

THE Skanner
Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now

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The Skanner Newspaper, es-
tablished in October 1975, is a
weekly publication, published
every Wednesday by IMM Publi-
cations Inc.

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The Skanner is a member of the
National Newspaper Publishers
Association and West Coast Black
Publishers Association.

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Opinion

An Unwinnable Situation led to a Racist Electoral College

In life people face many moral dilemmas. The challenge of making choices when different values are in competition is not easy.

It is easy to imagine this happening between parents in living rooms after children have gone to bed; one says, “we should invest in Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman because war is a growth industry” and the other says “I don’t want our retirement to be paid from the blood of innocent people.”

It is true, in many years so-called “defense contractors” are a good investment because of their long-term predictable government contracts, and it is also true that Lockheed Martin makes products like Hellfire missiles that kill innocent civilians, just like all weapons/ammunition contractors do.

In the example provided, there are solutions. One option is to find more ethical investment options, another is to change retirement plans to necessitate a need for less monetary accumulation to reach financial targets. Maybe another option would be committing to pressure defense contractors and legislators to end practices that kill innocent civilians or the abolition of war, since it threatens all human life.



Wim Laven
Guest
Columnist

Moral dilemmas are a type of conflict and parties have choices in how they choose (or not) to engage with them. Avoiding conflict is a choice, just like compromising, collaborating, competing, or accommodating are strategic options. No strategy is guar-

“One option is to find more ethical investment options

anteed to win, or achieve desired results, but strategic choices can have dramatic impacts on outcomes.

Unfortunately, sometimes in life we face dilemmas where winning is not obtainable. In popular culture this is sometimes referred to as Kobayashi Maru, a reference to a training exercise in Star Trek with a no-win scenario.

The creation of the US Constitution in some ways is a product of such dilemmas, the

starkest being the existence of chattel slavery in some states. Slave states regarded Black people as property; states that had rejected slavery regarded Black people as...people, but even those states were willing to settle to form the first modern democracy with an actual constitution.

U.S. history as taught in some districts teaches about the 3/5ths Compromise as a great achievement. It was a solution between delegates from Northern and Southern states at the Constitutional Convention in 1787: slaves would be counted as 3/5ths of a person for determining taxation and representation in the House of Representatives. While one side held that slavery directly contradicted liberty, they also believed in limited government and property rights. The other side believed in racial prejudice—white supremacy—which thoroughly supported a slave-based agricultural system.

There was no winning. The parties (the North and South) were not going to change the minds of the other side. It is remarkable, and ugly, to read about this triumphant and appalling part of U.S. history. But a belief in the need for and a commitment to unity held the day. Of course, I have

a biased take, as everyone does; either you think slavery is morally repugnant, or you do not. The Founders clearly concluded that no compromise means no Constitution.

The Electoral College was established to execute the compromise. There would not be a direct democracy for a number or reasons, the least of which being a negation to the principle: one person, one vote. Many people would be counted towards representation but without the privilege of casting a vote. The special electors would represent the population, and this would balance between the interests of the North and the South.

At that time, it was a balancing act. The issue of slavery was avoided or at least put on hold. Other concessions were written into the Constitution to prevent the abolition of the slave trade, but only for 20 years; James Madison wrote: “It seems now to be pretty well understood that the real difference of interests lies not between the large and small but between the northern and southern states. The institution of slavery and its consequences form the line of discrimination.”

Read the rest of this commentary at
TheSkanner.com

Honor Rosa Parks, Not Through Words, but Action

February 4 is Rosa Parks’ birthday. It is also Transit Equity Day. These days are tied together because Rosa Parks is an iconic figure among many of the civil rights era who chose the tactic of refusing to give up her seat on the bus. And transit advocates, like myself, want to make the connection to this act of resistance to highlight the rights of all people to high-quality public transportation powered by clean and renewable energy and organized labor.

But for far too long, policy-makers in Washington have prioritized highways and cars over public transit. This has devastating impacts not only for the climate crisis but on the budgets of local transit agencies and communities across the nation.

A new piece of legislation introduced last month by Congressman Hank Johnson from the Atlanta area would change that. The bill titled, “Stronger Communities through Better Transit Act” will provide high-quality transit to communities across the country.

The fact of the matter is the COVID pandemic and recovery forever changed how our communities function, work, socialize, and commute. It also dramatically showed



Bakari Height
Guest
Columnist

that public transit is essential to our communities, local economies, and the lives of millions of people across the country. Essential workers depend on and operate transit, small businesses depend on transit, and historically marginalized communities depend on transit. Transit is a key component of economic recovery and a more environmentally sustainable society, and it’s a road to equity for disconnected communities—rural, urban, and suburban.

The recently introduced legislation would create a new formula grant program available to all transit agencies to increase service frequency and dependability so that people don’t have to wait so long for the bus, to provide additional hours of service so that those who don’t work white-collar hours can still get to their jobs; and to add new, frequent service to underserved communities.

For decades, the federal government has supported the cost of operating avia-

tion through air traffic control and the cost of shipping through investment in ports and the management of locks and dams in the inland waterways. These are essential services for the movement of goods and people. Operating high-quality transit is just as essential to get people to employment and to give businesses access to talent and

“Every dollar invested in transit offers a 5-to-1 return

customers. And it is time for Washington to treat it as such.

While Congress has taken vital steps in recent years to fund transit capital projects like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the fact of the matter is that the lack of congressional action on operations funding, which this latest bill would provide, has led to critical funding shortfalls at numerous transit agencies and has left many in fiscal trouble.

This new legislation will help fix that.

The truth of the matter is that in communities throughout the country transit is a driver of economic growth, jobs, and opportunity for many residents. Nationally, tens

of millions of people in the U.S.—from small rural towns to major urban centers—rely on public transit to get to work every day, generating trillions of dollars in economic activity. Every dollar invested in transit offers a 5-to-1 return, and every \$1 billion invested in public transit produces 50,000 jobs. Transit agencies are often among the largest employers in their cities.

We also know the climate crisis is not coming; it is here now. And it’s getting worse by the day. We’ve seen it all around us on a near daily basis. It is impacting our economy and nearly every aspect of our daily lives. Investing in public transit is one of the top ways we can help address the climate crisis on the scale that is needed.

In other words, an investment in transit by policymakers would be a win-win. A win economically and a win in our efforts to address the climate crisis.

And it is far past time for Washington to ensure that public transit does not just recover from COVID but expands to create more-sustainable and -prosperous communities.

We need to honor Rosa Parks not just through words, but through action. And that is what this bill will do.