

# KEIZERTIMES PUBLIC SQUARE

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## 2022.2?

By LYNDON ZAITZ

Several weeks ago I wrote about how January brings an opportunity to shape how the new year will be. I am always optimistic that things will turn out alright. What other choice do we have?

I am not ready to concede that my optimism was misplaced, but three weeks into the new year, that optimism is a bit tainted.

The nation's news announces new reason to be angry or frustrated. A visit to the local grocer demonstrates the effects of the global supply chain problem; we once were greeted with fully stocked shelves. Now? Not so much. It is human nature to want to place the blame for this problem on someone or something.

For many of our ills today, blame it on COVID. At the beginning of the pandemic, manufacturers across all industries slowed or shut down production due to lack of demand and sick employees. It was not only manufacturers, but also the transportation and shipping sectors. If you have been waiting for a gadget for months, it is most likely stuck on a cargo ship sitting outside the ports of southern California.

President Biden tried to alleviate the bottleneck by ordering ports to work around the clock to unload ships, but that is slow going. Recently Biden allowed teens to drive the trucks that deliver goods. That's a partial solution, but those teens need to be trained and certified. No comments about teen drivers, please; we have to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Inflation is running at the highest level in over 40 years. Many thought the days of hyper-inflation was a thing of the past. Prices are up 7 percent in the past year and experts think that trend will continue far into 2022. The higher prices you are paying is due not only to supply chain issues, but higher wages employers have to pay.

There are many tasks computers and artificial intelligence can accomplish, but jobs of service and healthcare workers cannot easily be foisted onto a HAL 9000.



The rush to spend trillions of COVID relief dollars to America's workers and households led many in the workforce to conclude they were better off living on the public dime. Millions of employees at all levels have decided to quit. When a business faces a worker shortage, potential employees are in the driver's seat and demand higher pay than is offered. Pay employees more, you have increase the price of what you sell.

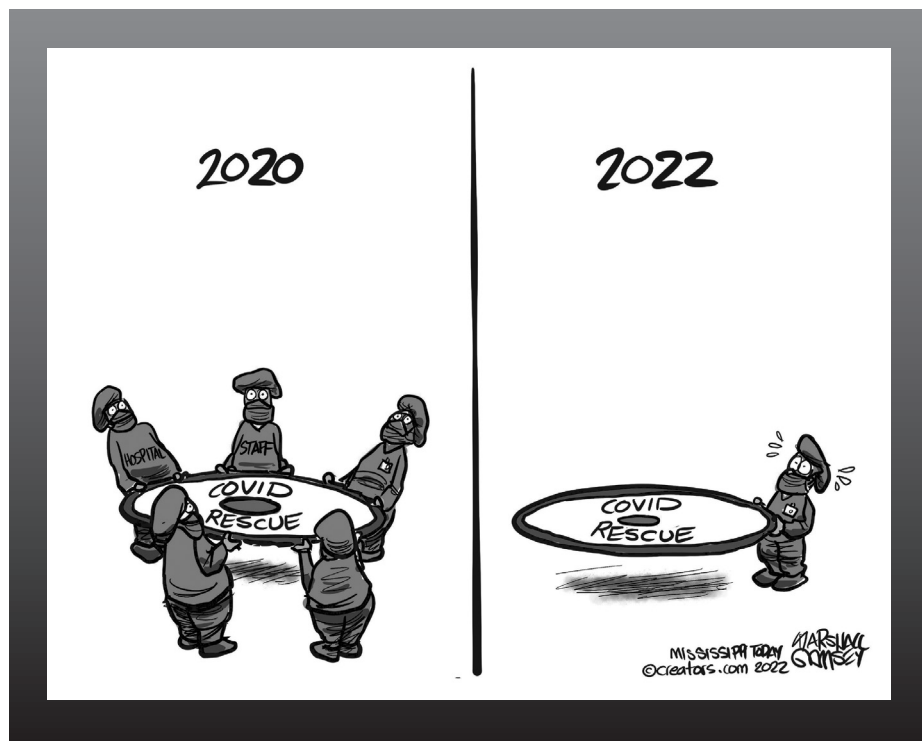
Dealing with a pandemic that spawned an economic crisis should not have been any different to address than the Great Depression of the 1930s. It required the full force of our nation's leaders, using every weapon in its arsenal. The country pulled together during the Great Depression, yet our response to COVID was defined by the polarization that cripples the nation.

By a 7 million vote margin, the country elected Joe Biden as president. More than 80 million people felt they were voting for experienced, stable leadership that would know what to do.

America needs leaders who will put their country in front of their political needs. They will do that when the people demand it. We may never completely eradicate COVID and its disastrous results, but if we all don't put our own and others wellness ahead of politics, we will continue to face challenges we have no control over.

If nothing else, people want some semblance of control of their lives. I am optimistic that, in the end, we Americans will pull up our backs and do what needs to be done.

(Lyndon Zaitz is publisher of the Keizertimes.)



## Does Joe Biden feel lucky?

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

President Joe Biden went to Atlanta last week to push for passage of what Democrats hail as "voting rights" legislation.

The speech prompted pundits to question the wisdom of a president who promised to bring the country together comparing opponents of the Democrats' Freedom to Vote Act and John Lewis Voting Rights Act to Jefferson Davis, George Wallace and Bull Connor.

Biden argued that the Freedom to Vote Act is necessary because Georgia Republicans passed SB 202, an election bill that represents "Jim Crow 2.0," and other states introduced laws to promote "voter suppression and election subversion."

Among changes in the Georgia bill are provisions that would limit drop boxes to one per 100,000 voters and require voter ID for absentee ballots.

"Rules that were implemented in Georgia to accommodate voters in the height of COVID, understandably need to be changed when COVID wanes," GOP strategist Alice Stewart told me.

Biden also invoked the most outrage-provoking provision of the Georgia law, which he said "makes it illegal to bring your neighbors, your fellow voters, food or water while they wait in line to vote."

After the bill passed, *The Washington Post* ran a story about a food truck that feeds voters as they stand in line. The headline: "New limits on food and water at Georgia's polls could hinder Black and low-income voters, advocates say."

What advocates should be saying is that well-run Georgia counties don't make voters stand in lines for hours and something must be done. Want to boost voter turnout? Insist on more workers, not water.

And another thing: To safeguard voters during COVID-19, Georgia expanded vote by mail, early voting and drop boxes. With two other options, voters didn't need to stand in line for hours.

And if they chose to stand in line, SB 202 allows for self-serve water stations.

"Line warming"—the practice of trying to "inappropriately influence voters in the crucial final moments before they cast their ballots"—already was



illegal, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger noted last year.

Raffensperger, by the way, is the Republican election official who rejected former President Donald Trump's telephone entreaty to "find 11,780 votes" to flip the Peach State in Trump's favor.

Biden praised the GOP election official, even as he likened the state election law he supported to the Confederacy and segregationists.

CNN's Jake Tapper asked the question that begs to be asked: Noting that New Jersey bans ballot harvesting and Delaware limits early voting, Tapper asked why "Democrats only complain about the strict voting regulations in red states, in Texas and Georgia," and not in Democratic states.

That is not a trick question.

The Democrats' Freedom to Vote Act is designed to tilt elections to the left. It would require all states to offer same-day registration, automatic "motor voter" registration, online registration and drop boxes.

The Freedom to Vote Act also undercuts voter ID requirements in states that require official photo IDs. "States that do not have a voter identification requirement would not be required to make any changes," according to a fact sheet put out by co-sponsor Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

And it would make Election Day a public holiday.

For an apparent power grab, Biden has turned up the pressure on moderate Democrats to change Senate rules—dump the filibuster—to get these measures passed.

He's pushing ahead even as voting-rights advocates skipped his speech. They pushed Biden to the precipice, and now they want distance.

So, here's the other question that begs to be asked: Are there 50 lemmings in the Senate?

(Creators Syndicate)

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