass a law to prevent mental illness.

But Congress is fully capable of outlawing assault rifles and bringing an end to some of this senseless violence.

The Gun Violence Archive, which tracks reports of mass shootings (defined as incidents where four or more people are shot, not including the shooter) reports there have been 30 mass shootings so far in 2018. Schools have been some of the deadliest sites for shootings over the years.

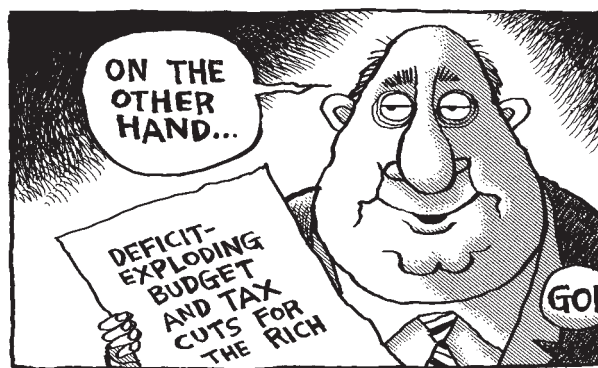
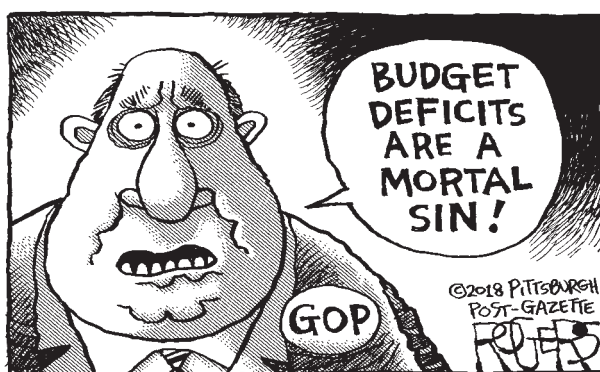
The third deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history was at Virginia Tech University in 2007, when 32 people were killed. The Sandy Hook Elementary shooting, which is tied for the fourth-highest casualty shooting, led to 26 deaths.

Based on the school calendar, which requires students to attend 180 days in Tennessee, our country is on pace for a school shooting 4 out of every 5 days of school.

It's uplifting to believe in the power of prayer and remember the 17 families who have just lost teens. But the power of prayer won't ban the assault rifles responsible for so many of these tragedies.

It would be nice to think grown adults elected to serve the best interest of our nation would not sit back and watch as Americans are slaughtered with assault rifles.

But they have watched and done nothing to stop it thus far.



The real women's march

Tamika Mallory, an African-American who leads the national Women's March, declared at a rally in Las Vegas last month: "Stand up for me, white women ... You say you want to be my friend? I don't want to hear it from your mouth. I want to see it when you go to the polls at the mid-term elections."

Mallory was identifying a key question for those midterms next November: How many white women who supported President Trump in 2016 will abandon him this year and back Democratic congressional candidates? The answer could well determine who controls Capitol Hill for the rest of Trump's term.

The early signs are encouraging for Democrats, who need a net gain of 24 House seats and two Senate seats to win majorities in those chambers. The latest *Washington Post* / ABC News poll asked voters which party's candidate they're likely to support in the fall, and Democrats held a 12-point edge.

Women favored Democrats by 26 points in the poll, 57 to 31 — exactly double the margin Hillary Clinton ran up among female voters in 2016. The shift is fueled almost entirely by white women, who backed Trump by 9 points, 52 to 43, but now favor Democrats by 12 points.

"Trump's first-year overall job approval rating was the lowest of any U.S. president in Gallup's polling history, and his support among women was particularly low," writes Gallup's Megan Brennan. "During his first year in office, Trump did little to help himself with women."

That's not entirely true. Women vote on many different issues, and good economic news will certainly

help Team Trump. But doubts about the president's character and temperament, which dogged him during the campaign, have not gone away.

As Brennan writes, "Allegations of past sexual misconduct, including a videotape in which he spoke of women in vulgar terms that erupted in the final weeks of the campaign, continued to follow him."

Trump aggravated his problem by sympathizing with a long string of powerful men who were also accused of "sexual misconduct," from conservative media stars Roger Ailes and

Bill O'Reilly to Roy Moore, the Republican Senate candidate in Alabama. Now his defense of staff secretary Rob Porter, accused of domestic violence by two

ex-wives, has highlighted the issue — and his woeful lack of judgment.

Republican strategist Katie Packer Beeson tells Time that Trump's actions and statements have "disillusioned many Republican women and caused them to ask themselves whether or not there is a place for them in the 2018 GOP."

Steve Bannon, Trump's former adviser, made a similar point to journalist Joshua Green: "You watch. The time has come. Women are gonna take charge of society. And they couldn't juxtapose a better villain than Trump."

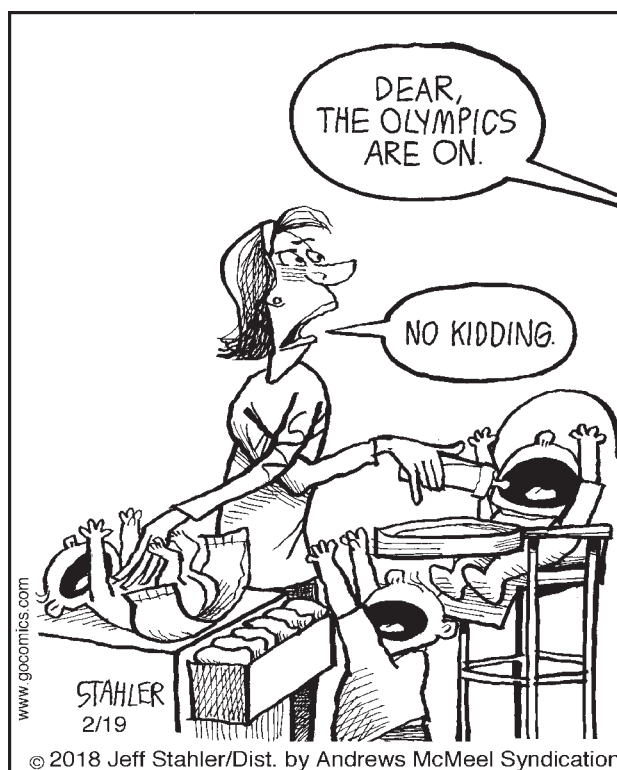
All this energy won't matter much if women don't listen to Tamika Mallory and actually vote. The complacency that helped sink Clinton is a real danger. As Paulette Rappa, director of a nonprofit that helps prisoners re-enter society, told *USA Today*: "The real march is on Election Day."

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COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE ROBERTS



In the world of "woke" Twitter, House Majority Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana is a white-supremacist, fundamentalist, homophobic NRA lackey who has tested God's patience by opposing gun control.

Comedy writer Marcella Arguello was blunt, responding to breaking news when Scalise was seriously wounded in an attack on the GOP baseball team last summer. She tweeted that if a few old "conservative white men have to die in order to get the gun control issue discussed then I'm willing to take that risk." She later deleted the tweet.

The mood could not have been more different at the recent National Prayer Breakfast, when Rep. Cedric Richmond of New Orleans offered an affectionate introduction before Scalise — still on crutches — rose to speak.

People keep asking, said Richmond, how they can be such close friends. One leads the Congressional Black Caucus. The other once led the conservative House Republican Study Committee. They disagree, Richmond conceded, on about "80 percent" of the issues facing America.

The key, he said, is to understand that faith can transcend politics.

"We don't differ on the end goals — helping the needy and protecting our citizens and caring for our elders," said Richmond. "We don't disagree on where we want to end up. Most times, we disagree on how to get there. ..."

"Faith allows us to put purpose first. We put purpose over politics, we put purpose over profit, because at the end of the day we know that we're

here on Earth to fulfill a purpose."

The two men met in the Louisiana House of Representatives and came together, from opposite sides of the aisle, to help their state recover from hurricanes Katrina and Rita. To this day, said Richmond, they are united in the belief that "we are all created in the likeness of God, no matter what country, no matter what state, no matter what city, no matter what zip code, no matter what block."

This year's prayer breakfast offered a break from the acidic D.C. mood, a time to give thanks for a kill shot that deflected off a chain fence at the baseball diamond, as well as the timely presence of an Ohio congressman with surgery experience.

Richmond and Scalise praised the wounded Capitol Police officers who stopped a massacre.

Ever since he was wounded, Scalise said he has felt supported by the prayers of people he has met in chance encounters, as well as those he hasn't met face to face. These encounters have affected his recovery and his work on Capitol Hill.

On the first day he was healthy enough to return to Mass, the Catholic congressman said he flipped through the pew missalette in order to find the Psalm for June 14 — the day he was shot. It was Psalm 27, and Scalise read key phrases to the prayer breakfast crowd: "The Lord is my light and salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, whom should I dread? When those who do evil draw near, they stumble and fall."

Terry Mattingly is the editor of *GetReligion.org*. He lives in Oak Ridge.



ON RELIGION

TERRY MATTINGLY



THE SCOOP

JAMES CLARK

Election ride is about to begin

The field is set and a wild ride appears to be in store as we barrel toward the county elections in August.

For anyone who has ever wanted new leadership in government, for anyone who has ever clamored for change, now is the time to seize that opportunity.

The election ballot has been set and the biggest thing I notice is the high level of interest in serving on the Warren County Commission. There are 50 candidates running for 24 seats, making contested races all across the county except for the 6th District.

Three districts have five candidates running for office, while the 10th District has seven candidates who have qualified. Looking back at the 10th District race four years ago, there were 878 votes cast for county commissioners. Depending on how the votes are distributed this time, the two winning candidates might just need 150 votes.

When looking at the countywide race for sheriff, seven candidates have qualified. After the Democratic Primary eliminates one, there will be six in the General Election.

Looking at the totals four years ago, there were 8,149 votes cast in the 2014 race for sheriff. Divided evenly by six, that's 1,358 votes.

Considering some candidates will get over that amount, and some under than amount, we're realistically looking at 2,000 votes as enough to be elected sheriff.

The race for county executive just got more interesting with the addition of two candidates, Ray Hixson and Allie Hyatt, qualifying to run. They join political veterans Terry Bell and Jimmy Haley on the ballot.

As mayor of McMinnville, we know Haley is extremely popular in the city, but is that popularity spread throughout the county? We know Bell would never lose an election on his home turf of Midway, but will he be able to capture the city vote? And how much will Hyatt and Hixson impact the race, or could one of them win it?

These are all questions I'm anxious to have answered as the campaign trail beats a path toward Election Day in August.


The only thing I don't like about this election field is two candidates are running without opposition. Road Superintendent Levie Glenn and County Court Clerk Lesa Scott both get free rides for four more years of office.

This is not to suggest I don't like Levie and Lesa, or think they do a sub-par job. On the contrary, I think they are both qualified and efficient and they do their jobs well from my experience in dealing with them.

My contention is everyone needs to be held accountable, whether they're doing a spectacular job or a lousy one. There's no way to hold an elected official accountable if they automatically get four more years without anyone running against them. That's my only complaint from the 2018 field.

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