

O P I N I O N



Jonah Goldberg

I wanted to write this column about dogs. Because I just like dogs.

It's a common sentiment. Dog ownership has been going up markedly for a while now. There are some who worry that dogs — and even cats — are replacing human children as the objects of our devotion.

There's evidence to support the claim. Many young couples are more eager to have pets than kids. Expenditures on pet insurance have soared. One often sees dogs referred to as "furbabies" on social media. Two decades ago, my wife and I struggled to find hotels on our cross-country drives that would accommodate dogs (at least at a reasonable price). Now, many hotels compete for the attention of dog owners. Some businesses eager to hire skilled young workers have generous bring-your-dog-to-work policies, and some even provide "pawternity" care for new dog owners.

A survey by SunTrust Bank found that 33 percent of first-time home-buying millennials said the desire for a better space for their dog was a factor in their decision. Only 25 percent said marriage was an issue, and just 19 percent said children were.

Psychologist Clay Routledge makes a persuasive case that dog ownership is a symptom of America's very real loneliness crisis. As our society becomes more individualistic, Routledge observed in *National Review*, "pets may be appealing to some because they lack the agency of humans and thus require less compromise and sacrifice."

In his book "Them," Sen. Ben Sasse catalogs America's loneliness crisis. We have fewer and fewer "non-virtual" friends. Americans entertain others in their homes half as much as they did 25 years ago. People don't know — never mind socialize — with their neighbors the way they once did.

There's much to ponder and debate here. But it seems obvious that Routledge is onto something.

Which brings me back to what I wanted to write about.

Dogs — and animals generally — are among the few things that bridge the partisan divide. Tragedies are a partisan affair. If someone dies in a hurricane or shooting, there's a mad rush to score political points. Last week, a lovely young woman, Bre Payton, died from a sudden illness, and a bunch of ghouls mocked or celebrated her demise because she was a conservative.

Even babies can be controversial since babies can touch various nerves, from abortion politics to the apparent scourge of "mis-gendering" newborns.

But dogs are largely immune to political ugliness. The angriest complaints I get about my dog tweets — from people on both the left and right—are that I'm wasting apparently scarce resources on dogs when I could be expressing my anger about whatever outrage the complainers demand I be outraged about.

This is one of the reasons I love dogs. Because it is an occupational hazard in my line of work to be constantly drenched in the muck of politics, dogs are a safe harbor. They don't care about political correctness. They don't want to Make America Great Again or join the "resistance." They just want to pursue doggie goodness as they see it.

It strikes me that all of these things are connected. The increasing nastiness of our politics is a byproduct of our social isolation. We look to politics to provide the sense of meaning and belonging once found in community and religion, which is why everything is becoming politicized. The problem is that politics, particularly at the national level, is necessarily about disagreement, which is why it cannot provide the sense of unity people crave from it.

And that's one reason why dogs are so appealing. In an era when everything is a source of discord and politicization, it's good to have something that stands — and sits and fetches — apart. Because they're all good dogs.

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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:

Governments, like citizens often make good decisions, and, unfortunately poor decisions. Case in point: the new circle at Barclay and Highway 20.

It was a good decision to improve cross-traffic access with the circle construction. It was also a good decision to place art work in the circle and to hold a selection process. Then, some traffic person made the goofy decision to place four large rectangular motion arrow signs in all four circle entrances, effectively blocking any reasonable view of the artwork.

Beside being ugly, these signs provide no purpose. There are already circular arrow signs on all four approaches to the circle that direct traffic in a counter-clockwise direction. Furthermore, there are large, raised, concrete islands separating incoming and outgoing traffic in all four directions. A vehicle operator would have to drive over and through fixed concrete barriers to attempt turning in the

wrong direction.

If existing signage and concrete barriers can't deter wrong-way drivers, they have no business operating a vehicle. Those large, redundant arrow signs need to be removed, immediately, and a view of the circle restored. Still time to correct a poor decision.

Bruce Carpenter



To the Editor:

I'd like to respond to a couple of letters regarding the book "George," by Alex Gino, being approved for Sisters Middle School.

First I would say it is absolutely the responsibility of public schools to teach about gender politics. That is what social studies and government classes are for.

All politics are gender politics because we

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
AM Clouds/PM Sun 48/32	Partly Cloudy 50/29	Partly Cloudy 47/27	Sunny 47/29	Sunny 44/28	Sunny 43/30

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