

OUR VIEWS

Time limits on parking a wise move

Rumors about a parking shortage in downtown Janesville have been greatly exaggerated.

Unless there's a holiday parade or some other special event, an available space is almost always within a block or so of any downtown destination.

But the downtown has some spaces that could be used more efficiently, and the city took steps this past month to replace some all-day parking spots with two-hour spots.

Imposing time limits for parking spaces near stores and restaurants is a customer-friendly move. We'd like to think people who work or live in the downtown would be courteous enough to avoid parking in front of downtown businesses, but that's not a reasonable expectation. Many people will stay indefinitely in a spot unless they're given a time limit. Two hours is enough time for most people to do their shopping or dining in the downtown, ensuring others will also get easy access to the same businesses.

Of course, the city will need to commit to enforcing the new rules if people are to respect these new limits. If the two-hour limit signs end up being ignored like scarecrows in a corn field, business owners will again become frustrated with the parking situation.

Ideally, the changes will force people who had used the all-day spots to move to locations farther from businesses. Ultimately, the downtown parking arrangement should function like a parking lot at a big-box store, with employees parking farthest from store entrances and the customers getting the premium spots.

Downtown has ample parking availability, and the city has been wise not to fall into the trap of asking whether more parking is needed. The real question is whether existing spaces are being used efficiently. With more two-hour parking added, we can confidently say yes.

Speak your mind

Write a letter to the editor

What are your thoughts?

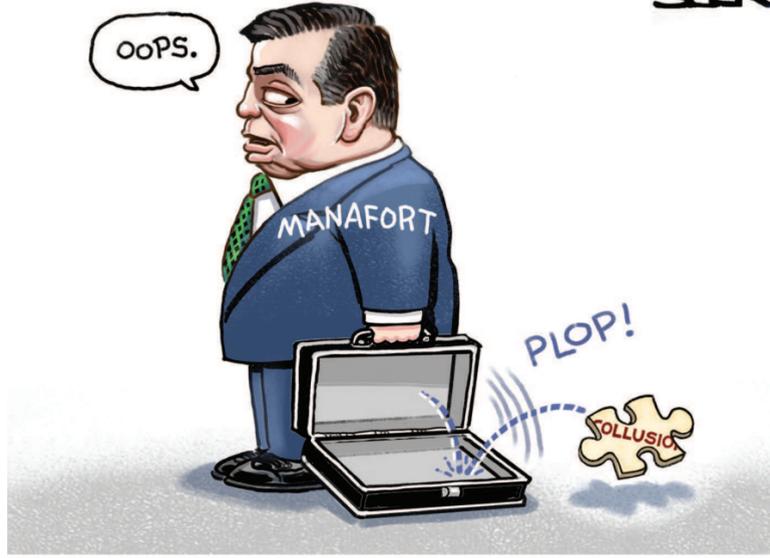
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OTHER VIEWS

Foreigners shape up Americans

The kids are bratty, the parents fighting, the homes a mess. It's remarkable how American domestic life can breed so much dissatisfaction amid so much plenty.

Foreigners have made an industry of observing this paradox and offering Americans fixes. Restoring tranquility and, frankly, dignity is the goal.

Start with the Japanese commissar of decluttering, Marie Kondo. Her Netflix series, based on her best-seller, "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," digs into the psychic pain lurking beneath American affluence.

Kondo visits Californians embarrassed by their multiple closets bulging with clothes they barely remember buying (or wearing). Episode one features the parents of two small children.

Rachel and Kevin are at each other's throat. A big issue for Kevin is that they pay someone just to do the laundry because Rachel doesn't like doing laundry. He works 60 hours a week, and she is home most of the time with the kids.

Her explanation: "My kids are just like, running around and being crazy, and we never get anything done."

That's true. The little girl constantly interrupts with her demands. Her parents, meanwhile, seem intent on asking the little tyke for approval. "Do you like that?" "Are you having fun?" And praise is nonstop. "You look so pretty."

Perhaps some French mothers can offer guidance, as documented in the book "Bringing Up Bebe." Author Pamela Druckerman, an American living in Paris, observed that while her children were throwing tantrums on restaurant floors, the French children were eating calmly with their parents.

"Why don't my French friends ever need to rush off the phone because their kids are demanding something?" Druckerman writes. "Why haven't their living rooms been taken over by teepees and toy kitchens, the way ours has?"

For the long answer, read the book. The short answer is that the French "educate" rather than "discipline" their children. They don't yell at the little ones but rather convey the idea that when they want the children to

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stop doing something, they mean it.

Back in California, Kondo notes, "American kitchens are so large." She smiles sweetly. Too bad the dishes are so piled up that you can barely see the expensive stone counters.

Kondo has the parents heap everyone's clothes on a bed. The stack approaches the ceiling. She engages in some hocus-pocus about thanking the clothes, but the exercise centers on getting rid of things that no longer serve.

Kondo herself is a model of cleanliness and grooming. She wears spotless white tops with simple skirts. The couple, for all their mass of clothes, don't dress particularly well.

I would love to have seen Kondo's thought bubble as she helped Rachel neatly fold a pair of jeans so ripped up that parts hung off her knees. Far be it from me to turn judgmental on a fashion item adopted by masses of good Americans. I'll pass that job on to Tim Gunn, an esteemed fashion consultant who, although American, possesses a good amount of Old World starch.

"Jeans are an American classic," he states. However, "the ratty, holey, horribly faded distressed denim—don't wear it!"

Before leaving, let's put in a good word for Tan France, the fashion expert on the Atlanta-based "Queer Eye." France is a Brit of Pakistani origin. His mission is to coax his American men out of their shabby T-shirts and dilapidated running shoes and into neat, stylish outfits.

He finds himself asking basics, such as "Do you have a laundry basket?" and "A hoodie is your favorite thing in your closet?"

Clearly, there is much work to do, and Americans need to import some help. January is a good month for shaping up. Good luck to us all.

Froma Harrop writes for Creators Syndicate. She can be reached at fharrop@gmail.com.



FROMA HARROP

OTHER VIEWS

The real crisis isn't at southern border

By Scott Martelle

President Donald Trump's speech Tuesday night, and the congressional Democratic leaders' response, offered nothing to the nation that it didn't already know—that our government is broken, and there's not much reason to have faith that it's going to get any better.

The current manifestation is that the nation elected as president someone who has no idea how to do the job, and who is not predisposed to grow into it. Any stray thought that comes to mind gets trotted out as fact or edict, forcing the few people on Trump's skeleton staff who have an inkling of how governing works to scramble to corral him, persuade him that he can't do what he wants to do, or find some loophole through which they can drive whatever bugbear Trump is obsessed with at the moment.

We do not, as the president would have us believe, face a national security crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. But we do face a crisis in competence. This administration—as did the Obama administration before it—has been unable to come up with a solution for the number of people arriving at the border to seek asylum.

In Trump's case, his xenophobia and his politicization of the desperate people seeking to exercise their legal right to ask the U.S. for protection has made the problem worse. Separating children from their parents as a deterrence measure. Imprisoning children for weeks in apparent violation of the 1997 Flores court agreement limiting detention of minors facing deportation. Insisting on a wasteful expanded wall to stem illegal immigration that comes less and less across ill-guarded stretches of the border and more and more through legal channels, then fail to leave as scheduled.

In fact, illegal immigration is broadly down over the last quarter-century as the number of border agents has quadrupled. And Customs and Border Protection statistics show drug seizures by Border Patrol agents, a proxy for drug smuggling, dropped from 2.3 million pounds in 2012 to 882,039 pounds in 2017. Most of that decline came in marijuana seizures.

And most drugs are smuggled through in vehicles crossing staffed ports of entry. Adding to the existing 700 miles of wall and fencing would do nothing to affect that flow.

But the president doesn't build policy out of facts. He builds them out of fears, aiming not to solve a problem but to shore up his shaky political standing and feed the misperceptions of his loyalists.

How do we get out of this mess? There's no easy path. Trump's election didn't cause the polarization in American politics but arose from it. Public trust in government remains near historic lows since the National Election Study began in 1958, and government shutdowns—even partial ones like this one—don't engender much faith that the people elected to run the government can actually do so.

But it does feed the cynicism and disillusionment that means presidents get elected by a minority of eligible voters, while more than two of five people who can vote don't.

That's the real crisis here. Trump on Tuesday framed illegal immigration and its (exaggerated) effects as "a crisis of the heart, and a crisis of the soul," but in truth we face a crisis of the democracy. And that's something else that a border wall won't fix.

Scott Martelle is an editorial writer for The Los Angeles Times.

WEB VIEWS

From online story comments

On planned March closing of Milton pool: Closing in early March, one month before the April referendum vote? Coincidence or collusion?

—Allan Halkey

■ People are shocked that a 40-something-year-old pool that's needed replacing for years has problems?

—Joe Brown

■ I agree the students should have a pool but only if

all money needed for long-term maintenance is factored in AND the public ensures its in the budget every year.

Teach the kids that you use the pool how much it costs and how to be actively protecting it each time a new budget comes out. Make this a teachable event, or these

future leaders will make the same mistakes.

—Joe Regester

On YMCA members threatening lawsuit to gain access to YMCA records: It will be very interesting to hear the outcome of this lawsuit. Janesville Gazette, please continue to follow and report this story. Trust and believe that there is a HUGE story here!

—Brett A Grant

■ Paul Murphy, you five guys are very kind by giving

Jeffrey Jensen and Tom Den Boer one more chance. Hope the lawsuit prep is in the hopper so it can be filed on the 16th. Perhaps some members who haven't yet been booted will opt to not renew their memberships and use the savings to help with legal costs incurred going after these two. Even if everything turns out kosher, both need to be replaced due to their arrogant, untrustworthy behavior.

—Cathy Diotte Scott

YOUR VIEWS

Trump would require Duplos to build wall

I want to clarify a political cartoon that ran in the Dec. 29 edition of The Gazette, Page 6A. The cartoon shows President Trump constructing a wall with Legos. The mistake? CLEARLY, Trump is building with Duplos, which is the Lego product for preschoolers.

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1 South Parker Drive • P.O. Box 5001
Janesville, Wis. • 53547-5001 • 608-754-3311

Sid Schwartz, Editor

sschwartz@gazetteextra.com

Ann Fiore, Chief Copy Editor

afiore@gazetteextra.com

Andrew Broman, Opinion Page Editor

abroman@gazetteextra.com

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