

Standard online reader survey



Q: Do you think election meddling is a major concern?

YES 56 percent
NO 44 percent

GUEST EDITORIAL

Don't trample speech in debate over 3D guns

The debate over 3D-printed guns blew up last week. Many people rightly see this issue as being about the Second Amendment right to bear arms. It's also about the First Amendment and free speech.

The plans for a basic 3D-printed gun have been around for a couple of years, but the federal government prohibited online publication. Texas-based Defense Distributed challenged that policy in court. The case dragged on for a couple of years until the Trump administration recently settled. Online publication started Aug. 1.

That got people's attention. Americans would quickly fall victim to a rash of plastic gun violence, gun control advocates said. The weapons are untraceable, can pass through a metal detector, don't have a serial number and can be made by felons.

Everything those advocates say is true. Allowing people to make unregulated 3D-printed plastic guns will create serious challenges. However, stifling free speech can't get lost in the mix.

Anyone who really wants a gun without a background check is far more likely to get it at a gun show or illegally on the streets. Real guns are more effective and cheaper than

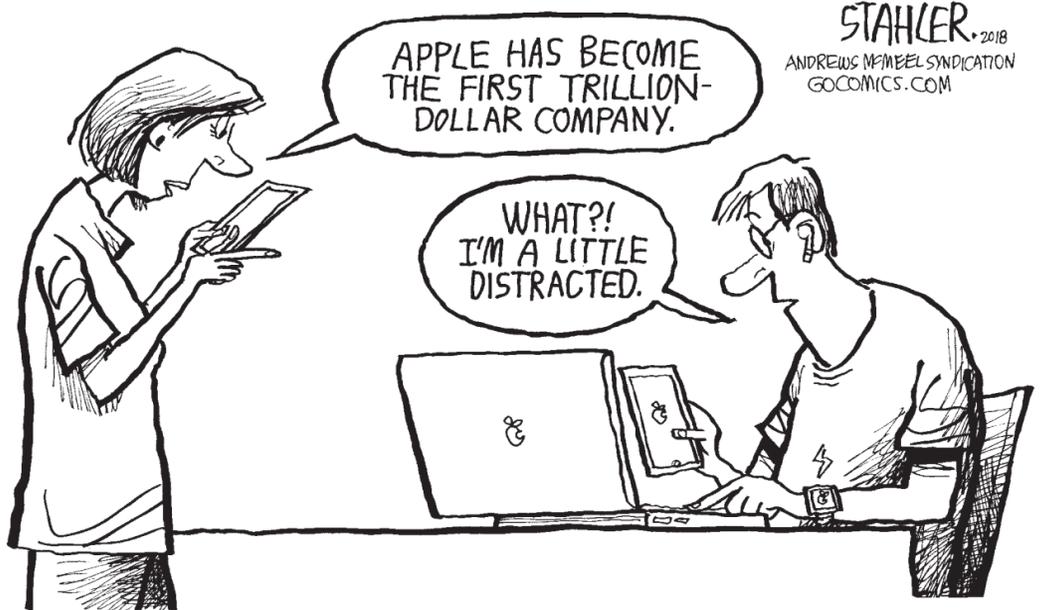
Miami Herald

plastic ones that are good for a handful of shots at best and require a 3D printer that costs thousands of dollars. The government must tread carefully when it limits speech.

The plans for a gun, in and of themselves, make no threat and cause no harm. The danger lies in what people might do with the plans. But free speech does not end because publication of an idea creates a potential hazard. If it did, too many important ideas would be silenced.

Anyone can find plans for bombs and instructions on how to make drugs online. Such documents circulated even before the internet. Government does not prohibit that speech, but it does prohibit bombs and drugs. Laws target the act, not the words.

If 3D-printed guns are untraceable "ghost guns," require a state-issued serial number and a piece of metal, as California does, and a gunsmith license, as New York is considering. Congress and state legislatures are not powerless. They can mitigate, though probably not entirely prevent, the danger of 3D-printed guns without trampling the First Amendment.



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Terrified, traumatized, tearful

Before the story fully fades from view, it's important to remember one of the most shameful episodes in a shameful presidency: the Trump administration's policy of "zero tolerance" toward illegal immigrants that separated more than 2,500 children from their parents.

Public outcries and legal challenges forced Trump to rescind the policy in June, but hundreds of children remain in government custody -- "terrified, traumatized, tearful" reminders, as the *Washington Post* put it, of an administration that has been both colossally inept and cruelly immoral.

Officials were clearly and directly warned that their policy would divide families and cause permanent psychological damage to the abandoned children. And yet they went ahead anyway.

But it's important to remember this period for another reason. It demonstrates that checks and balances still exist, that the judicial system remains a separate and vital branch of government capable of deterring this president's worst impulses. Civil rights lawyers sued the administration, and a courageous federal judge, appointed by a Republican president, took their complaints seriously and ordered families be reunited.

Judge Dana Sabraw ruled that the government's policy "arbitrarily tears at the sacred bond between parent and child." It was, he wrote in June, "brutal, offensive, and fails to comport with traditional notions of fair play and decency."

Last week, Sabraw again berated the government when it argued that civil rights organizations should be

responsible for tracking down the parents of the children still held in detention. "This responsibility, of course, is 100 percent on the government," the judge declared. "The government has the sole burden and responsibility and obligation to make this happen."

The Trump administration "is at fault for losing several hundred parents" during its anti-immigrant crusade, Sabraw continued. And for every one who isn't found, "there will be a permanently orphaned child" -- a living, lacerated legacy of this president's worst impulses.

Trump's war on immigrants is part of another pattern, as well: his adamant refusal to accept facts he finds inconvenient. Every study shows that immigrants commit fewer crimes than native-born citizens, but he continues to rail against "rapists" and "killers" he claims are pouring across the border to ravage innocent Americans.

Trying to paint a rosy picture of the situation, an official of Immigration and Customs Enforcement described the facilities where some youngsters are detained as "more like a summer camp," with basketball courts and soccer fields. That description is just another absurd comment that ignores the searing truth.

That's why it's so important to remember what Trump has done. The detrimental effects on the children he's harmed are permanent. The detrimental effects on his political reputation should be permanent, as well.

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THE SCOOP
JAMES CLARK

Many voters are only presidential

The piñata that was Election Day last Thursday has left candy all over the floor. As we begin to pick up the pieces and build for the future, here are some government thoughts.

VOTERS TAKE A NAP: I realize there's no greater voter turnout than during a presidential election year, yet I was still surprised only 10,136 Warren County residents voted.

That's way, way down from the 14,023 voters who cast their ballots in November, 2016 for Trump or Hillary. I figured with key races like sheriff and county executive to decide, we could approach presidential numbers, but we ended with 3,887 fewer voters. That's a huge chunk that, for some reason, decided to stay home.

WE'RE ALL RED: Speaking of the 2016 presidential election, you may recall some states were so close the results weren't decided until the next day. In Tennessee, the polls closed at 7 p.m. and the state was called in Mr. Trump's favor around 7:10 p.m. That's how Republican we have become, essentially making us a one-party state.

That trend is continuing with Tennesseans voting more than 2-to-1 in the Republican Primary over the Democratic Primary.

In the governor's race, there were 792,153 votes cast for GOP candidates, while 372,655 were cast for Democrats.

Closer to home in the 43rd District House that includes Warren, White and Grundy counties, there were 9,350 votes cast for Republicans. There were 3,274 for the Democrat.

That ratio holds true in the 47th District that includes Warren and Coffee counties. There were 9,001 who voted Republican and 3,769 who voted Democrat.

What this means is we are electing the Republican of our choice. And, as we've seen in recent years, some bad Republicans have defeated quality Democrats. When we're looking for the best and brightest to lead, this isn't the direction to go.

OUT OF RETIREMENT? Linda Hillis announced her retirement after serving for 22 years as the director of Warren County's Finance Department. From everything I've heard and seen for myself, she did a fantastic job managing the county's \$86 million budget.

So Linda retires and the county looks like it may pay her replacement \$13,000 more. That's just wrong. If I were her, I'd rescind my resignation and ask for the \$13,000 raise.

TIME TO SHUFFLE: The election provided an opportune time for people to put an end to their careers because virtually every department in county government, from the jail to the courthouse, is seeing departures from high-ranking employees.

With keeping the tax rate low a constant emphasis, and with major changes in county leadership, this would be the perfect time for a top-to-bottom evaluation of our county offices.

There were 325 employees on the county payroll as of last month. Instead of hiring replacements for everyone leaving, it would be wise to examine each department to gauge efficiency and shuffle current employees around as needed.

Standard editor James Clark can be reached at 473-2191.



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Own the Bible and read it too

Most of the people who actually celebrate Book Lover's Day celebrate it Aug. 9, with some celebrating the first Saturday of November or some other day.

Book reading is a great hobby for many people, and it is an important one as well. It is considered to be educational, inspiring and even relaxing. Some people read a book at bedtime to help them go to sleep. Some employers actually look for it on resumes for jobs.

According to Guinness World Records, the best-selling book of all times is the Bible, with over 5 billion sold and distributed. Unfortunately, as is the case with many books that have been sold, those who own a copy of the Bible do not necessarily read it from cover to cover, or even on a regular basis.

We are told in the Bible that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, so that the people of God may be complete and equipped for good works."

Over 40 different writers wrote the 66 books of the Bible, and they were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible teaches many truths and the very same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is also available to help us understand them and explain them.

What this means is if we really

and truly want to learn what the Bible teaches, we will invite Jesus into our lives, because when we do so Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit to live within us. One of His many roles is to teach us and remind us of what Jesus taught.

The Bible is also intended to serve as a means for God to reprove people for the wrongs they have done. This is most likely one of the main reasons people often do not read the Bible.

People usually do not like to be reproved by God, or anyone else, for that matter. The Bible does make it very clear what is unacceptable to God and what does not meet with His approval. Another purpose of the Scriptures is correction, and it is quite obvious that in order to be able to correct our behavior, we need to know what we are doing wrong.

Lastly, the Scriptures provide instruction in righteousness, telling us the right kind of behavior that pleases God. If we will concentrate on the right way to live for the Lord, we will often eliminate the wrong behavior.

Jesus is our best example and if we will "follow in His steps" as the Bible says, we will be more likely to please God.

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