

Standard online reader survey



Q: Faced with steel tariffs, do you think Harley-Davidson is justified to move some production overseas?

YES 38 percent
NO 62 percent

GUEST EDITORIAL

Overdose deaths are nationwide epidemic

Fatal aviation disasters are a rare event in the modern age. It would come as a shock to hear of a passenger jet crashing and killing everyone aboard. Now try to imagine it happening today, tomorrow, the next day and the day after. That will give you an idea of the death toll from drug overdoses in the United States.

Last year, according to a preliminary estimate from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 72,000 lives were lost to overdoses. That's 197 people dying every day — more than enough to fill a Boeing 737 passenger jet. It's an increase of more than 6 percent over 2016.

Unlike airline crashes, these tragedies happen one by one, usually out of sight, unnoticed except by family, friends, first responders and emergency room personnel. But the staggering figures represent a crisis of historic proportions. The toll last year is nearly double the number of gun deaths in 2016.

Two-thirds of the deaths involve opioids, including heroin, prescription painkillers and synthetic drugs such as fentanyl. The latter substances play by far the biggest role in the increase. Fentanyl is cheap and about 50 times more potent than heroin.

Reversing the deadly tide is not easy. So far, the effort has been mounted on several fronts. Law enforcement has targeted suppliers, particularly those shipping fentanyl from China and Mexico.

Chicago Tribune

A multitude of lawsuits have been filed against pharmaceutical companies by local and state governments and other parties accusing pharmaceutical companies of marketing these powerful drugs in an irresponsible way. Last week, President Donald Trump called on the Justice Department to consider filing a federal lawsuit too.

This type of litigation may bring about changes in marketing and recover monetary damages. But it won't eliminate dependence on the drugs that are doing so much damage.

The ultimate remedy, though, is to reduce demand by educating doctors and patients about the dangers of over-reliance on opioids, facilitating access to treatment and encouraging drug users to get it.

Vermont has reduced overdose deaths by taking steps to better integrate treatment into primary care.

Governments need to make a priority of expanding access to those who lack health insurance coverage. Last year, a presidential commission reported only 10.6 percent of those who need substance abuse therapy actually get it.

Preventing many or most of these fatalities will not be an easy undertaking. But the chances of success will be much better if our policymakers recognize this epidemic as the national catastrophe it has become.

The subpoena scenario

Two words explain the extraordinary significance of the upcoming fall election. The first is "subpoenas." The second is "women."

If Republicans lose one or even both houses of Congress, the impact on legislation would be fairly small. President Trump would retain his veto and more than enough support to uphold his rejection of objectionable bills.

Still, a Democratic majority by a single vote in either body would profoundly alter the Capitol. The opposition party would suddenly have the power to chair committees, hold hearings, summon witnesses, hire investigators, pose questions, and — perhaps most threatening to the president — demand to see documents he wants to keep private, like his tax returns and loan arrangements with foreign bankers.

The admission by Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, that he conspired with the president to pay off two of Trump's girlfriends, only increases the stakes and the questions.

"When you give somebody a gavel, they can actually hurt you," warned Republican strategist Scott Jennings.

"You dream every day what you would do if you were in the majority," said Rep. Elijah Cummings, ranking Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, to the Post.

Whether those dreams come true depends heavily on women. Democrats have recruited and promoted female candidates in the hope they provide a graphic contrast to the blustery machismo emanating daily from the White House.

According to the Center for

American Women and Politics, 13 Democratic women have won Senate primaries and 154 have been nominated for House seats, including many in the high-visibility races that will decide the majority. In Virginia, for example, women won the Democratic nomination in all four of the most hotly contested districts. Another 10 Democratic women are running for governor.

The gender gap has been a factor in American politics for many years, but it promises to be particularly consequential this cycle. The latest Quinnipiac poll shows Democrats

holding a 9-point edge overall when voters are asked which party they want to control Congress. But men favor Republicans by 1 point, 47 to 46; women prefer Democrats by 17 points, 55 to 38.

Trump insists his presence boosts GOP energy, and he plans to campaign widely this fall, telling the *Wall Street Journal*, "I think the Democrats give up when I turn out."

All evidence contradicts that fantasy. "He's enraging the opposition while simply reinforcing a much smaller base," veteran GOP strategist Karl Rove said on Fox News.

"I'd argue (Trump) could make things worse" for Republicans, said Frank Luntz, another senior party operative, on ABC.

If the Republican nightmare can be summed up in one image, it would be a determined-looking woman with an "I Voted" sticker on her lapel and a subpoena in her hand.

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COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE
ROBERTS



No time to wait for Catholics

Until last week, the predominant attitude of most of the American public about the problems of "predator priests" seemed to be that it was tragic, but limited in scope. A few bad priests in the river of faith, but hardly a tsunami!

But with the stomach-curdling landmark grand jury report from Pennsylvania last week, an entire moral, ethical and legal landscape within the Roman Catholic Church has changed profoundly, inside and outside the gates of Vatican City.

How does one cope with the reality of at least 1,000 victims of sexual abuse by at least 300 priests over eight decades in only this one state alone? How to excuse the \$3 billion paid to keep people silent? How is the sincere Catholic in

Youngstown, or Phoenix, or Chicago able to sleep, thinking about the "father" who injured the back of a young man while sodomizing him?

The report says there are likely thousands more victims. It has all become so very routine.

Pope Francis, a beloved pope but a man now stained by ambivalence, feels "shame and repentance," and rightly criticizes "clericalism," or an "excessive deference to church hierarchy," but where exactly do such words lead?

Because this is no ordinary problem; this is a "Galileo Moment," a moral replay of that other one in the 17th century when the Vatican stopped the great astronomer and physicist Galileo from proving that the Earth revolved about the sun — and almost burned him at the stake.

The Catholic Church has been unable to react with any grace or imagination to the nexus of sexuality

and faith; so let me step away from the "predator priests" question and propose an idea.

Let the Vatican stop telling the rest of the world how, when, where and by what means to procreate — or not to procreate. When it comes to birth control and family planning — and trying to create a humanely developed world — the Catholic Church has been deliberately, and often cynically, holding its flock back for years, preventing any modicum of family planning to those who need it so desperately.

The United Nations states that every year, more than 88 million unintended pregnancies occur in developing countries.

Dark wars caused by overpopulation are spouting up everywhere — from Rwanda in the 1990s

to Syria and Somalia today. The U.N. projects that, with 7.5 billion people crowding Planet Earth today, population will rise to about 10 billion by 2050 and perhaps as high as 16 billion by 2100. We add a billion every 12 to 15 years.

Meanwhile, masses of poor Africans, Asians, Afghans, Bangladeshis, Somalis and myriad others are throwing themselves desperately at the gates of Europe, which is hardly eager — or able — to give them succor or harbor. We are dealing with a worldwide uprising of the new homeless.

And so, it is no longer enough to look the other way when yet another priest victimizes yet another child — or to just not say anything to our Catholic friends or neighbors because we don't want to offend them.

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THE SCOOP

JAMES
CLARK



Two high schools are just a dream

There are certain questions that can be expected at certain times of the year.

As the end of October approaches, it's common to ask, "What are you going to be for Halloween?" When Jan. 1 pops up on the calendar, the question is usually, "What's your New Year's resolution?"

With a new school year under way in Warren County, the question I often hear this time of year is "Why don't we have two high schools?"

Opening-day attendance at WCHS was reported at 1,918 students. It's an enormous school, more than twice the size of any other school in Warren County.

Some people suggest a smaller school would provide a more welcoming atmosphere. Others say two smaller schools would make us more competitive when it comes to sports. I've heard better security and less traffic also mentioned as reasons for two high schools.

While I share the belief two high schools would be better for our community, it's not going to happen. The No. 1 reason why is cost, soaring construction costs. Just look at what's happening around the state.

The Wilson County Commission is in the process of building a new high school in Mt. Juliet with a price tag of \$106.5 million, according to *The Tennessean*.

Shelby County just opened a new high school in Collierville this year that came at a cost of \$94 million, according to the *Commercial Appeal*.

"We're struggling with a \$12 million bond for an addition to our jail and improvements to West and Bobby Ray," said Director of Schools Bobby Cox. "If we're struggling with \$12 million, I'd say \$90 million is out of the question."

I asked Bobby if it would be feasible to shuffle around our existing students in a way to create two high schools without an additional building project. He said it would not.

The only other school which would be suitable to use as a second high school would be WCMS. If that were done, the School Board would have to find a place for 808 students and there would be no way for other schools to absorb that much of an enrollment increase.

As for curriculum, WCHS has made great strides in offering first-rate programs in nursing, welding, Mechatronics, and other fields. Bobby points out there would be no way to divide that equipment between two high schools to make the same programs available to students at two different sites.

"I've had folks talk to me about two high schools, but when you get into a conversation about the details, you see how much more there is to it," said Bobby. "It's a good discussion, but a second high school would be a big-ticket item for sure."

Talk of having two high schools in Warren County might just be a case where the grass always seems greener on the other side of the hill. We want what we don't have.

If the new high school in Mt. Juliet is any indication, there are 106.5 million reasons why we won't be getting a new high school in Warren County any time soon.

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