

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Semi trucks causing too many fatal wrecks

Thousands are dying in semi truck crashes. Why won't the government make a simple fix?

The number of fatalities involving semis and other large trucks is spiking, making our highways increasingly perilous for drivers. And both federal regulators and the trucking industry have refused to take relatively simple steps to mandate the installation of new technology that could prevent rear-end collisions — a fact that should spark outrage and action.

With deadly accidents involving semis on the rise, heavy truck manufacturers should commit to installing automatic emergency braking, forward collision warning systems and other high-tech safety features in new rigs. Congress should require all semis on the road to be equipped with collision avoidance technology regardless of model, make or year.

Each year, at least 300 people are killed and another 15,000 are injured in wrecks involving a semi that runs into the back of another vehicle, a study found.

Since the summer of 2017, at least eight people involved in rear-end truck crashes in the Kansas City area have died. Nationwide, more than 4,300 people were killed in accidents involving big rigs in 2016.

Those numbers should spur demands for long overdue regulations that would improve safety in the industry. It's bewildering and indefensible that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has failed to mandate needed changes during the past two decades.

Requiring forward collision avoidance systems is a simple fix that could prevent more than seven out of 10 rear-end truck collisions, according to companies that have

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installed the equipment. As *The Star* has reported, the National Transportation Safety Board has recommended at least 10 times since the 1990s that NHTSA require forward crash avoidance and mitigation systems on all heavy trucks.

And road safety experts agree that technology can prevent wrecks. Untold numbers of deadly rear-end truck crashes might have been avoided had the systems been in place.

Regulations exist for a reason. When industries are not required to adhere to reasonable safety standards, lives are needlessly lost.

The European Union requires crash avoidance systems on big trucks. Why hasn't the U.S. done the same? Could the influence of lobbyists and influential donors be the reason?

Lobbying efforts on behalf of the trucking industry totaled \$11 million in 2017. And congressional candidates collected more than \$5.2 million in campaign contributions from like-minded groups during the 2016 election cycle.

The lack of action is unacceptable. As U.S. Sen. Cory Booker told *The Star*, the rising death toll from truck accidents shouldn't be ignored.

Booker, a Democrat from New Jersey, called on Congress to take meaningful steps to improve safety across the transportation sector. Other lawmakers should stand with Booker — preventing fatal accidents need not be a partisan issue.

The federal government has the final say. It should mandate that the trucking industry put safety above saving a few bucks.

Howbeit  
Andrew  
McMeel  
go comics.



THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORM

### GOP hopes storms subside

Republicans know what the midterm election polls say. They hear the talk about a blue wave. They're aware of historical party-in-power midterm losses in the House. But they still see something else, seven weeks out from Election Day.

"If the election were today, the Democrats would take back the House," said a Republican strategist. "But we're not far off. Things aren't great, but I don't think we're that far away."

Of most concern right now, the second strategist said, are those districts with the highest percentages of college graduates. "There are two worlds in polling right now," he explained. "The great divide is education -- more than gender. A college degree seems to be the big dividing line."

That has always been a divide, but never as much as since the rise of President Trump. The education split that developed during the election endures. In a Quinnipiac poll last month, the president's job approval among college-educated white voters was 41 percent approval, with 55 percent disapproval. Among whites without a college degree, it was precisely the opposite: 55 percent approval, with 41 percent disapproval.

"Trump is a real weight in the most educated, affluent, suburban districts," the second strategist said.

An example is Colorado's 2nd congressional district, represented for the last decade by Republican Rep. Mike Coffman. Coffman managed to win in 2016, when Hillary Clinton carried the district by 9 points. But now, a recent *New York Times* poll showed Democratic challenger Jason Crow pulling away from Coffman,

with an 11-point lead. Among the poll's respondents, 57 percent had either a bachelor's or graduate degree.

What is most frustrating to Republicans now can be summed up in a few numbers: 3.9 percent unemployment; 4.2 percent growth; 26,154 Dow Jones average. How can a party take those healthy, happy economic numbers into an election and have such a good chance of losing?

To some in the party, the problem is all the noise and disruption that comes from the Trump White House. GOP candidates are still recovering from the storms over the president's Helsinki visit and illegal immigrant family separation policy. Now, many Republicans are hoping, perhaps against hope, for a smoother, quieter time between now

and the election. Of course, for Republicans, even as the president's style alienates some voters, the results of his policies -- lower taxes, deregulation, economic growth, conservative judges and a strengthening military -- are the foundation of their campaigns today.

Democrats have plenty of problems of their own, among them a continuing progressive-establishment split and the fact that they have no discernible agenda beyond opposing Trump. All of which makes this a very complicated race, further complicated by the fact that a large number of voters have a negative view of both parties. That's one of the factors that made the 2016 presidential race so volatile, and now, in a different race with different players, it's happening again.

*Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.*

#### COLUMNIST

BYRON YORK



#### LIVIN' LA VIDA LACY

LACY GARRISON



### Roaming dogs threaten safety

Last Wednesday, I experienced that spine-tingling, all-engulfing fear, when body and brain conspire toward a sole objective: survival. Although I typically strive to share the positives of my life, sometimes the ugly realities need to be mentioned too.

I recently gave my small front porch a facelift with new hardware, a fresh coat of paint and a new storm door. I'm so proud that I already decorated it with a new fall wreath, garden flag and placed the sweetest bouquet of fall faux flowers on my wrought iron chair.

On Wednesday morning, I noticed some of my fall décor was missing. I looked up and saw remnants scattered across the neighbor's yard with one of their temperamental dogs chewing on pieces of the pumpkin as if taunting me. I inherited my grandpa's Woodlee temper and I lost it for all in Westwood to witness. No amount of singing "This little light of mine" under my breath could subdue my anger.

Grandpa drove me over and I knocked on my neighbor's door to discuss the matter. Two of the dogs were pent-up (rarity) and the other went crazy barking and growling. I took a video for evidence because no one answered. Real shocker.

Afterward, the dog followed me back to my property, so I called Animal Control. I waited and a member of the organization came out to inspect along with two police officers. By this time, the dog had retreated back to its owner's littered yard. I filed a report, which was their second warning.

This isn't a new issue. Sadly, many in our neighborhood have reached out to Animal Control in concern for their family's safety. Ross almost got bitten on a morning run and I'm tired of these three dogs terrorizing our neighborhood, pooping anywhere and everywhere and damaging property.

Later that evening, that's when the terrifying incident occurred. I walked to my mailbox to get my mail and the pit bull and coon dog came barreling toward me together. I backed up slowly in my yard fighting the urge to turn and run. As they cornered me, I yelled at them to go home. It didn't work and they were about two feet from me aggressively growling.

I breathed slowly and prayed I could back into the safety of my porch before they attacked. When I felt my foot hit the step, at that point my terror morphed into rage. I ran inside and grabbed the nearest weapon -- a piece of broken oak paneling in the fireplace and came back outside swinging at them.

The pit bull ran home and eventually the coon did too. Immediately afterward, I called my grandparents and in-laws and we reported yet another incident.

I'm here to confirm that the "pack mentality" people talk about is a real thing. Those three dogs go from individually tolerable to aggressive. So please, be a considerate neighbor and responsible pet owner. Also, if you are a runner or walker, be careful going down Westwood Fourth and word to the wise, carry pepper spray.

*Standard reporter Lacy Garrison can be reached at 473-2191.*



### Scariest Halloween ever

Halloween is six weeks away, and I am very scared. Not of trick-or-treaters coming to my door, or of my car being soaped (although it needs it).

No, I'm scared that I'll have to go shopping for something between now and Oct. 31. Because I know there is no way I can go to any store between now and then without passing pyramids of gaudy "holiday-sized" packs of Halloween candy, costumes, napkins, tablecloths and giant outdoor decorations. What happened to all the costumes and decorations people bought last year? Where did they go?

Yes, it's convenient to be able to load up my cart with a couple of 3-pound bags of orange-colored candy and pick up a blood-sugar monitor from the same aisle, but is it really good for us? Maybe that explains why so many grocery stores have pharmacies in them now.

Can all that candy be going to goblins and vampires on Halloween? Not unless people are giving it away by the bagful at every knock of the door. I think much of it is being eaten long before, and after, the holiday. Either way, it had better be gone by the time the Thanksgiving-themed candy and pies start filling up the stores. And all THAT has to be gone before the Christmas cookies arrive.

Most of us don't have a problem overeating during the holidays. The problem is that EVERY day has become a holiday. Almost every weekend is an excuse to have a little extra -- a tailgate party, a birthday, a wedding, a graduation, a new job, a vacation -- have another drink, have a piece of cake, a little chocolate chip cookie

won't kill you. Until it does.

To get away from all the holiday sweets, I gave children hard-boiled eggs last year at Halloween. It was a big success! First, the kids got a little accidental protein, and second, I will never, ever have to worry about them coming back to my house again.

This year, I'll be turning out the lights and pretending no one's home, which should also keep them away. Not that I have anything against kids, but instead of canvassing the neighborhood for sugary snacks, shouldn't they be out getting some exercise by TP-ing houses?

Houses other than mine, of course.

Sometimes I go to my grocery store to buy food, not candy, but it's getting harder and harder. All I needed last week

was olive oil and bread, but the olive oil was next to the seasonal M&Ms and the XXXL children's clothes, and the bread was next to the fruit-free "froot" roll-ups and cellphone chargers.

They say not to go grocery shopping when you're hungry. So I ate the last of the Easter candy before I went this time. But not being hungry doesn't stop me from buying kitchen utensils, flowers, Halloween cards, that new vodka that tastes like bubble gum, car wax, hair gel, one of those new razors that make it look as if you haven't shaved at all, scented candles, and a bottle of pills that will help my memory (which, it turns out, I already had a full bottle at home). I had to go back an hour later because I forgot to get the chicken I had gone in for.

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#### VILLAGE IDIOT

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