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WHAT CLYBURN SAVED

The civil rights revolution is not dead.

And when Rep. James Clyburn exhorted his fellow South Carolina African Americans to vote for Joe Biden, this is what he was really saying:

It's time to stand up to the Republican-nominated federal judges and the Trump administration appointees who are reversing the expansion of democracy that the civil rights revolution sought for all Americans, black or white, straight or gay, native-born or immigrants.

In a sense, that has become one of the underlying messages of the surprising turn in the Democratic presidential race, as large numbers of African Americans in the South and moderate suburbanites in the North fueled the comeback that restored Biden's front-runner status.

For the last dozen years, following Barack Obama's election in 2008, Republicans on the state and national levels have engaged in a concerted effort to roll back the voting rights advances of the 1960s, epitomized by enactment in 1965 of the Voting Rights Act. Rather than expand the electorate, they have sought to contract it.

As a reporter and columnist, I've covered it all from the drives in the 1960s for voting rights and school desegregation in the South to the 21st century GOP counter-attack. Nothing has been more dispiriting than to see this negative turn in the federal courts, which once helped produce those advances, and the collapse of the bipartisan congressional coalitions, which enacted them.

Let's not forget, it's only since Obama's election that Republican fears of the ascending voting majority of liberal-to-moderate whites and the country's growing minority population have prompted the GOP to turn away from the equal rights advances it initially helped to enact.

The most deadly assault has come from, of all places, the U.S. Supreme Court, most notably its 2013 decision that invalidated the provision of the Voting Rights Act that required the federal government to pre-clear voting law changes, mainly in Southern states like Texas with historical records of discrimination.

No institution so epitomizes the backlash as the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Three ground-backing Republican jurists, nominees of President Dwight Eisenhower, once led its assault on the segregation and illegalities of the past.

Now, GOP appointees have made it a conservative bastion, most recently responsible for declaring unconstitutional a measure aimed at helping millions of less fortunate Americans, black and white, the Affordable Care Act.

Half of the states have enacted restrictive voting legislation since 2010, reports New York University's Brennan Center, almost all by Republican governors and legislatures.

They include shortening pre-voting periods, enacting stricter voter identification requirements, reducing the number of voting places despite a growing population, and making registration harder for college students.

In some places, the impact has been significantly

politically: Analyses showed a major factor in Trump's narrow 2016 Wisconsin victory was the state's voter ID law's effect in discouraging minority voting; GOP leaders acknowledged that was one of the measure's goals.

The ostensible reason for the court's voting rights decision was that its list of targeted states was outdated.

To be fair, that argument had some merit, and the call for Congress to update it made some sense — on paper.

But in a day of partisan gridlock, surely some of the astute jurists who wrote that decision knew that the chances of corrective measures were minimal.

There has been a concerted effort to roll back the voting rights advances of the 1960s.

It's worth noting that Chief Justice John Roberts has displayed animosity toward the Voting Rights Law from his earliest days as a young government lawyer.

Predictably, congressional Democrats introduced measures to update the law, and, equally predictably, Republicans looked the other way.

The House voted late last year to restore the pre-clearance authority, with just one Republican vote, sending the legislation to certain death at the hands of Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, the self-styled "grim reaper" of liberal legislation.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration has sided in some key judicial cases with efforts to limit voting rights, unlike prior administrations, which supported efforts to expand voting.

When the history of Biden's comeback is written, and especially if he goes on to win the Democratic nomination and defeat Trump, accounts will cite Clyburn's endorsement as a crucial moment.

As Peggy Noonan noted in a perceptive column in *The Wall Street Journal*, his speech wasn't just an endorsement but "a template" for Biden's campaign "about the price you'll pay to stand where you stand."

And who could be a more appropriate person to do so than Clyburn?

Before becoming a powerful congressional figure and the No. 3 leader of the House Democratic majority, he was one of those young African-American students who led the fight for equality by demonstrating and getting themselves arrested to tear down legal barriers.

Along with the even more fabled Rep. John Lewis of Georgia, Clyburn is one of the last of those groundbreakers to be active in public life.

It would serve him and history well if the campaign for which his speech reversed Biden's fortunes could become the administration that reversed the retreat from the commitments many believed had become a permanent part of American life.

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LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTER

JEFF DANZIGER THE RUTLAND HERALD

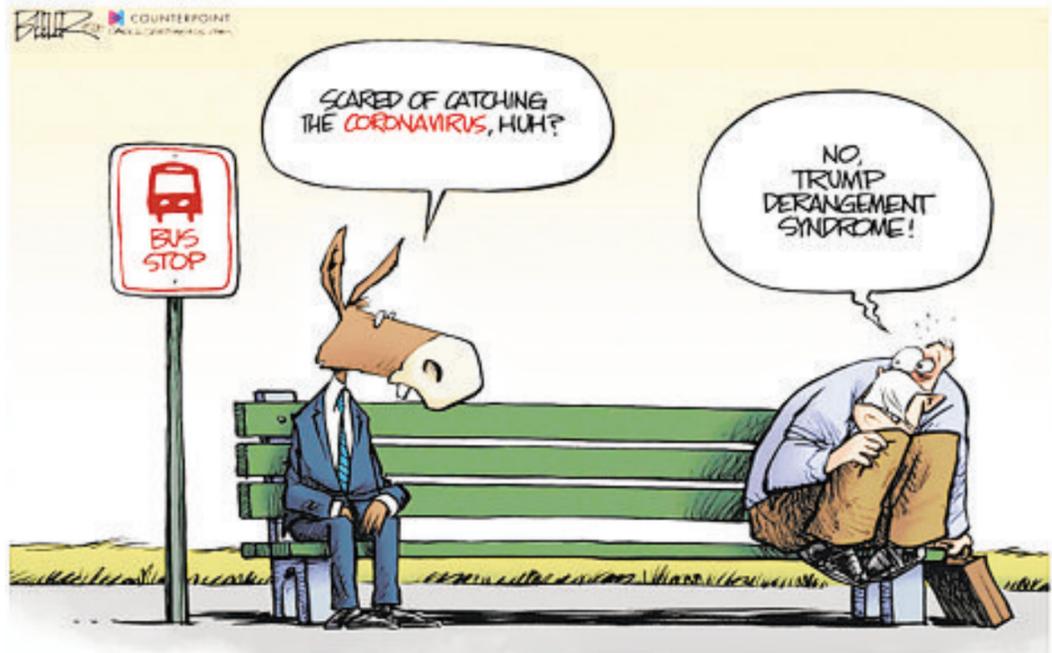
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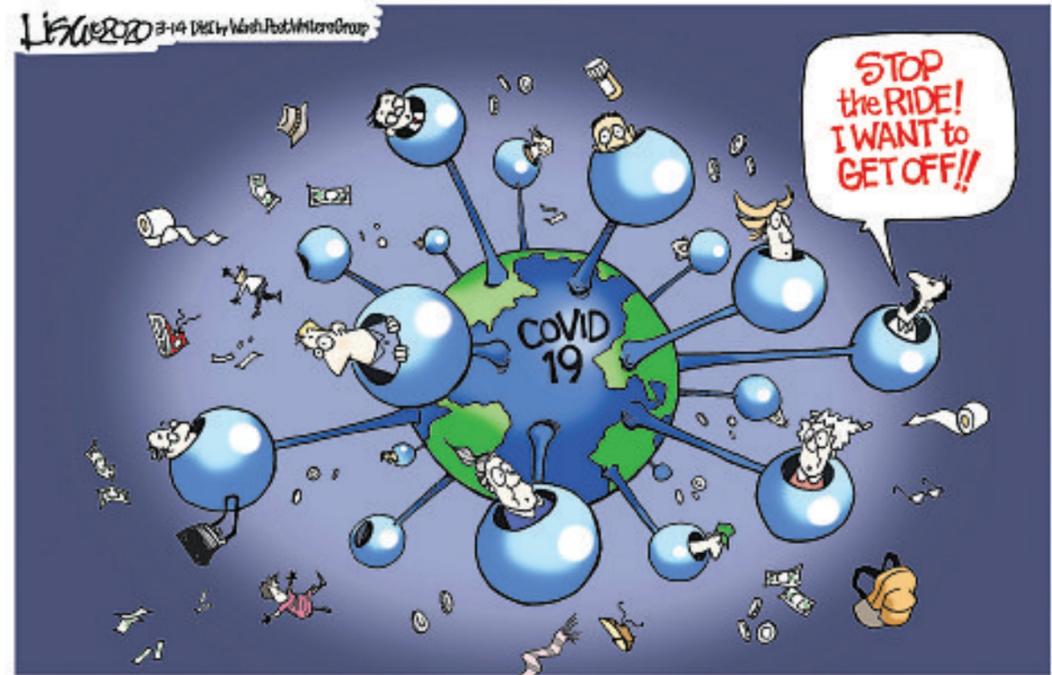
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NATE BEELER COUNTERPOINT



LISA BENSON THE WASHINGTON POST WRITERS GROUP



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Everyone is doing it' is not a valid excuse

Re "City overrules panel to OK 6-story tower" (March 9): Councilman Chris Ward said he voted to overrule the county's Airport Land Use Commission and allow the construction of a six-story apartment building under the San Diego International Airport flight path because there were other and taller buildings already there. This is tantamount to a youngster's explanation that "everyone's doing it." Who is the adult in the room? Why is it OK to follow one bad decision with another?

Judy About
North Park

has been the author of his own conduct since he became an adult.

He served as a Marine and learned what it means to serve his country. Then he became a politician and it all became about serving himself.

Maybe the temptation to take money for his family and personal jaunts was too much for him to resist. But what explains the months of denials and then the cowardly accusation that it was all a witch hunt manufactured by Democrats?

What's happened to character in our politicians today? Or, should I qualify, our Republican politicians?

Richard Ackermann
San Diego

Hunter's demise leaves unanswered questions

Re "Hunter attorneys seek home confinement instead of federal prison" (March 12): Duncan Hunter

Campa-Najjar can't be counted out just yet

Re "An Issa win in November is not sure thing, but it's close" (March 8): Columnist Michael Smolens

suggests that Darrell Issa's Democratic opponent, Ammar Campa-Najjar, no longer has an opponent weighed down by tremendous baggage (as in Duncan Hunter).

I argue to the contrary. Most notably, Issa doesn't really live in the 50th Congressional District that he seeks to represent. He lives in Vista, in the 49th, although I understand he has changed his polling place to the home of his mother in Bonsall.

Does that free Issa from being labeled a "carpet-bagger"? I don't think so.

Robert Lerner
Valley Center

Unused bike lanes replace needed parking

I moved my practice to the Landmark Centre offices on Balboa Avenue 20 years ago because of its locale and parking opportunities.

Over the years, as the complex filled up, parking became a premium and

many residents parked on Balboa, near State Route 163, to provide space for clients. As you might guess, suddenly that stretch of Balboa, basically the on-ramp to the 163, became a bike lane.

And, poof, we all collected \$52 tickets. I have never seen a bike here, nor will I ever, as, where would it be going? So, without any notice, we lost 15 to 20 crucial parking spaces.

To solve what problem? A common text now is "I'm late for my appointment, because there are no parking spaces, anywhere!" Thanks, mayor.

Gene Ondrusek
San Diego

Someone should review the UC faculty report

Re "University of California system shouldn't drop SAT or ACT for admission" (March 9): Numerous studies, including from the University of California, have shown that high school grades are stronger predic-

tors of student success than tests such as the SAT and ACT.

The UC faculty task force report's finding that the opposite is true deserves greater scrutiny, especially to ensure it properly accounts for socioeconomic factors. Admissions tests are far more stratified by race and income than high school grades.

If the UC system is truly committed to a student body that mirrors California's population, it has not made a case for maintaining the SAT for another nine years.

Pamela Burdman
Berkeley

Nation must act to save our bee populations

Re "Backyard gardeners can help bees survive" (Feb. 29): The threat of colony collapse deserves immediate attention from our state policymakers. Bees are our most important pollinators — hundreds of thousands of plants depend on their pollination.

Large-scale bee deaths have dire consequences for our environment and global food supply.

Matt Bender
Cardiff-by-the-Sea

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