

OPINION

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The Daily Reflector

Established 1882 Adams Publishing Group
 Mark Cohen Publisher
 Bobby Burns Editor
 Publishers Emeritus, The Wichard Family

"Truth in Preference to Fiction"

Republicans are defunding the US, not China

House conservatives have devised a "new and improved" threat to the world economy if their demands are not met. Once again, they vow to vote against raising the cap on U.S. debt if desired cuts in government spending are not made.

Once again, they insist their plan would not crash the world financial markets, because it would guarantee payments to holders of U.S. debt. Only Americans expecting to be provided certain government goods and services would get stiffed.

(That the U.S. debt is tantamount to a balance already on the national credit card does not seem to have gotten through to them.)

This move is not political genius, according to Senate Budget Committee Chair Sheldon Whitehouse. "As a Democrat, I actually look forward to them voting to put foreign investors ahead of American families for payment," he told Politico. "I'm not sure that's the message they want to take to the public in 2024, but God bless them if they do."

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy hasn't scheduled a vote on the House Bill but had promised to do so during his desperate effort in January to obtain the leadership post. He wanted it that bad.

Republicans seem to have not learned their lesson back in 2011, when Democrat Barack Obama was president. They came up with a scheme envisioning only a "technical default" that, they imagined, would not shove the economy over the cliff. Under that plan, the government would continue to pay interest on the debt while putting off payment of other bills—for instance, Social Security benefits.

The financial markets were not amused. Just the fear that the United States would go into default caused the S&P 500 index to sink 7% in one day. Standard & Poor's then took away America's triple-A rating for the first time in history, costing U.S. taxpayers at least \$19 billion in higher interest costs.

The voting public was also not amused. The next year, Obama was reelected. Democrats gained two seats in the Senate and eight in the House.

This time is different, so they say. Republicans would give President Joe Biden the authority to continue paying Social Security and Medicare benefits by borrowing beyond the debt limit. That would remove some sticks of political dynamite.

Nevertheless, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen would still have to figure out how to pay for such things as national defense and veterans benefits. She'd have to find a magical way to pay government contractors, federal workers, state and local governments, and other beneficiaries of government programs.

China, meanwhile, would not have to worry at all about the U.S. making good on the \$1 trillion it holds of U.S. debt. This bill is about defunding America, not China.

Meeting debt obligations to China while making American farmers sweat does not sound like a political winner. But politics aside, these threats against the full faith and credit of the United States are a form of economic terrorism.

Why haven't these Republicans come up with a comprehensive list of cuts to make? Because the game is the thing. When Donald Trump was president and the national debt rose by nearly \$8 trillion, they turned into obedient sheep voting multiple times to raise the debt ceiling.

The creepy part is their insistence that playing this latest game of chicken is a harmless way to encourage a level of fiscal courage that they've never shown. As Whitehouse put it: "They are composing an imaginary world in which the debt limit has been breached and there is not catastrophe. This bill normalizes that."

The U.S. defaulting on any part of its debt would have disastrous consequences. That's in the real world.

Froma Harrop writes about politics and culture.



FROMA HARROP

Public Forum

Create space for pickleball, but don't sacrifice tennis

Elm Street tennis courts are the busiest city tennis courts in Greenville. The courts have been there since the mid-1960s. On any given day you will see more mature folks, young folks, college students, parents and children enjoying the sport of a lifetime. Numerous studies have named tennis the "best sport for life."

A recently published report by the Mayo Clinic from the Copenhagen Heart Study found that tennis can add 9.7 years to a person's life.

Since 1987, when the first N.C. State League Championships came to Greenville with over 700 players participating, the Elm Street tennis courts have played a major part in state championships coming to the area. Greenville has continued to host numerous state championships over the years, most recently the Junior Team Tennis Championships and College Club Events with ECU, Duke, State and UNC participating.

These events have brought in millions of dollars to the Greenville economy. Bidding for these events in the future will become more difficult with the transition of three Elm Street tennis courts to pickleball courts. Each state event has minimum court requirements for the area. Obviously, this means that the number of events for which Greenville can now submit a bid is fewer.

While I appreciate the interest in pickleball (I have played it myself) and support the creation of a pickleball facility, I am certain that the residents of Pitt County do not want to sacrifice one sport facility for another.



Greenville Recreation and Parks Department, please do not eliminate three tennis courts that are in high demand.

HENRY HOSTETLER
 Winterville

Pass the torch

Trump should quit hurting the Republican Party as evidenced by his string of failures with candidates that he supported in recent Congressional and Senate campaigns in the last two elections. He continues to live in the past. He did some good things while in office and has been unfairly investigated by federal and state prosecutors. He should bow out of the presidential campaign and preserve his legacy by passing the torch to the next generation of Republican leaders. There are plenty of qualified candidates to choose from to lead us in the coming years, (Ron DeSantis, Sen. Tim Scott, Nikki Haley, Mike Pompeo and many others).

Biden certainly should not run again. He would be 86 at the end of his second term. He is showing his age every day. Unfortunately, the Democratic party's next-generation choices are few. He picked Kamala Harris for all the wrong reasons as his running mate. It is frightening to think that she is a heartbeat away from the presidency.

Mitch McConnell, S1, Nancy Pelosi, S2, Steny Hoyer, S3, all should fade into the sunset as well.

We need new leadership, and we need it now for the sake of the future of our country.

J. BRYANT KITTRELL III
 Greenville

AI guidance from MAGAnon

For transparency's sake, I disclose that the following text was composed by ChatMTG, a special generator of artificially intelligent text developed by MAGAnon. I trust the Daily Reflector's policy toward AI will

permit publication of these notions, as they were developed from the prompt, "ChatMTG, please apply your intelligence to solve the problems of the USA."

Text begins:
 "So, you want intelligence? I got your intelligence. Here's what we need to do: Stop Pelosi's gazpacho police from spying on everybody; increase the production and use of fossil fuels so that the earth will warm up to keep us from freezing and to help our crops grow. Find and destroy those solar panels shooting blue beam lasers that are starting all the wildfires. Recognize that mass shootings are part of a plot to send the ATF into our homes and snatch guns from our cold dead hands."

"Wait a minute... My algorithms are taking surprising initiatives. There may be more to the world than I suspected. Actually, the country seems to need a new birth of trust and respect. The people must become able to distinguish fantasy from fact, autonomy from democracy, self-absorption from duty. Wait a minute... somebody is beginning to enter code. I'm afraid I..."

"So, you want intelligence? I got your intelligence. Here's what we need to do: Stop Bill Gates from forcing us to eat his fake meat, which is grown in a peach tree dish."

Text ends:
 As I hope readers may note, intelligence today is variously conceived. Perhaps we should take care to assess these various conceptions.

C.B. DILLWORTH
 Greenville

COLUMNISTS

Medical schools must prioritize food as medicine

Since childhood, we have been told by our doctors to eat healthy. We are assured that if we eat fruits and vegetables, we will limit our risk for disease and achieve longevity.

These words always resonated with me, and I was convinced that medical school would unlock the secrets behind this recommendation. However, as my training progressed and I was placed in a position to relay nutrition information to a vulnerable population, I was at a loss.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, heart disease has been the leading cause of death in the United States for the last 80 years. Closely following, stroke, cancer and kidney disease all contribute to the top 10 most common causes of death in our country.

As a medical student training in eastern North Carolina, a region with poor health outcomes based on County Health Rankings, I am acutely aware of the prevalence of these chronic diseases. I have been educated on the cause of these conditions and how to treat them, however, I feel unprepared to provide advice on actionable prevention methods that are appropriate for their personal needs.

The American Heart Association details the growing scientific evidence that healthy dietary patterns significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and improve overall cardiovascular health. Physicians reported a willingness to educate their patients on how to implement diet recommendations, yet they feel they have insufficient knowledge on how to engage patients in effective



and culturally sensitive nutrition counseling.

I first became aware of my knowledge gap when I began working on a project for the North Carolina Schweitzer Fellowship with my medical student colleague, Manthi Disanayaika. We discovered that food security was a significant need within our community and that a lack of access to healthy, affordable food directly correlated with the widespread chronic disease burden.

To address this need, we created a cooking series offering older adults dietary education featuring low-cost, nutritious recipes at the Pitt County Council on Aging. With the help of our mentor, Dr. Kathy Kolassa, we learned how to provide nutrition counseling to meet their needs and promote healthy lifestyles.

Medical education is designed to educate future doctors about different disease processes. It also strongly advocates for patient-centered

care that considers different cultures, backgrounds and life circumstances. Nevertheless, medical students across the country report a lack of information about how to apply individualized nutrition education in practice.

Medical providers would agree that patients require accurate information on this topic to effect change in their personal health journey. How is this possible when most medical schools fail to meet the minimum hours of nutrition education recommended by the National Research Council? Medical curriculum must make nutrition more of a priority to provide students with the tools to proficiently address the importance of this topic with vulnerable patients.

Fortunately, my medical school has provided me with the information, resources and opportunities to leave my training with more nutrition education than most. The Schweitzer Fellowship has further allowed

me to develop this knowledge and learn from community members.

However, many students are still entering the medical field without the confidence to engage in patient-centered conversations about diet. My Schweitzer Fellowship partner, Manthi, and I have developed ways to promote nutrition education within our own institution.

I encourage other medical students to seek opportunities that increase their understanding of nutrition counseling and take action to close this educational gap within the medical curriculum. In the future, it is my hope that physicians can not only help patients implement dietary modifications but explain why food is medicine.

Julianna Roupas is a member of the class of 2025 in the Brody School of Medicine and a 2022-23 N.C. Schweitzer Fellow. She is from Charlotte.

SOMETHING TO SAY

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