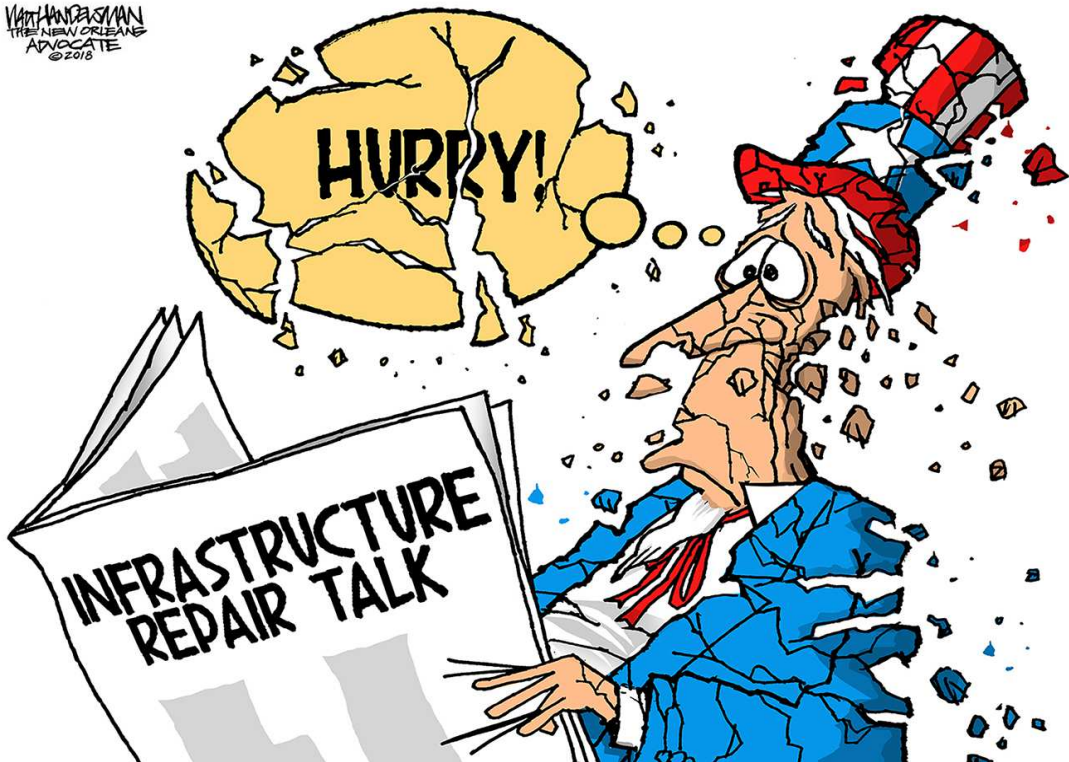


O P I N I O N

VAN HANDESMAN
THE NEW ORLEANS
ADVOCATE
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Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

While it wasn't reported, there was a fire at Zimmerman Butte gun area, Friday, October 26, at 5:30 p.m. Fortunately one of my neighbors called it in and the Sisters Fire District responded and extinguished it.

Several people reported "explosive noise" — likely Tannerite — before the fire was reported. A similar fire was reported two years ago.

This should make all in Sisters nervous. While we have seen an increase in population and visitors coincident with increased fire danger, the Forest Service has not changed its management practices of these gun ranges.

The law is clear on gun use, especially on federal land, and I am not debating gun use, but corralling shooting into one location for hours a day causes noise pollution, physical harm for people with PTSD and potential fire danger, within a mile of Sisters.

I would urge the Forest Service to do a better job of managing these areas. They neither

detected or extinguished this fire and do nothing to be good neighbors and manage what they describe as Sisters' recreational gun area, nor have they investigated the unlawful use of Tannerite according to their dispatch center.

Stephen King

Editor's note: The Nugget has contacted Sisters District Ranger Ian Reid regarding this incident and will report on it next week.

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

Thank you, Jim Anderson, for your wonderful words about our amazing country.

To my fellow Sisters-Americans: Please, let's remember that deep down we want most of the same things, life, liberty and the right to be happy. We have so much, just being blessed to live here. Let's smile and say "hi" when we see each other and keep Sisters the friendly town I moved to 29 years ago.

Have a great day,
Jean Nave



Jonah Goldberg

It is perhaps the central irony of our politics today: We live in an incredibly polarized and partisan moment, but our political parties have never been weaker.

As odd as it sounds, political parties in democracies have an important anti-democratic function. Traditionally, the parties shaped the choices put to voters. Long before voters decided anything in the primary or general elections, party bosses worked to groom good candidates, weed out bad ones, organize interests and frame issues.

In the modern era, the story of party decline usually begins in the aftermath of the 1968 presidential election. The move toward primaries and the democratic selection of delegates took power away from the bosses.

After Watergate, there were more reforms, curbing the ability of the parties to raise and spend money freely. This led to the rise of political action committees, which raise cash independent of the formal party structure. As Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said during the floor debate over the McCain-Feingold campaign finance bill in 2001, "We haven't taken a penny of money out of politics. We've only taken the parties out of politics."

Outside groups — the National Rifle Association, Planned Parenthood, unions, etc. — often do more to effectively organize voters around single issues or personalities than the parties do. The Kochs, Tom Steyer, George Soros and Sheldon Adelson serve as party bosses, only outside the parties.

Technology is another, less obvious, force siphoning power from the parties. As political historian Michael Barone has noted, the telephone dealt a grievous blow to political conventions, where insiders have outsize power.

"Until the 1960s, the national convention was a communications medium," Barone writes. "Political leaders in the various states seldom met each other, outside of sessions of Congress, during the four years between presidential elections."

The telephone eliminated the need for the face-to-face negotiations. Today, political conventions are little more than infomercials for presidential candidates.

The internet and cable TV have accelerated the eclipsing of parties. Opinion websites and TV and radio hosts now do more to shape issues and select candidates than the parties do.

And yet, Americans keep talking about partisan politics as if the parties are in charge, and base voters on the left and the right keep railing against the party establishments like mobs unaware that they're kicking dead horses.

When you take political power out of the parties, other actors seize it. When wielded by people who aren't supposed to be in the politics business, that power corrupts. This is why every Academy Awards ceremony is peppered with asinine political jeremiads, and why late-night comedy hosts serve as de facto Democratic Party organizers.

It's why people like Jerry Falwell Jr., the president of Liberty University, act like social-gospel ward heelers. It's why the cable news networks spend so much of their time rallying voters in one direction or another. And it's why countless pundits and allegedly objective reporters serve as unofficial political consultants.

It's also why Donald Trump could leverage his celebrity to seize the GOP nomination, and why someone like Oprah Winfrey could be next.

There are other, larger forces at work. The decline of strong independent institutions — religious, civic and familial — has people searching for other outlets to find a sense of meaning and belonging. Identity politics, populism and nationalism are filling that void.

That's happened before, but when it did, the parties were there to filter, constrain and channel those passions in a healthy direction. The Potemkin parties can't, or won't, do that anymore. The result is a nation of partisans decrying partisanship.

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Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Mostly Sunny 59/64	Mostly Sunny 59/32	Mostly Sunny 56/32	AM Clouds/PM Sun 46/22	Mostly Sunny 51/24	Mostly Sunny 51/25

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