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## OUR VIEW: THE REPUBLIC

# Some GOP senators support democracy

President Donald Trump isn't merely contesting the outcome of a free and fair election. He's striking at the pillars of the American republican form of government that gives sovereignty to the people.

### Why it matters

President Donald Trump has become the greatest threat to our modern Republic.

And a legion of misguided GOP legislators see their support of his illegitimate claims of election fraud as a bigger priority than standing with the people who they represent, millions of whom elected Joe Biden.

It's heartening to see a growing chorus of other Republicans strongly condemn Trump and his congressional enablers. Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah and Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania

have been prominent among those condemning Trump's attempt to not only delegitimize the election, but the basis of the election itself.

Trump put his unlimited electoral avarice on display last week when he tried to corrupt a Georgia election official, demanding he "find" the 11,000 votes that would overturn that state's results, which went for Biden. A transcript of the phone conversation showed Trump making mafia-like threats and at one point suggested White House lawyers could be "deputized" to recount Georgia votes.

Said Trump: "I need only 11,000 votes. Fellas. I need 11,000 votes. Give me a break."

A group of 10 senators that included Republicans Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana issued a statement saying the "2020 election is over." They said further attempts to cast doubt on the election's legitimacy are "contrary to the clearly expressed will of the American people and only serve to undermine Americans' confidence in the already determined election results."

Every living former secretary of defense, from both parties, signed onto in an op-ed that said the election is over and the time for questioning results has passed. They said any use of the military to overturn the election would be "unlawful" and "unconstitutional."

Republican Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland said the "scheme by members of Congress to reject the certification of the presidential election makes a mockery of our system and who we are as Americans."

Sasse said he would not be following senators such as Josh Hawley, R-Missouri, or Ted Cruz, R-Texas, who he said are engaging in a "dangerous ploy" to threaten democracy and elections with their challenge to the certified Electoral College count.

The consent of the governed has been a hallmark of American democracy. Trump wants to revoke that consent. Nothing could be a bigger threat.

This unprecedented attack on the U.S. republican form of government where people direct the government can only be thwarted by all of us standing behind the GOP senators who oppose Trump's threats.

## OTHER VIEW

# An undeserved honor

Los Angeles Times

It's more than a little ironic that President Trump has decided to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to, of all people, a California congressman who has spent the last few years attacking some of the United States' most fundamental freedoms — namely, freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

But, then again, nothing should surprise us in these last few days of the Trump administration, when the outgoing one-term president has used awards, pardons and other presidential prerogatives to reward his allies and score political points.

Still, Rep. Devin Nunes is hardly a worthy recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, an award given to men and women who have

made especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors. It is the nation's highest civilian honor.

What was Nunes' especially meritorious contribution? He made himself one of Trump's most ardent and outlandish defenders in Congress. Nunes used his position on the Intelligence Committee to try to undermine its investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Trump isn't the first president to hand out presidential medals to his political allies. But among the men and women that presidents have chosen to honor, Nunes is in a class of his own. And not in a good way.

FOUNDED IN 1887

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APPROXIMATELY 100 AMERICANS DIED FROM COVID-19 DURING THIS PHONE CALL

## YOUR VIEWS

# Kind acts restore faith in humanity

On Dec. 26, I took my wife on a drive to do some store errands. We were at a store on Mankato's hill-top. As we backed out of our parking spot, at least two people pointed out we had a very low front tire.

We thanked them and as we backed out, a gentleman offered to pump up our tire by using a pump he had in his vehicle.

This type of action restores our faith in humanity.

Bob Olson  
Mankato

## Trump consistently downplayed virus

Just days ago, Bob Jentges sent a letter to the editor applauding Trump's response to the virus with a

carefully curated timeline that mentioned some of the highlights of the United States' official response to the ongoing pandemic.

He mentioned that as early as Jan. 31, 2020, travel from China had already been banned. What he did not include was when a month later, on Feb. 28, Trump called COVID-19 "(Democrats') new hoax."

Now, the opposition claims he was saying that the way Democrats were framing his response was a hoax and not the virus itself. I will, however, point out that in that quote, he had only just referred to the reasons for his impeachment as the last "hoax" and went on to say "it's their new hoax" about the virus for context.

He was clearly claiming the reasons for his impeachment were utterly fake in the previous sentence when

he referred to them as a hoax, so how could one not interpret his subsequent claim that "it's their new hoax" to mean the same, namely, that it (the virus) is also utterly nonsensical and fake?

On the other hand, regardless of this, he rarely wore masks in public, never required masks at his events and failed to act safely even within his own Cabinet, causing both himself and several of his close aides to also contract the virus, requiring his own and others' hospitalizations.

How can we expect him to convince Americans to act safely when he is unable to do so himself? I wonder if he still believes it's the hoax he claimed it was.

Dalton Myers  
St. Peter

# Shift to perennials for food production

## Our dependency on annual crops is destroying the land

By Jim VanDerPol

For MinnPost

An opportunity came along last summer to do some good for the Earth and at the same time engage in a form of distraction late in my working life. Owners of a piece of property a distance from our family farm in western Minnesota reached out and asked if we were interested in renting 120 acres that was coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program.

They found us based on what they heard we had done on our own farm, located west of Willmar in Chippewa County. We have in the last three decades converted a small 320-acre crop farm into a cattle and hog operation that sells all the meats produced directly to stores and individuals. I told them I would only use the land for grazing.

The land is damaged, as is all land in agricultural use. Because it is on glacial till with a gravel subsoil and steep slopes, it is designated by the government's Natural Resources Conservation Agency as highly erodible. The damage is stark. As a measure of the trend in agriculture in the 30-plus years this farm has been in standing, unused grass, it is possible to step down from the property corner a vertical distance of at least 6 feet to the corner of the adjacent corn field. This drop is a crude measure of row crop agriculture's breathtaking soil loss to the creek below in that time.

Later, I was to discover even earlier damage, swales hidden in this neighboring field that hadn't been tilled in decades. The swales caused the pickup to buck and roll as I drove from one area to another through standing grass. I could feel with my feet where the farmer, the ancestor of the current owner, had planted corn on slopes far too steep half a century and more ago, and created gullies that carried soil to the bottom.

### Managed grazing needed

I showed the owners the stunted brome grass on the hilltops and sides where it was mixed with goldenrod, and the lush patches of reed canary grass and cattaills in the low areas between the hills. We saw how the soil was thin with gravel exposed in places on the hills, but very thick at the bottoms where water often stood. I made the argument that the land

needed animals managed in a planned grazing system. Managed grazing will develop a strong and extensive root system under the grass. Those roots will keep rainfall in place and more soil on the hills, drying and improving the low creases, and also begin the process of returning atmospheric carbon to the soil, where much of it came from over the years of tillage.

So they asked me to build the fence I envisioned and bring my cattle in. I spent the summer rolling up miles of old barbed wire, pulling out posts and cutting weedy trees. A crew built the perimeter fence in August. I constructed the cross fences, dividing the 120 acres into seven large grazing paddocks. A well was drilled and so we were ready for the cows next April.

Four pairs of leather gloves and two shirts ruined by the barbed wire didn't dim the satisfaction I took in the pandemic summer's work. It seemed to push toward a turning.

Then, another turning: Democrat Collin Peterson, chair of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, lost the seat he had long held here in the rural Trump wave.

### Support for the largest operations

Peterson based his representation of the 7th Congressional District upon speaking for the largest half-dozen or so crops farmers in each county. He kept the money flowing to these operations, cloaking it in heavily subsidized crop insurance. This crop support inevitably got bid into increasing land values as growing farm operations bid up both land values and rents in what was actually a publicly supported effort to grow more corn, soybeans and wheat. This locks out young start-up farmers, traditional livestock farmers and stymies efforts to get livestock back on the land.

CRP, established in 1985 to take fragile lands out of production, offers regular payments over the 10- to 15-year life of the contract. Land must be established in a cover crop, generally a perennial grass, and noxious weeds must be controlled. There are slightly over a million acres currently enrolled in Minnesota.

I would like to have stood with Peterson, who thinks of CRP more in terms of crop supply control, viewing the 6-foot drop off to the adjacent

corn field to get his take on the effect of row cropping at work.

For Earth to remain viable for human habitation for more than a few decades, agriculture must change.

### Move toward perennials

It must give up its centuries-old fascination with annual crops like wheat and corn, and begin the study of how perennial plants fit food production. Perennial plants, properly managed as under a good planned grazing regimen, incorporate atmospheric carbon into the soil as organic matter, thus beginning to reverse centuries of burning off carbon through tillage. Even carefully planned rotations of annual plants without tillage will not safeguard soil and build organic matter like a good stand of perennials.

Perennial plants must be developed for food production instead of this shortsighted focus on breeding plants that can withstand chemical applications. Wes and Dana Jackson established the Land Institute, a nonprofit research center in Salina, Kansas, in 1976, and have been working on perennial replacements for annual crops ever since. They and their staff developed Kernza from intermediate wheatgrass, useful for both grazing and its wheat-like kernel. It is currently being distributed and commercialized by the University of Minnesota with the help of certain grain milling and baking businesses. Another ongoing study is of Illinois Bundeeflower, a potential protein source for livestock and humans.

Production of perennial crops requires close on-site management driven by observation, experience and a feel for natural systems. This is especially evident for Kernza production, which is best done by a mix of cropping and livestock systems. We have few people in the farm population even capable of this breadth of management anymore. A different set of farming skills and a new attitude are required. It will take both time and financial stability to learn them, and then to apply them. The need for decision-making based upon observation and knowledge of place and its biology presupposes that operations cannot be huge. Perennial agriculture will create a different human social structure around it.

Jim VanDerPol and his family have been farming and learning from the land for nearly 45 years. He has been writing about what he sees for about as long.