

## Standard online reader survey



**Q: The Warren County Fair has arrived! How many times do you plan to attend the fair this week?**

- 1 time 27%
- 2-4 times 20%
- Every single day 6%
- Not at all 47%

## GUEST EDITORIAL

## People are turning away from Facebook

There are some interesting facts to be found in a new Pew Research Center survey about Facebook.

The survey results were released this month. It shows a lot of people who use Facebook are taking a second look at how they do so. More than half say they have adjusted their privacy settings in the last year. More than 40 percent have taken a break from checking the platform for several weeks or more. About 25 percent said they deleted the Facebook app from their cellphone, according to the Pew Research Center.

We've written about this issue before but we think it is an important one — when it comes to media, things feel, to us, like they are changing yet again, and this is particularly true about social media.

We know media changes all the time. There is a new technology, a new website, a new gadget, a new app. It is a part of our lives that morphs constantly, driven mostly by advances in technology. It is a dizzying task to try to keep up with it all. What is dominant today will likely not be dominant in the future. But the changes in how people are viewing and using Facebook seem to be more than just a short-lived trend to us.

The survey findings listed above highlight a scientific approach to gathering peoples' opinions. This scientific approach demonstrates people are more wary of social media platforms like Facebook, and it

**Daily Independent  
Ashland, Ky.**

also shows a significant chunk of people are using it less. We also have our own observations that are, admittedly, very unscientific, so take it for what it's worth, but our thoughts are:

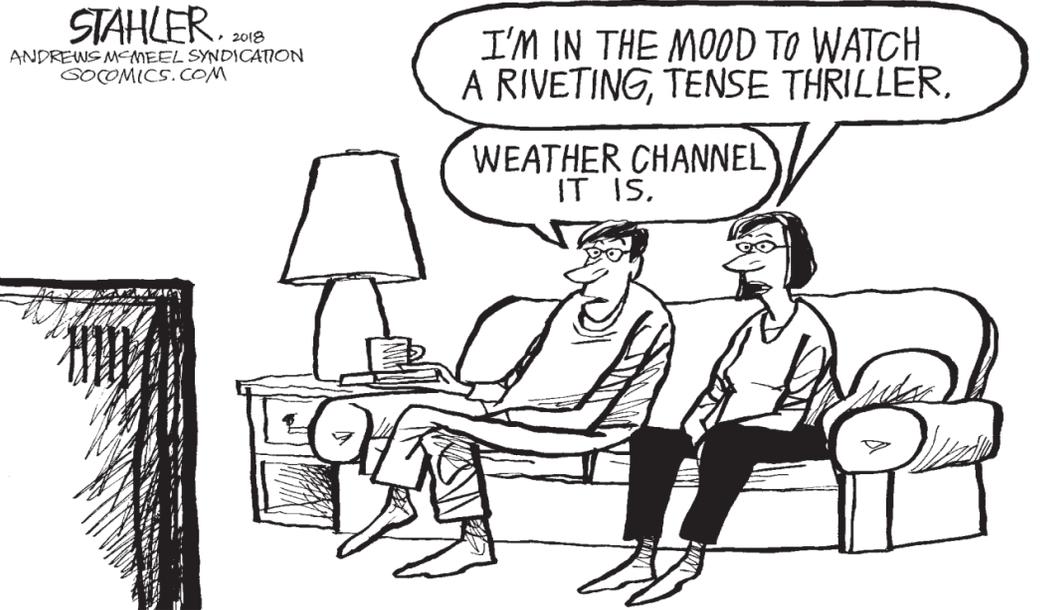
— People are beyond fatigued by the caustic, often politically divisive content on social media, with the heart of it found on Facebook. American politics are now so exhausting given our stark divides. To go on social media and to be preached to by someone you might see once a year about why and how your views are right or wrong is only making it worse.

— The privacy violations are alarming. When you combine the political fatigue with concerns about privacy, Facebook is facing a double whammy.

— People are starving for thoughtful, meaningful, local content like what you find in the local paper or on the local news. What you find in Facebook posts, however, when it comes to local information are rants, half truths or in the worst case scenario falsehoods.

There are ebbs and tides in everything. Politics. Societal trends. Media. We would like to think that, just perhaps, society is moving back to more meaningful, respectful communications. We believe that those turning away from social media are doing so for this very reason.

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## Anonymity creates unease

Should the *New York Times* have published an anonymous op-ed column that describes a White House in chaos and a "quiet resistance movement within the administration" aimed at containing President Trump's worst impulses?

The column has provoked a fierce debate in many quarters, including the classroom at George Washington University where Steve teaches a course in journalistic ethics. President Trump has accused the author of "TREASON" and called for a Justice Department investigation.

The public is conflicted and confused. A Quinnipiac poll found 55 percent believe the writer's allegations. And yet 51 percent say it was "the wrong thing" to publish those charges anonymously.

A similar debate is simmering over the new book by Bob Woodward, who depends heavily on confidential sources to draw a damaging picture of a dangerously deranged president. Even defenders of Woodward and the *Times* concede that using unnamed sources is never an optimal solution, and always a risk. You're asking the public to trust you while withholding key information they deserve to know and usually receive.

Here's the first test that must be met in justifying those risks: Is the story truly significant?

The second test is whether the information could have been obtained in another way, and the paper insists that was not possible. Trump demands such total loyalty, goes this argument, that no internal critic could have spoken openly and survived. As James Dao, the *Times* editor who commissioned the piece, put it, anonymity "was necessary to protect the author from reprisal, and the concern has been borne out by the president's reac-

tion to the essay."

The third test is making certain the anonymous source is a credible authority who knows what he or she is talking about. Dao said he talked to the author directly, did "some background checking," and received a recommendation from a "trusted intermediary."

Critics were not persuaded, calling the essay old news that broke no new ground. "The fact that senior administration officials have been trying to block Mr. Trump's uninformed policy impulses, and mute his self-destructive anger and narcissism, has been reported hundreds of times," argues a *Wall Street Journal* editorial.

Others fear that the column will backfire, fueling even more of that anger and narcissism from Trump. As conservative columnist David Frum wrote in *The Atlantic*, "He'll grow more defiant, more reckless, more anti-constitutional and more dangerous ... Things will be worse after this article. They will be worse because of this article."

An especially damaging criticism of the op-ed is voiced by Woodward, who says the *Times* description of the author as a "senior administration official" is "too vague" and "does not meet the standards" of authority and credibility he uses in his own book.

This is a close call with no clear answer. Cokie shares Woodward's reservation the *Times* did not sufficiently identify or authenticate the author. Steve agrees with Sullivan the "newsworthiness" of the column outweighs its drawbacks.

The public will have to make its own judgment — about the validity of the *Times* column and the behavior of a president the writer finds so fundamentally flawed.

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COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE  
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## THE SCOOP

JAMES  
CLARK



## County brimming with criminals

I was talking to a gentleman on the phone the other day who insists were are tossing too many people in jail in Warren County.

To hear this guy tell it, our judges are handing out hard time for jaywalking. They've never heard of a slap on the wrist, instead opting to give everyone who stands before them a kick in the stomach.

The only reason we need to build a bigger jail, this guy contends, is because our sentences are too long and because we're yanking hard-working citizens off the street to serve time when they could be earning a living.

I couldn't disagree more. The overwhelming majority of people serving time at Warren County Jail have been given chance after chance after chance to follow our laws and they have blatantly refused to do so. If I could make a blanket statement about our legal system it's that people don't get enough jail time — and that's only because we don't have the jail space to put them.

Anyone who has paid much attention to our court dockets knows the most common reason people are jailed is for violation of probation. The reason they are on probation in the first place is because they have been found guilty of a crime and have been placed on probation instead of placed in jail.

I would think any law-abiding citizen who had made a simple mistake would take advantage of this second chance, follow the terms of their probation, and stay out of jail. But alas, this is a fairy tale.

Instead, people on probation continue to commit crimes and show no regard for the law. When they're caught violating probation, they're often given a few days in jail, 30 days perhaps, to teach them a lesson. This will surely show them jail is not the place to be and they will use those 30 days behind bars to think about what they've done and vow to change their life.

Yeah, right. The reason we have jail overcrowding is because we have too many people who refuse to abide by the law. They are given second chances, sometimes third chances, and they don't appreciate them.

As one 40-year law enforcement officer told me this week, the main problem with putting people on probation is it requires them to accept a certain amount of responsibility. And there are some people who have shown they cannot accept any level of responsibility.

I think our local judicial system has it about right. It tries to show leniency at first, but people who habitually break the law must be punished at some point.

That leaves us faced with a costly \$8 million problem of building a bigger jail to house all our criminals. Then we're faced with the continued expense of paying for their food and guards to watch them.

The perfect-world solution would be to live in a society where everyone obeys the law. We're heading the wrong direction for that.

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



## Wars that never end

This week as we again mourned our losses 17 years ago on 9/11, I have been deep into watching the old documentary about Robert McNamara and how he led us to our national disaster in Vietnam.

Perhaps it was because the title, "The Fog of War," reminded me of our new fogs. But more likely it was because McNamara's last words.

"But you don't have hindsight available in the beginning," he said, excusing himself.

Ah yes, hindsight. The "perception of the nature of an event after it has happened."

I think it is high time we thought seriously about this current era and about our most recent military adventures: the seemingly endless wars in the Middle East that followed the attack on the Twin Towers.

Have you noticed, for instance, how little we hear or read about them? Yet they are very much there and, among foreign policy thinkers, they even have rather frightening new names: "forever wars," "permanent wars."

"To wage these wars," Michael O'Hanlon, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a respected analyst of the Middle East wars, wrote recently in *The Wall Street Journal*, "there are currently some 15,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan, 10,000 in Qatar, 5,000 in Iraq, 4,000 in Bahrain, 2,000 each in Syria and Kuwait and more than 1,500 in

Djibouti and Turkey." And that is only in the Near East.

"These 'overseas contingency operations' cost more than \$30 billion a year, on top of the \$600 billion-plus core defense budget," he continues. "It's a huge, expensive effort, and there's no end in sight."

More than 2,200 Americans have been killed in Afghanistan, which historians have wisely called the "graveyard of empires."

American military officers repeatedly say we cannot win in Afghanistan — but we also cannot appear to lose. So we just stay.

You don't hear or read much about Iraq these days, not with all the "fun" many are having

with the endless dramas in Washington. But Iraq is becoming what the *Financial Times* calls a "dysfunctional state," with devastating protests all over the country against the American-backed government in Baghdad.

So that's where we are, fellow citizens. In the quicksand of the Middle East where anyone with any historical knowledge could have told us, "Beware! Stay out!" Our adversaries are active; we are static.

Hindsight — once again. Where are the Americans who will demand foresight?

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