

DAILY HAMPSHIRE
GAZETTE

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EDITORIAL

Occupy spirit hits the House

Do your job, Speaker Ryan. The House of Representatives, as you noted in a moment of anger last week, exists to carry out “the people’s business.”

That means it falls to you, Paul D. Ryan, to find common causes and make law that improves America. That’s not an easy job in today’s political climate and is probably why you had to be dragged to it kicking and screaming.

America is a big country and the interests of its citizens often compete. But on one matter – the advance of common sense gun control – there is agreement.

A Pew Research Center survey last August found that 88 percent of Americans want expanded background checks for gun purchasers. And a Gallup poll last October found that 55 percent of Americans want additional gun control, the first time in three years this was a majority view.

Your Republican Party doesn’t want gun reform, not even the small steps outlined in two modest pieces of legislation. One would strengthen background checks and another would ban gun sales to people on the terrorism no-fly list.

These proposals have been around for a long time, waiting for common sense to return to Congress.

Desperate times do sometimes demand desperate measures. That explains what just happened in the august House of Representatives.

And then came yet another horror show: the killing of 49 people inside a Florida nightclub and the wounding of many others.

In the halls of Congress, it was time for another moment of silence. And then it was continued silence – and inaction – on gun control.

Yes, it’s perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, that on this issue, you shall not be moved.

But others are – and in ways that might create enough momentum to break the logjam and perhaps the makeup of the House itself.

You made clear your displeasure with last week’s disturbance in the chamber, when Democratic members staged a sit-in, or, as you put it, “a publicity stunt.”

One of its leaders, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, the Georgia Democrat and civil rights champion, pleaded to be allowed to vote on these hardly radical gun-control measures.

Let me do my job, he said.

After the C-SPAN cameras were shut off, Lewis’ message, and those of dozens of other representatives, reached the American people through streaming video.

You didn’t like that, either. The whole thing broke rules of Congressional decorum.

And yes, it was a stunt – and an unusual one at that.

But desperate times do sometimes demand desperate measures. The stalemate in Congress over gun control led Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut to stage his own desperate act the week before last, when he took to the Senate floor for a 14-hour filibuster that succeeded in bringing votes on several gun control measures.

They didn’t pass, but the stalemate was briefly broken. Hope rose across the nation that we might finally see the light.

The Senate voted again Thursday, when 52 senators supported a bill co-sponsored by Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Heidi Heitkamp, D-North Dakota, that would bar gun sales to terrorism suspects on the no-fly list. That’s a majority, but under Senate rules this bill, more narrow than a similar one put forward by Democrats, needed 60 votes to advance.

Members of the House cannot stage filibusters, but they can occupy the well of the House and interrupt business as usual. What the Democrats did last week may alienate some voters. But it is far more likely, as members of Congress travel their districts this week during the July 4 recess, that the sit-in by rebellious Democrats will accelerate demands on all lawmakers to address gun violence in America.

Speaker Ryan, you said last week that “one of the things that makes our country strong is our institutions.” Everyone must respect the system, you said, “otherwise, it all falls apart.”

But a system blind to common sense is already broken. With or without your help, the business of the people is to fix it.

Why we are stronger together

By ANNA NAGURNEY
and LADIMER S. NAGURNEY

At this time a year ago, we had just landed in Greece, only to find the banks closed and our credit cards unusable. A week later we were in Vienna staying at a hotel next to the venue for the U.S.-Iran talks and were forced to walk in a labyrinth of security to get to our rooms. We do not know whether we are the cause of the upheavals or are drawn to the uncertain world.

This year we’re spending Trinity Term in Oxford, England. Oxford shares many characteristics with Amherst – an educated populace, many young people, and a vibrant cultural life.

Of course, over the past month, the key question at the university, coffee shops, and pubs was: How will you be voting in the referendum on the European Union? Will you vote for Britain to Remain or Leave?

Like Amherst, the residents of Oxford are proud of their multicultural and ethnic diversity. The university is proud to herald the diversity of its student body and faculty. Like in Amherst, you see faculty and students from many nationalities and countries working together on a daily basis.

The response to the common question, was, of course, Remain. Most of the residents of Oxford understood the benefits to England that membership in the European Union (EU) provided: free migration, transport of goods, uniform

In Amherst and the Pioneer Valley this fall, we will be facing many of the same questions associated with Brexit.

health and safety standards, broad access to financial markets, and many social benefits such as enhanced maternity/paternity leave.

While both camps passed out literature and lobbied voters in the center of town, the Brexit (British exit from the EU) camp was a small minority.

Last Thursday, England voted! When the results were tabulated, Oxford solidly voted to remain with over 70 percent of its citizens voting thus. Awakening Friday morning, we heard the shocking news that Brexit had won. At All Souls College, when introducing a guest speaker, the chair commented that he would normally begin his introduction with “Good morning,” but based upon the vote the greeting seemed inappropriate.

We have heard many reasons for the vote outcome and are sure in the years to come the analysis of the vote will become the fodder for a plethora of academic papers and doctoral dissertations. It has been said that some voted to leave although they did not mean it, just to send a message to those in power. It has even been reported that the leaders of

the Brexit movement were most surprised at its passage and are now wondering what to do next.

In Amherst and the Pioneer Valley, we will be facing many of the same questions this fall. We all value the contributions of the many cultures that make up the U.S. and are convinced that, while an individual may harm society, it is wrong to single out or exclude a group because of the actions of a few.

We understand that by giving up some of our Yankee sovereignty (and stubbornness) we have become part of something bigger. We realize that change is taking place and that many gives to our parents are no longer possible.

While the parties have not officially nominated candidates for the presidency yet, we all can clearly predict who will take Amherst and Hampshire County. We only hope that come that Wednesday morning in November, we will not awake to shocking news.

We are all stronger together with the free flow of people, ideas, services, and goods. This enhances the education of our students and the resilience of our communities.

Anna Nagurney is the John F. Smith Memorial Professor of Operations Management in the Isenberg School of Management at University of Massachusetts Amherst and a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College at Oxford University. Ladimer S. Nagurney is professor of Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering at the University of Hartford. Both are Amherst residents.

LETTERS

Why one family indebted to Easthampton police

So many people have heard the word “brotherhood” when it comes to police officers. Well, until you’re a family in the brotherhood, you really don’t understand the meaning. Our father, Frederick Petersen, was a retired police officer for the city of Easthampton, where he worked for 17 years then retired due to a work-related injury. He later returned to handle road details.

In June 2015, our dad and our entire family was hit with the most devastating news. Our dad had terminal cancer. When word reached the police department, its members provided a tremendous amount of support to our dad and family. It meant so much for our dad to have such love from his fellow brothers and sisters. We saw the light in his eyes that got there knowing he had so much support and love.

In November, our dad’s six sisters put together a benefit to raise money to cover his growing medical bills. With help from so many businesses, friends and community members and the police department, his benefit was an amazing success.

Despite all the fight and determination our dad had, we lost him in early January. Our father’s wake was the hardest thing we had to do. The police department came together and honored our dad in a touching, remarkable way.

Then came the burial the third weekend in June – and once again the police department, still continuing to show love and support, took our breaths away by honoring and making his burial one our family will never forget. Thank you to Chief Bruce McMahon for his kind words, love and support. And thank you to all the officers for their support, love and the unconditional brotherhood.

We are proud and honored to be a part of such an amazing brotherhood.

JAIME PASCHAL & JASON PETERSEN
Easthampton

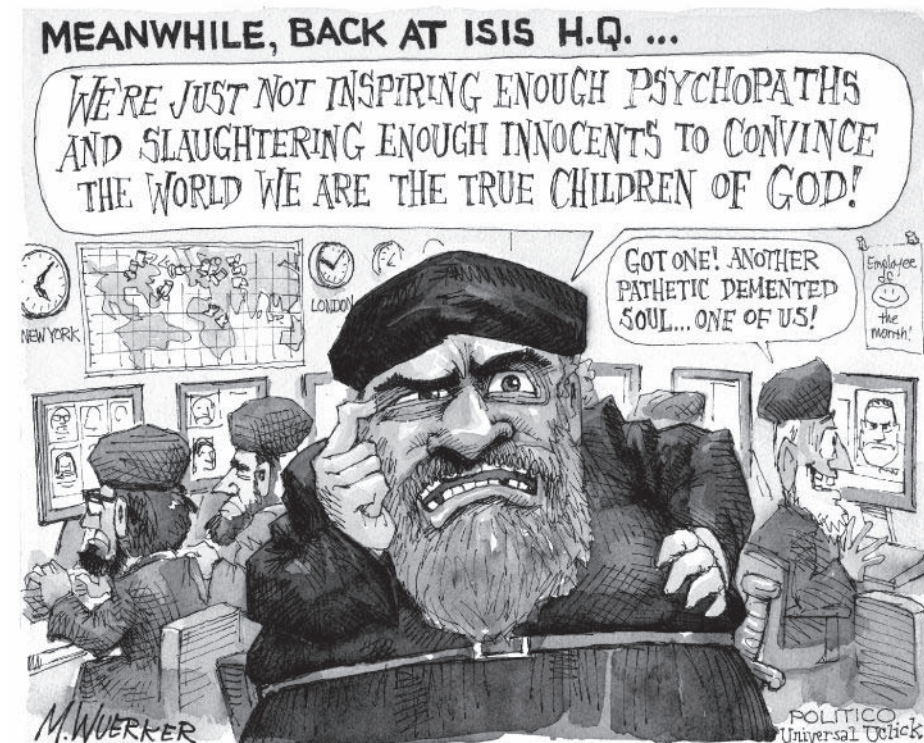
Hold the line on taxes in Massachusetts

Listen up, Massachusetts taxpayers. There seems to be some problem with a shortage of money in the state budget. I’ll bet the folks that we elected just might be thinking about finding more money by raising your income tax and or the sales tax.

Think about this for a moment. There is a sales tax on your aspirin and cough syrup. All the OTC meds are taxed – stuff that you and I need to help keep us healthy. However, soda and candy, which are not healthy, are not taxed! How come, you ask?

The soda and candy corporations have more say about that than you do. They can stuff the pockets of our elected officials better than we can. Tell them, don’t even think about a raise in tax until they have tried all other means of closing a budget gap.

DONALD OSTROSKI
Southampton



COMMENTS ON THEATER’S NUT-ALLERGY CHALLENGE

Young Shakespeare group accepting of all

Before joining the Young Shakespeare Players East this spring, I’d never acted before in my life. During 13 exciting weeks, I not only learned the amazing language of William Shakespeare and prepared for a large role in “Romeo & Juliet,” but I also became embraced by a community that accepted kids of all ages, incomes and abilities, and empowered them, on a tiny budget, to teach each other all the aspects of running a full-length Shakespeare production. I found that I love to act, love the works of Shakespeare, and love that YSPE gives kids autonomy and leadership. What a rare and precious thing in our fearful society. My experience is that YSPE and its director, Suzanne Rubenstein, are loving, warm, and accepting to all.

MADELEINE LOMBARD, 15
Northampton

Shakespeare program a valuable service

This letter is in support of Suzanne Rubinstein and Young Shakespeare Players East. She has done an incredibly wonderful job inspiring children to perform full-length productions of Shakespeare plays, putting in countless hours of rehearsal with dedication, spirit and kindness toward young performers.

The children come away from the experience with not only a deep understanding of the particular work of Shakespeare they are learning, but a newfound respect for their fellow performers and, most importantly, themselves.

The result is inspirational and a meaningful accomplishment in their young lives which will provide them with added confidence in their adult lives.

It is regrettable that the organization is under pressure having received negative press as a result of one or two disgruntled parents whose children have food allergies. It seems reasonable that, while being trained in the use of an epi-pen and attempting to provide a safe, allergy-free atmosphere for those participants with severe food allergies, that Suzanne would be uncomfortable providing a 100 percent guarantee that the program could be entirely nut-free and that she could not guarantee 100 percent vigilance for these allergy-prone children, and therefore would require all parents, including those in question who are painting a biased and inaccurate picture, to sign a release form.

I hope the differences can be worked out amicably as the program is too important to these young children, including those with severe allergy problems, to lose this acting platform on which to learn and grow.

STEPHEN WORTH
Ashfield

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