

# OPINION

## THE LEDGER INDEPENDENT

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### HOW YOU SEE IT

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** When leaving a comment for the Comment Line, please limit your message to one minute. This allows us to ensure fairness in publishing messages that we receive. Messages that use foul language or cursing will not be published. Thank you.

#### What happened?

What happened, Mason County and Lewis County? You didn't vote in your democrat.

#### Correction

I would like to make a correction. The Russell Theatre received a new lectern, not a podium. You stand behind a lectern. You stand on a podium.

#### Rumor has it...

Rumor is that the Augusta School's new gymnasium project is running about \$2.8 million short of having all of the funding they need. I think that would be a good story for the newspaper to investigate.

#### Obeys the school zones

I was driving south on Martha Comer Drive on Thursday, May 21, and I came across the school speed zone limit of 15 mph, so I obeyed the law and I drove at 15 mph, maybe 16, but there is no end to the school zone. So, as I was driving, I assumed the end of the school zone is where the school zone starts for the northbound traffic on Martha Comer Drive. The city should put school end zone signs on either side or, I don't know, it could be the school's responsibility to put these signs up. Everybody be safe. I know school is out now, but school start zones and end zones should be clearly marked.

#### Condemned properties

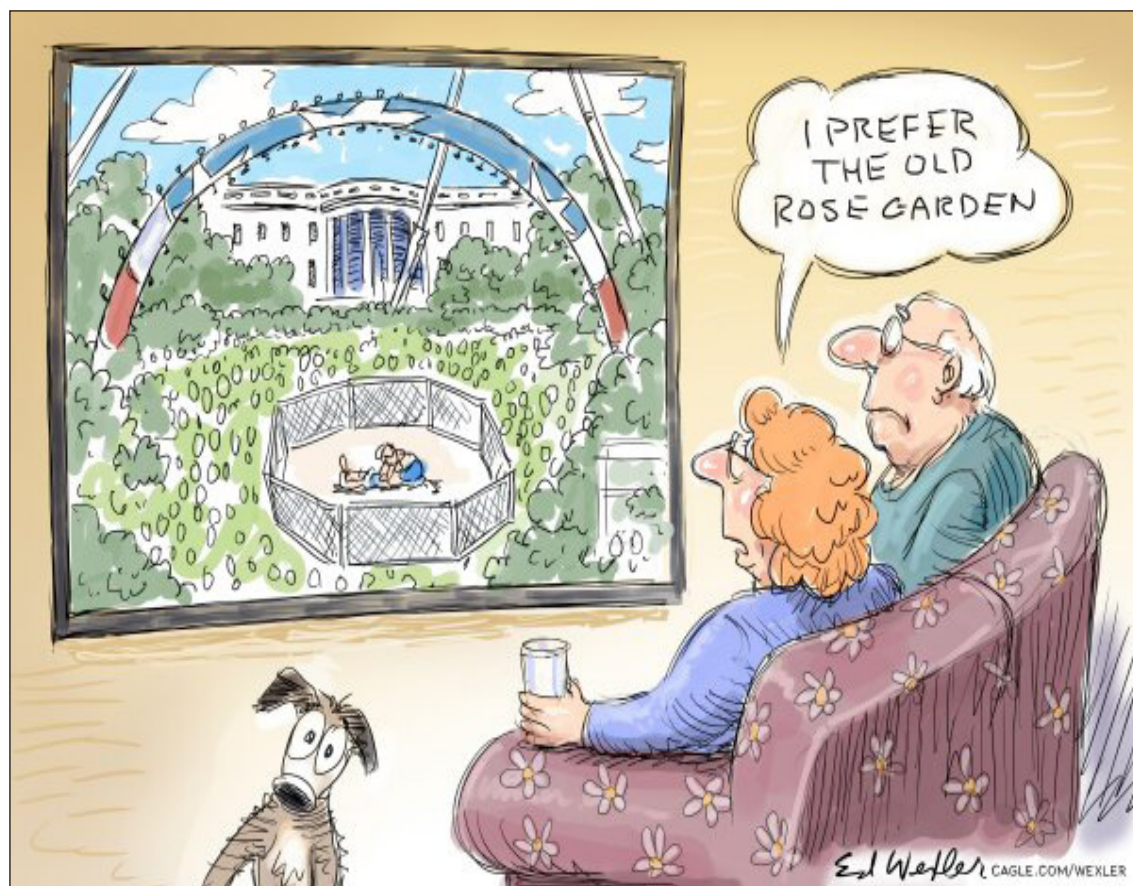
Hats off to Code Enforcement for their excellent work in the past for identifying and carrying through on properties

that needed to be condemned and demolished. These properties have fallen in serious disrepair and became homes for infestations, structural hazards and drug use. The steps for condemnation are very clear and give ample time for the owner to respond. If Commissioner Boone wants to preserve properties, then do as Mayor Cotterill suggested at the last city commission meeting. She suggested getting the ball rolling prior to condemnation if preservation is an option. Let a group view the property and see if it is financially sound to do so. This would hopefully keep from slowing the process, should it proceed; a process that homeowners adjacent and near to these properties would want completed in a timely fashion.

#### No fatties

Another update about Donald Trump's sinking. He's having a UFC fight in front of the White House on the 250th anniversary of America, which is also his birthday. He has requirements for the Army to be there or Navy. They must be of height and weight and of good stature. Can somebody please tell me what that has to do with any member serving in the Army or National Guard? But you can't come to the UFC fight unless you meet certain requirements. And the biggest one is, guess what he said: No fatties. Now, is this not a slap to the people that's served in the Army? We've got people in our family who have served in the Army, Navy or Marines. So please, let people know what President Donald Trump is really like because he don't want no fatties at the UFC fight on July 4. I think this is a very sad project for America. So thank you, and Happy Fourth of July to come — with no fatties.

The Comment Line is 606-564-9091 ext. 1251. A tape recorder is used to record messages. Please speak slowly and clearly and keep background noises low. It is not necessary to leave your name in order to participate in the Comment Line, however we ask that callers not dominate the medium. The Ledger Independent reserves the right to edit comments for libel, obscenities or other inappropriate material.



## Why teachers are walking away

The near legendary elementary school teacher sighed.

"I've been teaching more than 23 years and I love the kids," he said. "But it's getting harder and harder and I think I'm going to hang it up at the end of this year."

What's getting harder?

"There's so little support at home when the kids act up. There's so much stress in the classroom. There are some nights when I can't get to sleep. I love what I do but I think it's time. I have to take care of myself."

This teacher isn't alone. There is a teacher shortage and it isn't just a number problem, it's a working-conditions problem. Teachers are not merely leaving because they found better jobs. Many are leaving because the classroom has become a pressure-cooker: more disruptive behavior, more student anxiety, more parental hostility or absence, more political second-guessing, and less backup from administrators who fear complaints, lawsuits or bad publicity.

The result: a profession built on idealism now running on fumes. The facts give a clue why.

According to Learning Policy Institute,

about 1 in 7 public school teachers either moved to other schools or left teaching between 2020-21 and 2022. About 7.1% left the profession entirely. Rand Corporation says turnover stabilized after the pandemic, but there's still a big problem, especially in high-poverty, urban, special education, math, science and rural positions.

A 2025 national scan estimated 1 in 8 teaching positions is either vacant or filled by someone not fully certified, affecting more than 6 million students. Another estimated 56,000 vacant positions and 350,000 unqualified teachers for 2025-2026.

What's going on? The core issue is attrition. Learning Policy Institute says it accounts for some 90% of annual teacher demand, and less than one-fifth of those leaving are simply retiring. Many cite other careers, low salary and dissatisfaction.

Behavior and support are key reasons why some teachers are heading for the exits. The National Education Association found more than 75% of educators surveyed

cited lack of parental support in student discipline, and 60% cited lack of administrator support. Rand found 44% named behavior as their top job stressor while Pew found 80% of teachers deal with behavioral problems at least a few times a week.

In the past, when a teacher called home, parents often asked, "what did my child do?" Today, the questions at times would be "What did you do to my child?...My child couldn't have done that!...Well, he says he didn't do it so you're wrong."

At first glance, it would seem kids are more violent. From 2019 to 2026 there are several incidents of kids in middle schools who were either in fights or sucker punched, fell, hit their heads and died. But it's risky to claim that school violence is statically "worse than ever" because data are mixed.

However, it isn't risky to say teachers' experience schools as more volatile. The smartphone age has turned hallway fights into viral entertainment, and isolated brutal incidents — body slams, stabbings, knockout punches —

now ricochet across TikTok, YouTube and X before the school district can issue its first statement. That magnifies fear, but it also reflects something real: many educators feel they're being asked to teach, parent, counsel and police and absorb abuse — all at once.

Teachers can change lives, and I was fortunate to have two great ones. Seymour Schonberger at Amity High School in Woodridge, Ct. and Professor Marcus Franda at Colgate University totally changed my life. They gave me confidence, encouragement, and motivation that still fuels me. They also became surrogate fathers.

Somewhere tonight, an exhausted teacher is sitting at a kitchen table, thinking back to why he or she went into teaching, and wondering whether this is the year to quit. That should alarm all of us — because long after students forget test scores and homework, they remember the teachers who believed in them, challenged them, rescued them, or changed the direction of their lives.

America doesn't just have a teacher shortage. It has a shortage of grown-ups willing to let teachers teach.

## Why conservatives give better graduation speeches

Conservative graduation speakers still give better advice than speakers on the left.

In 2015, after reviewing two commencement-speech anthologies featuring 18 liberal speeches and 30 conservative speeches, New York Times columnist Carlos Lozada — then a Washington Post blogger — gave five reasons why conservatives do a better job.

First, he wrote, conservatives are more likely to speak to graduates as individuals rather than as members of a movement or generation.

Whereas liberal speakers say things, such as, "you are the first generation that ....," conservative speakers are more likely to say things, such as, "you'll rise or fall on your own" or "take

opportunities as they present themselves and work hard."

Second, Lozada wrote, conservative speeches, on average, are shorter. Whereas conservatives tend to give speeches that push tangible, measurable performance improvements, liberals are great at sweeping generalities that are short on specifics.

This trend has only grown more pronounced over the past decade.

In May, Nancy Pelosi spoke at Notre Dame de Namur University urging graduates to become "patriots of our time" and defend democracy from alleged threats to elections, truth and the rule of law — which, of course, was a veiled partisan attack on President Trump.

Can't the argument

be made that everything she said Trump is doing is what she and her party actually did: efforts to remove Trump from ballots through legal challenges, weaponizing justice departments to attack political opponents during an election cycle and pressuring social media companies to restrict the viewpoints of political opponents?

Hey, Nancy, if you want to give an honest speech, why not explain how you used your political position to provide insider information to your stock-trading husband — enabling your investments to outperform Warren Buffett by more than double and make you insanely rich.

Left-leaning politi-

cians, such as Congressman Jamie Raskin, declared that democracy is under attack — which is partisan code for "meaney Republicans are doing things we don't like" and "Democrats need to regain power to stop them."

Left-leaning celebrities including Jane Fonda, Sarah Jessica Parker and others preached their go-to "believe in yourself" mantra.

Conservative speakers, however, aware that Zoomers have been taught to prioritize self-esteem over achieving real results, typically emphasize personal responsibility and character.

Victor Davis Hanson, speaking at Hillsdale Col-

lege in 2025, focused on American virtues, honor, resilience, Western civilization and restoring decency.

Arthur Brooks, in recent commencement addresses, emphasized earned success, faith, family, community, practical habits for happiness and rejecting contempt.

Mike Huckabee at Yeshiva University in 2026 stressed moral courage, faith and individual character as the foundation for a meaningful life.

Liberal speeches flatter with empty praise, whereas conservatives tell graduates the world doesn't revolve around them.

Conservatives give timeless advice about work, responsibility, character, faith and building a meaningful life by

saying things, such as: You are not enough on your own. Self-control is far more important than self-esteem. And think of yourself less, not more.

Despite Lozada's conclusion that conservatives make better commencement speakers, liberal speakers continue to vastly outnumber them at America's top universities.

According to a 2026 analysis by "The College Fix," Democrats or Democrat-leaning speakers made up 86% of partisan commencement addresses at the U.S. News & World Report's Top 100 universities.

If you have plans to sit through a college commencement speech this June, prepare for sweeping generalities that are long on bluster and short on useful advice.



TOM PURCELL