

# OPINION

## PORTAGE DAILY REGISTER

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### Editorial Board

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# Rifts only are growing in our political system

While most of the media focuses on the widening rifts among Republicans over their presidential candidates, it ignores the ones developing among Democrats. Granted, it's not a huge fracture compared to the other side, but it could influence election results.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is supported by Democrats who believe she's eminently more qualified than her opponent, Sen.



PAT NASH

Like Republicans who supported Gov. Jeb Bush, Clinton's supporters tend to be establishment party members who don't believe Sen. Sanders has a chance of winning. Although they find many of his ideas and solutions appealing, they feel they're unrealistic in the current political system.

Sanders is undoubtedly an idealist. He thinks a small tax on stock and other financial transactions would enable the country to pay every qualified student's tuition at a public university or college. Even if it were true, it's a bad idea. I believe college students should pay a share of their tuition by working part-time during the school year and full-time over the summers. Otherwise they have no stake in their own education. I do agree that the cost of college is out of range for most students and they should be able to borrow at a low rate and refinance their loans, just as everyone else can. Republican lawmakers, by the way, keep blocking Democratic bills that would make that possible.

But back to Sanders: As a democratic socialist he believes in a capitalistic society that promotes the idea of businesses sharing their profits more equitably with their workers. He doesn't believe government should take over the businesses, but that it should guarantee everyone gets a fair return if they do their share of the work. He mentions Sweden and Denmark as good examples of democratic socialism, whose residents are some of the happiest people on earth.

But the population and area of the United States is much bigger than both those countries combined. Our nation also has a much higher incidence of poverty. Sanders thinks he can alleviate that poverty by raising the minimum wage. That would be a start, but there are more things to consider.

The \$15 an hour minimum wage, which Sanders promotes,

could be devastating to some small or new businesses. It would make sense in a place like San Francisco where the cost of living is extremely high, but in the Midwest or the South, it would be unreasonable to require all small businesses to pay that much. On the other hand, it's also obscene for a CEO of a profitable corporation to make a million dollars or more a year while paying employees the minimum wage.

Clinton is suggesting a minimum wage of \$10 an hour. I don't know anyone but teenagers living with their parents who could survive on that, but it's a lot better than the current minimum wage, which is ridiculously low. She assumes their pay would rise as their time and experience with a company increases. As it should.

Sanders' supporters are extremely fervent, some overly so. A few of them use right-wing propaganda and untruths to attack Clinton and, if Clinton wins the primary, have pledged to vote for Sanders or another write-in candidate. If they do, Donald Trump will be grateful for their support.

I haven't heard the same kind of vitriol or stubbornness from Clinton supporters. All of them I know say they will support Sanders if he wins the primary. They can't imagine someone like Donald Trump being president of this country. From what I've heard, many Republicans can't either.

I think we can all agree that this presidential campaign is ugly and divisive. And I find it sad that in this huge country there isn't a better candidate to come forth on either side. Where are the proven leaders who possess integrity, intelligence and courage? Where's the person who has the ability to work with all sides to help create a system where businesses and workers get an equally fair shake? Where is the person who isn't weighed down with extreme ideologies, bigotry or arrogance? Where is the hopeful realist with the know-how to achieve results?

Perhaps they don't appear because they know Congress is totally dysfunctional due to irrational partisanship that puts the American people dead last on its members' list of priorities. Maybe if we reformed the campaign finance system, better people could afford to run for office.

Only we can change all that, first on April 5 and again Nov. 8. So learn about the candidates, and for heaven's sake, vote.

Pat Nash has lived in the Baraboo area, off and on, for more than 30 years. Contact her at patnash5149@gmail.com.



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# DNR right to separate guns, alcohol at ranges

We've all seen how excessive alcohol consumption can lead to impaired judgment or aggressive behavior. Perhaps we've seen ourselves exhibit such behavior, or needed to be told what we had done the night before.

It's for these reasons that it's illegal to fire a gun if you're intoxicated. It's also why most private gun ranges in Wisconsin prohibit alcohol consumption on the range, and why the state Department of Natural Resources is planning to enact a similar ban at its ranges.

The DNR owns eight formal ranges around Wisconsin and operates about half of them; local clubs operate the others in partnership with the agency, the Associated Press reported this week. No uniform rules apply, though the agency has been working since 2013 to develop some, said Keith Warnke, the DNR's shooting

sports coordinator.

DNR officials plan to present a wide-ranging package of regulations to their board next month that would prohibit the possession and consumption of alcohol on the ranges as well as prohibit shooters from using fully automatic weapons and tracer ammunition. Incendiary, exploding and breakable targets would be banned, although clay trap targets would be allowed. Shooters would have to unload their weapons when they're off the firing line.

Warnke said the rules were spurred by a desire for consistency rather than any specific problems. Most of the regulations mirror rules at private ranges and gun clubs, he said.

"There's no supervision at most of these DNR-owned ranges," Warnke said. "We wanted to have a few basic safety rules to ensure that everyone us-

ing the range is as safe as can be."

To our eyes, there's nothing unreasonable in what the DNR is proposing.

When you show up at a shooting range, you might be able to tell in short order whether another person is an experienced shooter, and whether you can trust that he or she is there to do some practice shooting and nothing more.

What's not immediately apparent, until you can hear them speak or get a whiff of their breath, is whether a person has been drinking. That's true in any setting, and while most people maintain self-control while drinking, some don't.

Alcohol and firearms are a bad combination, and the DNR is right to move to keep them separate.

When you're shooting, you're shooting. When you're drinking, you're drinking.

## GUEST COLUMNIST

# A plea to save Montello Schools

I lived in Montello for 18 years and graduated from Montello High School as class valedictorian in 2003. I'm now a doctoral candidate in international relations at Oxford University in England. I'd like to share a couple of stories with you, as well as extend a pledge.

The first story is a reflection on my education at Montello and how it's made a remarkable impact on my life. The second story is a prediction of what would unfold if the April 5 referendum were to fail and Montello Schools close its doors. Finally, I conclude with a



JEFFREY WRIGHT

commitment to you, the voters, to volunteer my time to ensure the long-term survival of our district.

I look back on my education at Montello Schools with tremendous fondness and gratitude. I can say unequivocally I would not be where I am today without it.

It was Sandra Kowalczyk (reading) who brought to life Near Eastern classics like the "Epic of Gilgamesh" and the "Ramayana," and inspired an enduring love for books.

It was Mary Wright (English), whose multi-modal innovations in the classroom, driven by a strong predilection for Shakespeare, helped dissolve my creative limitations.

Had it not been for John Borud (calculus) and Ross Hahn (geometry), whose passion for mathematics is palpable, my fascination with numbers would have gone uncultivated.

Mary Ott's (music and theatre) uncompromising artistic direction empowered me to find my voice and place on the acting stage. My self-confidence today, as a man and professional, is a testament to her ability to lead and inspire.

And it was Catherine Ellenbecker (art) who gave me wings to fly, to take my dreams seriously and never shy from striving for excellence.

As a finalist for the Truman Scholarship in March 2008 — a national award for college juniors committed to a life of public service — I fielded a particularly difficult question from my five-person interview panel: "If you had to choose two works of art — one representing where you are now in your life and one embodying where you will be in the future — what would those be and why?" Despite not having studied art in any serious way since high school, my brain shuffled through the Rolodex of images that Mrs. Ellenbecker's teaching had imprinted on my memory years earlier. I soon settled on my answers: "Auguste Rodin's 'The Thinker' would have to represent the present," I responded confidently, "and Picasso's 'Guernica' the future."

Staying calm while responding impromptu to the question helped me win the scholarship. But it was my Montello High School art teacher who sowed the seeds for that moment of success.

I illustrate the impacts of these teachers to convey the tremendous value they bring to young people in our community. That said, giving future generations of students an opportunity to benefit from the same Montello education I received is just one reason to vote "yes" on next week's referendum.

The more compelling argument for many of you is that keeping Montello Schools open is in the financial interest of every property taxpayer. Here's why: property values are derived from certain social, economic, and environmental factors. One of the most important factors is "location" — a property's proximity to amenities, services, shops, and schools. Notwithstanding the geographical beauty

of Marquette County, our city possesses very few locational assets. Montello School District is by far its most valuable and is equivalent to a financial investment. The district provides education to students, cultural benefits to the community and employment to residents.

Without this community pillar, property values would plummet. Families would be less likely to stay in Montello, let alone move there and put down roots. And since families are integral to the future of any community, which can neither maintain nor increase its population without them, Montello itself would not survive.

It's as simple as that. When a school district is forced to close in a small, rural community like ours, property owners lose far more money in the valuation of homes, land, and businesses than they save in taxes. That is why it's in the financial interest of Montello residents to vote "yes" on the April 5 referendum.

Make no mistake, structural changes are required in order to move Montello School District past recurring referenda. The State of Wisconsin must reform its school funding model, which has resulted in a reprehensible 42 percent decline in state aid to our district since 2007-08. Failing this scenario, the community of Montello must pull together to find innovative solutions to the funding problem (which the district has ably done so far through the High Marq Environmental Charter School and Montello Forward 2020).

I pledge to volunteer my time to work with fellow alumni and local school and city leaders to find a sustainable path forward for our schools. I may not live in Montello anymore, but it is too special a place to vanish.

Jeffrey Wright is a 2003 graduate of Montello High School. He can be reached at jawright2@gmail.com.

## LETTER

### Vote yes on Rio school referendum

On April 5, our community will once again have the opportunity to invest in the village and show its support of the Rio School District through the ballot box. I am going to vote yes and I encourage you to do so as well.

The school system is our community's greatest asset. While we don't have an industrial base or corporate headquarters to draw people, we do have a good K-12 educational system that has a long history of producing successful

alumni. The Rio School District combined with the safety and affordability of our community and our location near a major urban area makes us an attractive place for people to raise a family. In turn, these families support our local businesses, buy houses, attend our places of worship and become involved in the community. They may even decide, like my wife and I did over 60 years ago, to make Rio home.

On April 5, let's send a message to those who are looking for a place to raise their children that Rio is the place for them because we support education.

Dale E. Strmiska, Rio

## ELECTION LETTERS DEADLINE

The deadline for letters of candidate endorsement or those related to ballot initiatives for the April 5 election is 5 p.m. March 30. Letters of rebuttal will be accepted until 5 p.m. March 31. Rebuttal letters must identify the letter being addressed within the letter.