

Standard online reader survey



Q: Do you think starting trade wars with China, the Europe Union, Canada and Mexico will benefit the United States economy?

YES or NO

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Skipping the straw can help environment

Kudos to local restaurants, schools and environmental groups taking part in the national Skip the Straw campaign, working to make a small but meaningful difference.

We were heartened to see restaurants going to straws on request only.

Students at Main Street School in Exeter have taken on the cause by educating and encouraging their community to go strawless and at Rye Elementary School. The school went straw-free for an entire month to show just how easy it is to give them up.

Environmental groups like Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation, Plastic Free 603 and Sustainable Seacoast deserve credit for spreading this campaign locally, educating the public about the impact plastic straws have on animals and oceans.

The anti-straw campaign has been around for more than a decade. It picked up momentum after a 2015 YouTube video went viral showing a marine biologist using a tool to pull a straw that got stuck in the nose of a sea turtle.

The painful to watch 8-minute video captures the turtle squealing in pain as the straw is pulled from its bloody nostril.

Portsmouth Herald New Hampshire

Plastic, in general, is a cause for concern as it does not easily degrade. The majority of plastics end up in a landfill or the ocean.

According to a study published in the journal Science, 8 million metric tons (1 metric ton equals 2,205 pounds) of plastic ended up in the world's oceans in 2010. A disputed 2015 study stated if nothing is done, plastic will outweigh all the fish in the oceans by 2050.

Why target just straws? That is the brilliance of the campaign. Straws are unnecessary because you don't need one to consume a beverage. It's a product you can easily live without.

Jen Kennedy, CEO of the Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation, says the small slender plastic tube you use "for 20 minutes will last forever in the environment."

According to OneLessStraw campaign, each year 100,000 marine animals and more than 1 million sea birds die from ingesting plastic.

Support restaurants doing their part in helping out the environment and do your part by choosing to Skip the Straw.



Dems set to derail Trump pick

As President Trump ponders his next pick for Supreme Court Justice, Senate Democrats are determined to derail any nominee he chooses to replace retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy.

The GOP Senate majority is already a razor-thin 51-49 (47 Democrats and 2 independents who caucus with them). Hence, the Democrats' strategy is twofold: first, to delay any Senate confirmation vote on any Trump SCOTUS nominee until after the November mid-term elections. This goal rests on the hope Democrats will regain their Senate majority, and hold the balance of power to block Trump's pick, if they can stall the vote until the new Senate convenes in January 2019.

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking member Dianne Feinstein and other left-leaning Senate Democrats are arguing "Republicans set a new standard" in 2016 that the Senate should never consider any Supreme Court nominee in any election year. Their argument is flawed because 2016 was a presidential election year and 2018 is a mid-term election year.

In 2016, the Senate followed the earlier counsel of former Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Joe Biden. On June 25, 1992, Biden asserted that, if a Supreme Court vacancy occurred, the "Senate Judiciary Committee should seriously consider not scheduling confirmation hearings on the nomination until after the political campaign season is over."

Using the same logic, Biden also refused to hold hearings for "more

than 50 of George H.W. Bush's judicial nominees. So, what made sense in 1992, a presidential election year, also made sense in 2016, another presidential election year. Not so in 2018.

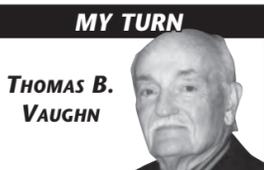
Meanwhile, the second prong of the Democrats' strategy is to rally their Senate ranks in unified opposition to Trump's pick, regardless of credentials, before they even know who he or she is. It, too, is flawed because the Constitution grants the president, not the Senate, the power to nominate and appoint justices to the Supreme Court. Sure, the Senate has an "Advice and Consent" role to

play, as intended by the Constitution, to be a check on the president's appointment power. However, it was never meant to be a separate or

sole Senate power to pick judges on its own. The president's power is to appoint only those nominees who have received the Senate's consent. Thus, he has no power, explicit or implicit, to appoint any nominee not confirmed by the Senate. For example, in 1969, 1970, and 1987, the Senate defeated the Supreme Court nominations of, respectively, Clement Haynsworth, G. Harrold Carswell, and Robert Bork.

Finally, the so-called "standard" that Schumer, Feinstein, and other Democrats are touting to oppose Trump's nominee "that the Senate should never confirm any Supreme Court nominee in any election year" is actually the new one, devised by Democrats, not Republicans.

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THOMAS B. VAUGHN

MY TURN

A guide to perfect Christianity

When newcomers arrive at a megachurch these days, they face an obstacle course of challenges – from deciding how much to tip the parking-lot guy to tricking their normal children into looking like cherubs.

Finally, loaded with visitor swag – donuts, coffee, the official church water bottle, snappy Christian T-shirts, the pastor's new book – they head into the flashy auditorium. Now what? The bottom line: Look spiritual.

"On the powerful choruses, lift your hands high with abandon. On the subtler verses, tone it down a touch," advises the snarky narrator in the new book "How to Be a Perfect Christian," by the duo behind the Babylon Bee, a Christian satire website.

The book's goal isn't to mock Christianity, but to help believers understand many churches have evolved into self-help supermarkets defined by trends in mass culture, said Bee founder Adam Ford. Often, faith turns into another "niche" product.

Said Ford, "Get a famous pastor with a lot of Twitter followers, host the most carnival-like church services, make sure everyone is as comfortable and entertained as possible, preach a Zig Zigar-style message, and you'll get more people to come to your church. Like churches are circus franchises or something, with the ultimate goal being more butts in seats."

Ford wanted to become a pastor, but veered into the more private world of digital publishing (Adam4d.com). He founded the Bee in 2016 and recently sold the site, in part because of the hot spotlight caused by its success and a run-in with Facebook over content. Lead writer Kyle Mann is now the editor and publisher, and also co-wrote "How to Be a Perfect

Christian."

The subtitle sums up the format: "Your Comprehensive Guide to Flawless Spiritual Living." Ford and Mann offer spiritual shortcuts, such as:

– Biblical warnings against spiritual pride were written before the internet. Today, Christians with social-media skills "were found to be 428 times holier than those who rarely ... posted pictures of themselves next to an open Bible and a hot cup of coffee."

– Concerning prayer: "Ninety percent of any good prayer is comprised of the three words 'just,' 'Father' and 'God.'"

– "Doing life together" is a crucial modern Christian concept. This means doing whatever interests you – but during "fellowship" time with church friends. "If done with non-Christians, you can call it evangelism and get even more spiritual credit! Awesome!"

– "Never let anyone get close enough to your life to see what a mess it is below the surface."

This is satire, but written by believers who are observing church life from the inside. Ford, for example, remains active in what he called a "Bible-believing" Baptist church outside Detroit.

The big idea is that authentic faith is timeless, he said.

"Many people think that ... simply plugging into a cultural program results in one being born again," he said. This book "pushes back against this idea using humor, challenging readers to ask themselves why they do some of the things that they do."

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