

Standard online reader survey



Q: Do you think the county should proceed with jail expansion considering the bid is \$1.8M over budget?

YES 36 percent
NO 64 percent

GUEST EDITORIAL

Government-controlled search engines awful idea

President Trump fired off an angry Twitter broadside against Google before the sun rose Tuesday, accusing the search company of skewing its results in favor of "fake news" outlets at the expense of conservative ones. Relying on reporting from the right-of-center PJ Media site, Trump asserted that Google had "rigged" its search results to "shut out" stories about him from conservative and "fair media" outlets.

He went on to broaden his accusation: "Google & others are suppressing voices of Conservatives and hiding information and news that is good. They are controlling what we can & cannot see. This is a very serious situation—will be addressed!"

It doesn't take much of a look to recognize what's going on here. Famously thin-skinned, Trump doesn't like the barrage of criticism he's getting online, much of it delivered in the form of news and opinion pieces from the country's mainstream media. So in addition to trying to discredit those outlets as "fake news," he's now trying to sow distrust in the search engine that leads people to them — and, worse yet, threatening to take action against them.

For its part, Google insists its only goal is to deliver relevant search results, and that its engineers "never rank search results to manipulate politi-

Los Angeles Times

cal sentiment." The company won't say exactly how its continually updated search technology does work, however — that's a closely guarded trade secret.

Still, there's an easy way to judge whether Google has, in fact, cleverly rigged its search engine to elevate bad news about the president over the hosannas of a grateful nation. Search for Trump news on another site — Microsoft's Bing, say, or DuckDuckGo — and compare the results with Google's. There will be differences on the margins, but the thrust will be the same. Most of the results will come from mainstream news outlets with large audiences.

Some conservatives are calling on the government to use antitrust law against Google and other tech giants that dominate their markets. But Trump seems to be calling for something different: Using the power of government to change how Google's technology works.

Such a big-government solution, turning Washington into a manipulator of search results, would be worse than the supposed problem it purports to solve. The president should stop Googling himself and pay more attention to the duties of his office.

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE RECENT MASS SHOOTING?

WHICH ONE?

Truth is truth; lies are lies

A small but significant line was crossed recently when the *Washington Post's* fact-checker, Glenn Kessler, called President Trump a liar for the first time.

He's cited the president for about 4,300 "false or misleading claims" since the inauguration, but as Kessler notes, "In many of those cases, it's not possible to tell whether Trump was intentionally fibbing or simply careless or wrong."

That all changed, writes Kessler, when the president's lawyer Michael Cohen pled guilty in federal court and provided "indisputable evidence that Trump lied" about his role in silencing two former girlfriends during the 2016 campaign.

"There's no question Trump lied — repeatedly, intentionally, over more than a year, enlisting top aides and advisers to further the deception," concluded the fact-checker.

Some ardent anti-Trumpers will tell Kessler, "What took you so long?" After all, as presidential historian Douglas Brinkley told the *Toronto Star*, "We've had presidents that have lied or misled the country, but we've never had a serial liar before. And that's what we're dealing with here."

Trump's incessant attacks on the media as the "enemy of the people" are deliberately designed to undercut the ability of fact-checkers like Kessler to correct and counter the president. And those attacks work. Gallup reports 62 percent of Americans think the news they get is "biased."

CBS correspondent Lesley Stahl recalls asking Trump why he assails the press so vociferously: "And he said, 'You want to know why I do it?"

I do it to discredit you all and demean you all so that when you write negative stories about me, no one will believe you."

What makes Trump even more dangerous is he's a very good liar. He never corrects himself, never apologizes, and keeps repeating the same fabrications over and over again. TV reporter Billy Bush recounts this off-camera conversation with Trump: "He says, 'Billy, look, look, you just tell them and they believe it. That's it, you just tell them and they believe it. They just do.'"

Scientists who study human cognition know Trump is on to something. Writing in *Politico*, Maria Konnikova summarizes the research in the field: "When we are in an environment headed by someone who lies so often, something frightening happens: We stop reacting to the liar as a liar. His lying becomes normalized. We might even become likely to lie ourselves."

Wait, it gets worse. "Here's the really bad news for all those fact-checkers and publications hoping to counter Trump's false claims," she writes. "Repetition of any kind, even to refute the statement in question ... perversely reinforces the very claim it means to debunk."

So should folks like Kessler and Baron give up? Should they abandon their mission of telling the truth?

Absolutely not. But Giuliani is wrong. Truth is truth. Facts are facts. Lies are lies. And the public needs and deserves journalists who will help them understand that.

Steve and Cokie Roberts can be contacted by email at stevecokie@gmail.com.

COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE
ROBERTS



Embracing a new beginning

At this time of year, public schools are back in full swing, as students and teachers have the opportunity for a new beginning.

Some students begin attending a new school, learning under a new teacher and a new principal. It remains to be seen how much can be learned this year, and how much students will mature and grow from their new knowledge.

Thousands of years ago, according to Genesis 1, our earth was "without form and void." So God created the world and everything in it, with His greatest creation being Adam and Eve.

God placed them in the Garden of Eden, and gave them one single, simple rule to not touch or eat of the tree in the middle of the garden. All was going well until one day the devil came to the garden and succeeded in deceiving Eve into eating fruit from the forbidden tree.

The devil twisted what God had said, and made false promises, a tactic he still uses today, and a reason we need to read and study the Bible so that we know what God really says.

The writers of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, who is more than able to teach us its truths, and explain those truths to us. As a result of Adam and Eve breaking God's rule, they lost the privilege of living in the garden, and living from the food God provided for them on the other trees.

There were many other trees

they could have touched, and from which they could have eaten, so there was no reason for them to eat of the forbidden tree.

God drove them out of the garden, and they lost a part of what made them what they were in the first place.

Genesis 2:7 says that "God formed man out of the dust of the earth, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." That's a far greater achievement than per-

forming mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to bring someone back to life.

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, their living soul became a dying soul. God never wanted this

to happen, but He had a plan to remedy the situation.

He sent His only begotten son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world, and to provide forgiveness for those sins. This also made possible the restoring of our dying souls and to give us a new beginning.

If we have not asked God to forgive our sins, we need to do so immediately, to prevent our dying souls from dying both completely and permanently.

Larry R. Steffee is pastor of the Center Hill Brethren In Christ Church on Miller Road in Smithville. Everyone is welcome to attend. For information, email lrsteffee@yahoo.com.

THE SCOOP

JAMES
CLARK



Change awaits, but how much?

Jimmy Haley has taken his oath of office as Warren County Executive. In a matter of hours, Haley is expected to submit his resignation and no longer be mayor of McMinnville.

Feel free to burst into tears, make a toast, go into denial, or display the emotion of your choice.

Haley's departure after a six-year reign means Ben Newman will be our new mayor, the first of what could be many changes on the horizon for city government.

With an open seat on the city board, officials could opt to fill that seat immediately, or shift into low gear and take their time. I'm guessing there won't be a mad rush.

Beyond that appointment, we have city elections just two months away. How many voters will show up for a third time in 2018?

For those who do, there are three McMinnville alderman seats on the Nov. 6 ballot and all three incumbents, Steve Harvey, Kyle Chastain, and Everett Brock, are seeking re-election.

Local voters were in the mood for change when electing Warren County Commissioners earlier this month. Will there still be that same ambience in November?

It's hard to really know how city voters were feeling two years ago because there were only four candidates running for three alderman seats in 2016. That included all three incumbents so we knew going in there would be minimal change.

This year will be much different as there are seven candidates running for three seats. That means there's a chance for three new board members, which is what happened in 2014 when these three were elected from a field of eight.

To borrow a phrase from national politics, McMinnville residents have to ask are we better off now than we were four years ago? Is there a bigger chicken in every pot?

We know city finances have never been better. That's in large part because: 1) the city's successful sales tax lawsuit against the county, 2) revenue from wine and liquor, and 3) a property tax rate that's among the highest of any municipality in the state.

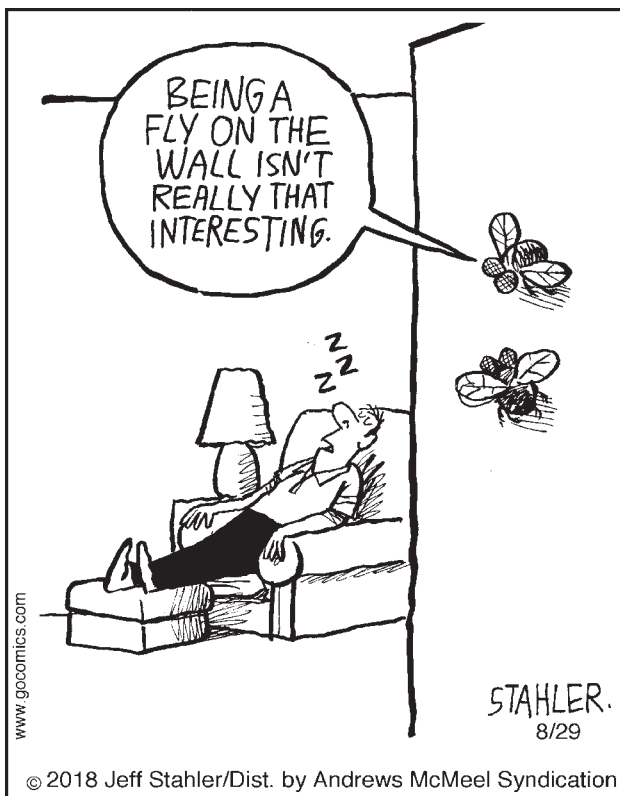
We know the new skate park is a radical addition to our recreational offerings. As someone who jogs by the skate park at night, I can say it's being well-used and enjoyed. Great move!

The Park Theater opened in May 2015 and is an absolute glowing star on McMinnville's landscape. This group up for re-election wasn't responsible for funding the \$2 million renovation project, but it has done a solid job of molding the venue into a centerpiece of our community.

As for the blue elephant in the room, in this case the Blue Building, it has continued to deteriorate and sit vacant for another four years. Another note, it's been four years and the push for an indoor pool continues to be smothered by a pillow. Yet the city wants to expand the Civic Center. I don't understand this.

All that said, we have the makings of an intriguing city election in just over two months. I think there will be change. I just don't know how much.

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