

OPINION



Gail Collins She writes for the New York Times.

Good luck managing speaker's challenge

That House speaker mess was all Donald Trump's fault. Yeah, yeah, I know you're not going to argue with me if I blame him for something bad. The House Republicans are a rancorous crew, and they've got only a nine-member majority, one of the tightest in recent history. We've been hearing all week that a mere five rebels can halt progress on anything, even a basic task like electing a speaker. Interesting how narrow that majority is. Normally, in nonpresidential-election years, the party that didn't win the White House gets a lift - often a huge one. Given the deeply nonelectric nature of Joe Biden's victory, you'd figure the Republicans would have made a scary sweep in 2022. But no - and one of the reasons was the completely loopy candidates running on Republican lines in districts that should have been up for grabs. Some had been hand-picked by Trump.

Trump endorsed three candidates in tossup districts last year; all of them lost. All that flailing around over selecting a House speaker was due, in part, to the Republicans' failure to corral their Flimsy Five around any of the original contenders. But it was also very, very much about Trump's lack of enthusiasm for logical candidates like Tom Emmer, the House Republican whip, who'd made the dreaded mistake of voting to certify the results of the last presidential election.

"I have many wonderful friends wanting to be Speaker of the House, and some are truly great Warriors," Trump declaimed. "RINO Tom Emmer, who I do not know well, is not one of them. He never respected the Power of a Trump Endorsement."

RINO, of course, stands for Republican in Name Only, something Trump has truly hated ever since he registered as a Republican in Manhattan back in 1987. Until he registered with the Independence Party in 1999, followed by the Democratic Party in 2001. But hey, he became a Republican again in 2009, then dropped his party affiliation in 2011, and switched back to being a Republican in 2012. There is absolutely no reason to imagine he would ever switch again. Unless, you know, there was something in it for him.

Mike Johnson of Louisiana, who finally won the speaker's job, is exactly the kind of guy you'd expect to come up on top. Right-wing anti-abortion activist who gets along with his colleagues and who, crucially, has items in his résumé that won Trump's heart. A former radio talk show host who helped lead the Republicans' battle to overturn the election results! What could be more perfect?

"GET IT DONE, FAST! LOVE, DIT!" our ex-president posted on Truth Social.

(Earlier, once Emmer had crashed, Trump praised all the possible successors to the ousted Kevin McCarthy as "fine and very talented men." Quick question: What's missing in that description? One minor detail - the candidate swarm was notably lacking in female representation. Just saying.)

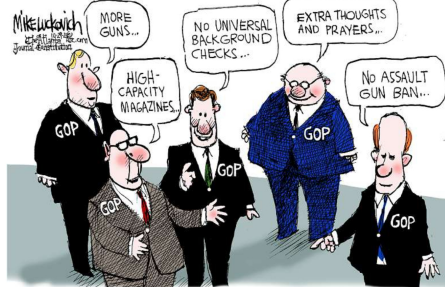
So the best goes on. Mike Johnson's friends are celebrating. Much of the rest of the nation is wondering why the heck anybody would ever want to be speaker of the House with its current crush of Republican crazies.

Welcome to your new job, Mike. Hope you enjoyed your big day. Just remember that it won't be long before Congress has to pass another bill to keep the government operating or send the country teetering into disaster.

Details, details.

Mike Luckovich

Mike Luckovich's cartoons appear Tuesday-Friday and on Sundays in the A.J.C. See more at ajc.com/opinion



From the Right

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CLAYTON BENNETT, CHATTANOOGA TIMES

Chattanooga Times Free Press BENNETT

READERS WRITE

As housing density increases, who's planning for traffic?

I read the Oct. 23 column by Doug Turnbull, "Commute example of why Atlanta needs more choices." As I drive around the city, I see incredible numbers of high-density housing (apartments, condos) being built.

At the same time, I see incredible amounts of traffic. More people, more cars and the same number of roadways. Hmmm? Is anyone planning to adjust roads or create useful mass transportation to accommodate the ever-increasing number of vehicles on the road?

Is there a plan to avoid this inevitable "perfect storm"? Who owns this problem?

JEANNE MCCARTHY, ATLANTA

Airport falls short in customer navigation

Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport should be the travel pride of Atlanta, though I fear it is falling well short of that distinction.

Making allowances for increased security screenings and the closure of the South parking deck, Hartsfield-Jackson is still an anxiety-inducing nightmare to navigate. Aside from regular business travelers, families with small children, those with disabilities and older adults are on the receiving end of some poor planning and subpar customer service.

Signage for security lines is highly confusing and even finding the restrooms in the main terminal is an exercise in frustration. My 22-year-old son, who is on the autism spectrum, flew by himself for the first time this month. He was already nervous at that prospect, but the shouting, patronizing and sometimes even rude airport employees only heightened his anxiety.

A little empathy would go a long way here. Flustered travelers being harangued by the airport and TSA staff only serve to slow down the security lines they are trying to manage.

ROB KADEL, PH.D., ATLANTA

Urban warfare in Gaza to see many casualties

A U.S. Marines recruiter said the video game "Call of Duty" helped recruiting efforts. Urban warfare, as may happen in Gaza, is no game.

Having trained for urban warfare and seeing Hue City, Vietnam, where urban warfare happened in 1968, it is a nightmare. My company commander Chuck Meadows stood on one street corner with tears coming down his face, saying, "I got 40 of my guys shot right here." Urban fighting

will result in severe loss of life on both sides. You can't use artillery or air support because the bad guys are too close. Doors are booby-trapped. You blow a hole in the side of the building and go in that way. You ricochet a hand grenade off the walls so it doesn't come back out at you. Snipers may be behind you, so every room of every building must be cleared.

My study of urban warfare cured me of any wish to do that. DANIEL F. KIRK, KENNESAW

No to pharmacy sales of medical marijuana

Recently, the state of Georgia approved rules that allow independent pharmacies to sell medical marijuana. This will be a first in the nation and there are significant risks for all concerned.

Without FDA testing and approval (which medical marijuana does not have), some pharmacists could

recommend dosages for their customers' varying illnesses, as well as THC/CBD ratios and advise on potentially harmful drug interactions, with little training regarding medical cannabis.

Pharmacies will have significant business risks and barriers regarding liability, banking and obtaining legal advice.

My group's suggestions are: 1) limit dispensaries to regional, independent licensees, based on the number of verified medical marijuana patient registrations; 2) since marijuana is a controlled substance, add medical marijuana

to Georgia's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP); 3) Give recently adopted federal legislation to promote marijuana research the opportunity to provide the research that patients can rely on.

MICHAEL MUMPER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIAN FOR RESPONSIBLE MARIJUANA POLICY (GRMP)

MORE INFORMATION

Letters to the editor must be no longer than 165 words and must include a daytime phone number for verification. Letters will be edited for length and clarity and may be published in both print and digital formats. Emailed submissions are strongly preferred, with letters pasted into the body of an email. Volume of submissions prevents us from acknowledging receipt of letters. Please email yours to: letters@ajc.com.

About the Opinion page: The AJC recognizes the diversity and differences of opinion among our readership, and we strive to accommodate this reality by regularly offering insights that point toward solutions for problems facing us today. Part of this work is regularly offering both conservative and liberal opinion voices as well. And we recognize the variety of opinions even within the same side of the political aisle, and hope you do too. For example, some of our liberal writers have been critical of the Clintons or former President Barack Obama - much as some of our conservative columnists have taken to task former President Donald Trump. We will continue looking at how best to bring you a variety of viewpoints on President Joe Biden's administration because we recognize the importance of balance on our Opinion pages - both between and within conservative and liberal ranks.



George F. Will He writes for The Washington Post.

Trump's repulsive politics echo 1968

The presidential candidate was a barbering of the future that became our ghastly present. Perhaps the most astonishing grassroots uprising in U.S. history put his name on 50 states' ballots. He drew 18,000 listeners to Boston Common in Hawthorne and Emerson's New England, far from Alabama.

Misery loves gloomy precedents - reassurances that there have been times when a nation's political life was as repulsive as it now is, so try Chapman University historian Luke A. Nichter's "The Year That Broke Politics: Golshusion and Chaos in the Presidential Election of 1968." Nichter argues that George Wallace, with his "class-based message," created a "lasting movement."

In 1968, North Vietnamese deaths in three weeks of the Tet Offensive (perhaps 50,000) almost matched U.S. deaths in eight war years but shattered Americans' support for the war. U.S. urban chaos, however, following two assassinations (the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in April, Robert F. Kennedy in June) displaced the war as the dominant issue.

Wallace was elected Alabama governor in 1962, propelled by full-throated racism, which also characterized his test run in the 1964 Democratic presidential primaries. But by the mid-1960s, he was, Nichter says, "a New Deal-inspired Southern populist, a demagogue first and a segregationist second." His antic, and comic, rhetoric would have echoes in 2016.

The major 1968 candidates were all from working-class families: The working class would define 1968.

Starting with Lyndon B. Johnson, five of eight presidents were to come from former Confederate states. But Wallace had an epiphany from Wisconsin. In 1964, that state's governor worried that the state would be tarnished if Wallace received 100,000 votes in its primary. He received 266,984. This startled both national parties more than they would be again until 2016. Wallace launched his 1968 campaign not in Dixie but in Western Pennsylvania, where Donald Trump norried in 2016 and 2020.

Evangelist Billy Graham said he thought that presidents are divinely chosen, but he also believed that the Almighty needed his assistance in 1968. Graham favored over Johnson, who almost seems to have favored Nixon, as Graham did. Wallace, however, called Wallace "one of the finest orators of the twentieth century." This judgment was an anticipation of evangelicals' jettisoning their standards in 2016.

In 1968, Nichter reports, a senior Humphrey adviser warned of blue-collar defections: "The group that we have often depended upon as the backbone of the Democratic vote is leaving us by the droves." Humphrey, however, almost won with the help of a former plumber.

On Sept. 29, 1968, Gallup showed Nixon at 43%, Humphrey 28%, Wallace 21%.

George Meany was, however, head of the AFL-CIO, and 30% of private-sector workers were unionized. (Today, 6% are.) Meany energized his coast to coast membership and on Oct. 24, Gallup showed Nixon 44, Humphrey 36, Wallace 20.

In 1948, less than 1% of Northemers supported South Carolina Gov. Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat presidential candidacy. Twenty years later, Nichter notes, about 8% supported Wallace, almost half of whose votes came from the North.

Nichter believes that Wallace's 13.5% of the popular vote "started a sustained movement that migrated into and eventually came to dominate the Republican Party." On Election Day 1968, Donald Trump was 22.