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INSPIRED BY GRUDGES

LePAGE INVESTIGATIONS WASTE TIME, MONEY

Another attempt by Gov. Paul LePage to settle a personal score by punishing a state government entity was rejected this week when a panel the governor created found that the Maine Human Rights Commission is not biased against the state's businesses. Instead, the review panel said, the commission needs more state funding and staff to better do its job.

It was another rebuke of the governor's stymying — through threats and withholding funds and personnel — the work of agencies and officials with which he doesn't agree. It is also a reminder that the governor should stop harassing and undermining state boards and commissions that don't conform to his distorted vision of how government should work.

In the case of the Maine Human Rights Commission, LePage was upset that the commission in 2014 ruled against the owners of Moody's Diner, a well-known restaurant in Waldoboro, in a religious discrimination case. A few months later, the governor, with Moody's officials in the room, called the commission's executive director, Amy Sneirson, to say the commission was "biased" and that he would go to court if the commission did not cooperate and reopen the case, according to a memo Sneirson wrote.

He then refused a request from the commission to transfer \$4,000 from one account to another in order to fill a temporary position.

In March 2015, the commission convened to consider reopening the Moody's case but voted not to in a denial of LePage's request.

So LePage issued an executive order in April 2015 that called for an investigation into the commission's operations.

The report obtained by the BDN on Wednesday is the result of that order, and it doesn't mince words.

"The Review Panel unanimously agreed that the MHRC, its Commissioners, and its staff are not actually prejudiced, biased or unfair toward respondents or complainants. The vast majority of

cases that are heard by the Commission are decided in favor of respondents," the seven-member group wrote in its 30-page report. Respondents are those accused of human rights offenses, often employers and landlords.

Although it found no bias, the panel said perceptions of bias stem from misunderstandings of the commission and how it works. For example, the commission is required by law to investigate all properly filed complaints that it receives. It doesn't have the staff it needs to do this quickly and efficiently, the report stated.

Accusing government officials and agencies of malfeasance, then punishing them in some fashion or demanding an investigation is a familiar pattern for LePage.

He killed the state Board of Corrections, and any hope of a coordinated corrections system, by refusing to appoint members to the panel because he believed control of the state's jails should be returned to the counties.

LePage refused to sign what are usually routine financial orders from the attorney general's office and refused to approve raises for its attorneys. LePage at the time was (and continues to be) at odds with Attorney General Janet Mills over numerous issues, including her refusal to have her office represent the state in litigation over the Affordable Care Act and social services. The state, which was represented by private-sector attorneys at taxpayer expense, did not prevail in either case.

In the case of Land for Maine's Future, the state land conservation program, LePage refused to sign off on voter-approved bonds. He said the program only benefited rich people, and he launched an "investigation" into the program, which resulted in a 194-page document that essentially recounted LMF's history and operating processes, but pointed to nothing it was doing wrong.

The governor's grudge-induced witch hunts waste limited state resources and time that would be better used serving the people of Maine.

OTHER VOICES

DEBATES FAIL TO TRULY INFORM

There are some misconceptions about the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates that may be relevant to Monday night's oratorical tilt between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. First: Abraham Lincoln may have won the debates, but he lost the race to Stephen A. Douglas, which was for the U.S. Senate, not the presidency. The lesson is that as important as debates can be, they may not decide an election.

Nothing new was learned Monday night. Clinton, who smiled a lot in trying to appear more personable, was predictably well-prepared. Trump was self-assured, but evasive on some issues and ill-informed on others. Maybe the most surprising aspect of the debate was how little time was spent on Clinton's missing emails.

Trump at times was clearly irritated, but avoided the name-calling he resorted to in the Republican debates. It was hard to imagine him and Clinton in a format resembling the Lincoln-Douglas debates, with each speaker having 90 minutes to express his policies and positions.

One easy way to make the remaining debates more enlightening than entertaining would be to limit each event to one topic. That wouldn't work when the Republicans had 10 candidates on the stage. But when it's down to two, voters should be given

more substance to help make up their minds.

Imagine if Clinton and Trump spent 90 minutes discussing how their approaches to fighting the war on terrorism would differ from President Barack Obama's. The moderator could ask specific questions after the candidates had outlined their foreign policies. Perhaps each candidate would get to ask the other a question on the topic as well. One-line zingers wouldn't be all that was remembered.

Issues as complex as the Black Lives Matter movement, which concerns much more than police treatment of African Americans, need more time for discussion than the paltry minutes they get in the current debate format. Residents of poor rural and urban areas beset by joblessness, poverty and crime want to hear more than, "I feel your pain."

Until the next debate, analysts will be telling us whether they think Clinton or Trump won. Those assessments will likely affect polls since it is human nature to want to be on the winning side.

Rather than succumb to that urge, voters need to understand that watching a TV debate may help, but its herky-jerky format prevents it from being the best way to find out who has the experience, aptitude and attitude to be president.

Philadelphia Inquirer (Sept. 27)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just vote no

We have a lot of citizen-initiated ballot questions to consider this year. Question 1 proposes to legalize pot when we have not done all that well with alcohol, tobacco and sugar, all of which we abuse. We may need another wing at Acadia Hospital. Vote no.

Question 2 — to increase school funding with a 3 percent surtax on annual income over \$200,000 — will shaft a small segment of the population because we cannot budget for our schools. It is not that we don't have enough money for the schools, it's that we want too much. What happened to the lottery earnings helping with the cost of the schools? Vote no.

Question 3 — universal background checks on all firearm transfers — is another example of out-of-state groups coming here to change our way of life. Have to take down the sign welcoming people into Maine and replace it with one that reads "the way life used to be." Vote no.

Question 4 — to raise the state's minimum wage — would give a nice wage increase for a lot of people. I remember when minimum wage was \$1.65. How has increasing the minimum affected the cost of living? By removing jobs and raising prices. Vote no.

Question 5 — to adopt ranked-choice voting — is a bad idea because it will not work any better than the election system we now have in place. Vote no. Well, that was easy.

R. Scott Jellison
Hermon

Spear for House

I'm writing to endorse Democrat John Spear's candidacy for Maine House District 92, which includes Cushing, South Thomaston, St. George, Thomaston and Matinicus Isle Plantation, plus Criehaven and Muscle Ridge Islands townships.

I first met Spear as a member of the search committee that interviewed him for the position of Waldoboro town manager. His qualifications, experience and recommendations from former employers were outstanding. Thankfully, Spear took the job, and Waldoboro was fortunate he did.

He assumed the position at a time when the local economy was really hurting. He worked with town employees and the select board to craft budgets that maintained a reasonable balance between the need for town services and the pervasive mood that local government should be cut. That was no easy task. Spear saw what was needed, suggested priorities and found ways to make things happen. His pragmatism, professionalism and leadership

were key contributions to the effort.

He maintained channels of communication with all Waldoboro residents. He was creative and considerate, character traits that helped him to tackle the issues the town had to address. He was excellent at building cooperation and consensus. Spear is congenial while ensuring one knows where one stands with him. He knows how to get things done. He would bring considerable experience and expertise to the Legislature.

Voters in District 92 would be well served if they elect Spear as their representative in November. If I were casting my vote in District 92, Spear would get it.

Bob Butler
Waldoboro

WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. **OpEds** may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

Zeigler for House

We need Democrat Stanley Paige Zeigler to represent House District 96, the towns of Belmont, Liberty, Lincolnville, Montville, Morrill, Palermo and Searsmont. He has a lifetime of experience as a ship's captain, logger and school board vice chair.

He's running for office for the first time because Augusta is not working for all Mainers. Zeigler wants to freeze our property taxes. The state is not redistributing enough funds to municipalities to meet their education costs because it has given tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy.

As Zeigler has said, "Giving tax breaks before paying for the services that benefit our community is like taking someone out for an expensive supper before you've bought your weekly groceries."

Zeigler will work to freeze property taxes and fully fund roads and schools that benefit all Mainers.

Chris Marshall
Montville

Wiley for Senate

For several reasons, I believe the residents of Bangor and Hermon are fortunate to have Republican Larry Wiley as a candidate for Maine Senate District 9. First, as a distinguished law-

yer and two-term mayor of Bangor, Wiley has advocated efficiency in government and worked effectively to reduce Bangor's property tax burden when he was mayor.

Second, because of the toxic atmosphere in the state government, Wiley has a detailed proposal recommending that the three branches of government hold an annual retreat. The purposes of the annual retreat would be to discuss civility in government; review the Constitution and separation of powers; get to know one another in a cordial way recognizing ideological differences, but without personal attacks; and consider business development and provide protection for our most vulnerable citizens. Imagine Maine government operating in a productive atmosphere.

Lastly, Wiley has been aptly described by those who know him as having a head for business and a heart for people. He has led and served various charitable organizations and he firmly holds traditional values. For example, while his liberal opponent, Geoff Gratwick, supported a bill last year to legalize physician assisted-suicide (which the American Medical Association has long opposed) and abortion, Wiley values all human life from conception until natural death.

Gerald Thibodeau
Treasurer
Larry Wiley for Maine Senate
Brewer

Background checks

On Question 3, a yes vote supports requiring background checks on all gun sales and transfers between Mainers who are not licensed firearms dealers. It extends the current law to capture the full spectrum of sales. And it is the right thing to do.

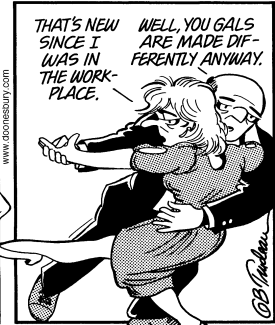
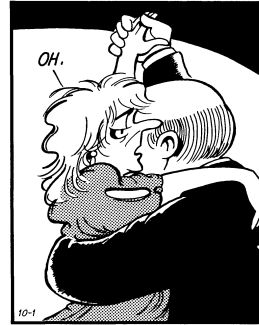
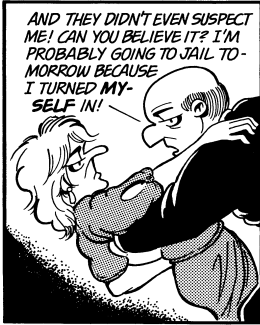
It is widely known that we are proud, independent people who cherish our great state and the way of life it offers. We hunt, fish, hike, snowmobile; the annual deer and moose hunting seasons are a right of passage for many children here. We love our way of life, and we don't want it to change.

But it's time to get with the times. Across the U.S., more and more unfit people are getting their hands on guns and using them to kill innocent people. Would you want a gun you sold to a stranger to be a part of a mass shooting? Of course, you don't.

We need to close the current loophole that allows guns to be sold without background checks in Maine. Voting yes on Question 3 is not about taking away Mainer's gun rights. It's about common sense and protecting the way of life that we love and cherish.

Sharon Gilley
Bangor

DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU