Opinion

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Baker City, Oregon

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EDITORIAL

Grateful for Jubilee, parade and all

Miners Jubilee wouldn't have been the same without the parade.

Fortunately we won't have to deal with an ersatz version of one of Baker City's signature summer events.

Last week, with just 12 parade entries signed up — typically there are about 60 — Shelly Cutler, executive director of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, issued a call for more.

"Nobody wants to go to a parade that only has 12 entries," she told the Herald.

The community, as it so often does here, responded with speed and enthusiasm.

In less than four days, the number of entries more than doubled, to 26 as of Monday, July 12, when Cutler announced that the Miners Jubilee parade would happen as usual on Saturday morning.

As of Tuesday afternoon there were 31.

Cutler said about a dozen of the entries are from groups or businesses that previously hadn't participated in the Miners Jubilee parade.

Thanks to them, and to everyone else who is devoting time and effort to make the parade possible.

The procession will start at 11 a.m. and follow the usual route. From the start at Baker Middle School, entries will travel east on Broadway Street, turn south onto Second Street, then east on Valley Avenue and then north on Main Street for the final stretch to the finish at Madison Street.

The parade is another positive sign that the summer of 2021 is a very different season than its immediate predecessor, when so much was canceled, or diminished, due to the pandemic.

The Baker City Cycling Classic returned.

This weekend Miners Jubilee is back, along with the Baker City Bronc Riding competition Friday evening and the Bull Riding event Saturday evening.

Later this summer, the Baker County Fair, which was somewhat constricted in 2020, will return as usual, and so will the East-West Shrine All-Star Football Game, which was canceled a year ago.

Even the weather appears to be cooperating — sort of.

The heat will persist this weekend, but Friday and Saturday, at least, look to be a few degrees cooler than what we've endured since late June.

But regardless of the temperature, it will be refreshing to again see a community gathering after a long period marked by isolation.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

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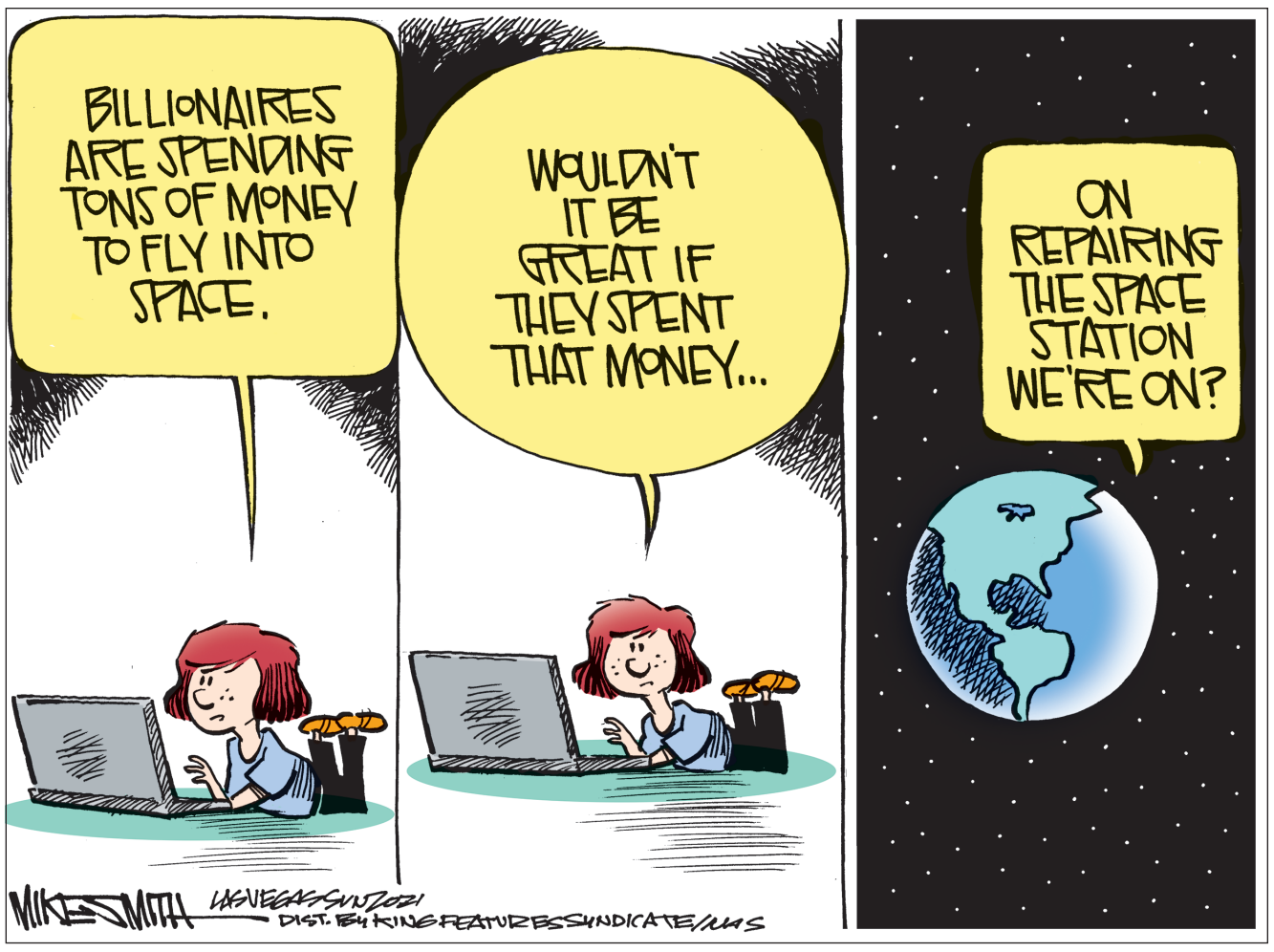

Will Democrats suffer another midterm election disaster?

By Stuart Rothenberg
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Democrats lost 47 House seats in the 1966 midterm elections, and that result still "haunts" them, wrote Washington Post columnist Charles Lane recently. But should it?

After noting President Joe Biden's solid job approval numbers and widespread predictions of a strong economic recovery over the next year and a half, Lane listed a few developments that unnerved voters prior to the 1966 midterms and could do so again next year, including a surge in inflation, a spike in crime (especially the homicide rate), and a "backlash against the racial-justice achievements of the Johnson administration by White voters who often blamed the civil rights movement for urban uprisings in Watts in 1965 and Cleveland in 1966."

Republican candidates used those wedge issues and others to turn out GOP voters and attract traditionally Democratic voters who were fearful about the present and the future.

Those same controversies are in the news today, and, while we don't yet know what the 2022 political environment will be like, Republicans are likely to use them as the party did in 1966 in trying to define next year's midterms.

"Democrats' control of Washington may hinge on their ability to address legitimate concerns about inflation and crime, without abandoning the drive for racial justice — or allowing their most progressive voices to alienate suburban moderates," wrote Lane in his column.

And yet, while there are similarities between 1966 and 2022, there are also obvious differences.

Ronald Reagan broke up the New Deal coalition in 1980. Donald Trump dramatically scrambled the electorate in 2016 and again in 2018, changing the tone of our politics. The internet has changed how we communicate, and voter confidence in crucial institutions has been undermined. The country is much less white and more suburban now than it was 55 years ago, and we are much more ideologically polarized than we were in 1966.

"... recent history has demonstrated that voters are unpredictable, and midterms remain dangerous for the party holding the White House."

But the fundamental shape of the parties going into the 1966 and 2022 midterms is also dramatically different.

If the Republican Party were a stock, we would say that it was seriously "over-sold" going into the 1966 elections.

Democrats had gained 37 seats in the 1964 elections, giving them a huge 295-140 seat advantage in the House of Representatives.

The debacle of Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign had cost the GOP seats they never should have lost, so the 1966 midterms offered them a raft of easy targets, which helped the Republicans snap back from the pummeling they took only two years earlier.

The 47-seat Republican gain in 1966 brought the party up near its "normal" range. In the seven House elections from 1960 to 1972, the GOP won anywhere from as few as 175 House seats to as many as 192 — except in 1964, when the party captured a paltry 140.

Republicans defeated 26 House Democratic freshman members in the 1966 midterms. Those Democrats had been swept into Congress on the coattails of Lyndon Johnson's landslide against Goldwater but lost their seats two years later when "normalcy" returned.

According to Congressional Quarterly's Greg Giroux and my own district-by-district count, almost half of those freshman Democrats who won in 1964 but lost two years later — 12 — came from only three Midwest states: Iowa (four seats), Michigan (five seats) and Ohio (three seats).

The large GOP gain was also fueled by redistricting, which occurred because of the Supreme Court's "one man, one vote" ruling. (See the High Court's February 1964 ruling in Wesberry v. Sanders.)

Republicans won six of seven districts that were created when incumbent House members ran in different districts, leaving their previous seats open. The open districts included Florida's 10th, Indiana's 7th, New Jersey's 1st, Ohio's 15th, Pennsylvania's 7th, Texas' 23rd, and Texas' 7th, which sent a Republican named George H.W. Bush to the House.

The current House lineup and the political dynamics are very different.

First, there are 220 Democrats and 211 Republicans in the House, with four vacancies in districts split evenly between the two parties. Neither party is dramatically overrepresented or underrepresented.

Second, The GOP gained 12 seats in 2020, winning back some districts the party would not have lost in 2018 had it not been for Trump alienating college-educated whites who live in metropolitan areas.

Of course, there are still some districts like that where Democrats won in 2018 and again in 2020. Some of those seats might well be vulnerable next year if the midterm dynamic hurts Biden's party in House races around the country.

Third, the country is so polarized and defined by partisanship that it will be difficult (though not impossible) for Republicans to pick up the four dozen seats that they would need to equal their gains of 1966.

Only 16 congressional districts split their tickets on the 2020 presidential and House races — nine districts voted for Biden for president and a Republican for the House, while seven districts voted for Trump in 2020 but a Democrat for the House.

This extreme polarization dampens the possibility of large House swings, since there are relatively few voters who see both parties as acceptable.

Still, Lane is surely correct that some of the themes and issues of 1966 could play a role again in 2022, and Democrats ought not ignore history.

While the parties' fundamentals suggest a large 40-plus swing is unlikely given the current partisan distribution of seats, recent history has demonstrated that voters are unpredictable, and midterms remain dangerous for the party holding the White House.

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov

Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Councilors Lynette Perry, Jason Spriet, Kerry McQuisten, Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon, Heather Sells and Johnny Waggoner Sr.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Jonathan Cannon, city manager; Ray Duman, police chief; Sean Lee, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Noodle Perkins, roadmaster; Greg Baxter, district attorney; Alice Durflinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.