

EDITORIAL

ESTABLISHED IN 1924
Andrew Kappas | Assistant managing editor
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R. Bruce Anderson
Columnist
Lakeland author
aka "TOOP" #173042

Biden isn't president. GOP should focus on its train wreck

One hundred days of President Donald Trump. Now we're over halfway through the second 100 days. I managed to survive the past three weeks of it, at least in part, but hey, it's as though I'd been left alone in a room, the screaming press coming out of the White House started sounding like a 99-100 of "Thank you!" The kids might be watching several news channels. There's silly, irrelevant.

Depicting Biden people, attacking law firms, firing whole agencies. The entire purpose of all this was clearly to scare us half to death. To a degree, it worked — but like most "shock and awe" strategies, it had very little power. It's all so, well, repetitive. That hasn't, however, stopped people and attack lawyers, shade up the stock market. When you run out of things, beat up on the dead — it's faster president.

I read all of Europe's newspapers, missed the staff about John Tupper's book, full with conspiracy theory, all of people hiding Mr. Biden's deal dates. But what about Biden's brain? Is that really the top priority in themselves, or just a skill for a started-up reporter's deal group list?

Oh, the Democrats have problems — serious ones if you come from the angle of following the stuff we should be watching. And it's not obvious one ago. While I was away, another Democratic senator died in office. He was 75. People die at 75 by natural causes, aggravated by a stressful life of legislating and deal-making. And the Democratic party might be dying the same way.

Chuck Schumer was on a podcast the other night — I was half-listening, trying to figure out the dealer's side against the 50-50 — and here was Chuck, sounding like Jimmy Puck, hectoring and threatening "strong measures" about something or other.

The Democrats have career problems, no doubt about it.

But Biden is no longer president, and as the days in office go into triple figures and the failures pile up for the current president, it gets harder and harder to blame Uncle Joe. The fact that his people — through self-interest, empathy, carefully calculated, calculating or otherwise — chose to cover up his falling medals is sad. And might as well have been shocking, maybe, if it had happened before August.

But apparently, Dapper decided the time for such things was now, later, when it could do Democrats no good whatever, but when it could be a news-cycle boon for their opponents.

For clearly, the chance to yammer on about the guy who had just left office — making light of his failures and then, later, about his deadly cancer — was a golden opportunity too good for the GOP to give up.

Because if they didn't take it up, they'd have to sweat through talking about their own wretched regime.

The conspiracy of noise, lawsuits, income nothing in the chambers of the House and Senate, disorienting voters, piled in outrage of one set or another from left and right — one disaster after another on stage, like being trapped in a basement watching an endless loop of North Korean rocket launches.

And it seems accelerating.

Biden was out of touch, particularly in his last months in office. His understanding of the American working people had dried up a decade back, and his increasingly shaky faculties didn't help matters. He'd been a bit of a stand-in when he ran in 2020, anyway — a figure to get behind that might unify those estranged by Trump 1.0.

All that's justified, but my own recollection of Biden's presidency was quite different than the one Tupper has tried to sell. Biden was a return to the presidency as presidency, rather than a cheap and dangerous one-man game-show, forever playing "checkbox" with total constitutional disaster.

Joe Biden was mediocrity with legs, but never have I been more grateful than when that mediocrity so solidly took hold for four peaceful years.

R. Bruce Anderson is the Dr. Sarah D. and L. Ark McKay, Jr. Endowed Chair in American History, Government, and Civics and Miller Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Florida Southern College in Lakeland. He is also a columnist for The Ledger and political consultant and on-air commentator for WLFY Radio.

Write to us

All letters are subject to editing for clarity, length, taste and flow. Letters should be signed and contain the writer's full name, address and telephone number. Letters should be kept to 200 words. Mail: Voice of the People, PO Box 408, Lakeland, FL 33802. Email: voice@theledger.com

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To combat AI in education, we need to make schools more human

Dustin Herbeck
Opinion contributor

As the 2025 school year ends, one thing teachers, parents and the broader public know for sure is that artificial intelligence is here, and it is taking on more responsibilities that need to be left to the human brain.

AI can now tutor students of their own pace, deliver instruction content and even assess, including one I made for my own course. While a bit frightening, that part doesn't bother me. Of course, machines can process information faster than we can.

What bothers me is that we seem ready to let the machines and political theorists define the purpose of education.

Kids are disengaged at school, AI doesn't help

A recent Brookings report found that only 1 in 3 students are actively engaged in school. That tracks with what I have seen myself as a former high school teacher and current professor.

Many students are checked out, quietly drifting through the motions while teachers juggle multiple crises. They try to pull some students up to grade level and just hope the others don't slide backward. It's more fringes than teaching.

I tested one of my own final exams in CHARTPT. It scored a 90% the first time and 100% the next. Cal teachers define their students as a daunting AI-writing enemy. One professor I know gave up and went back to in-class handwritten essays for his final exam. It's 2025 and we're back to blue books.

I recently surveyed and interviewed high school social studies teachers across the country for a study about democratic education. Every one of them said



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they're struggling to design assignments that AI can't complete. These aren't multiple-choice questions or five-paragraph summaries. They're book analyses, historical critiques and policy arguments — real, non-routine work that used to demand original thought. Now? The work that used to demand original thought. Now? A robot can write it well enough to get by.

So, what do we do? Double down on job training? That's what I fear. A lot of today's education policy seems geared toward pushing workers for its country that's already in flux.

But AI is going to reshape the labor market whether we like it or not. Preparing our kids for a world that way through it is worth thinking.

See HERBECK, Page 15A

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Julie Townsend was right to protect market from disruptor

I'm writing in response to the Ledger article "Conservative arrested personality argues her free speech was violated at Lakeland Farmers Market" [May 25, Page 4A].

While I was not present during the incident, I witnessed Julie Townsend at the same market just a week prior. The encounter was not a good faith conversation — it was engineered to provoke reactions for online content. She and her team harassed without asking for consent, asked inflammatory political questions and made no effort to engage respectfully.

From what I understand, her latest appearance followed a similar pattern. She positioned herself in the vendor area — whose space is paid for and reserved — causing disruption and denying or provoking customers. The facilities, Julie Townsend, simply asked her to move away from vendors so the market could continue operating smoothly.

This isn't a free speech violation, it's a common-sense decision to protect a community space from being hijacked by a clear-chosen farming foe. I hope The Ledger will continue to cover this story with a focus on the broader community and the people working hard to create safe, welcoming spaces. The community stands with Julie Townsend, The LDDA, and the Lakeland Farmer's Club Market team. Athena Wilson, Lakeland

Polk's unsafe decision on Thompson Nursery Road

The front-page article in the May 25 edition of the Lakeland Ledger, addressing the Thompson Nursery Road project [Polk approves Thompson Nursery Road design; residents say it's unsafe] clearly laid out the discrepancies between the affected communities' desires and the decision of the Polk County Commission. The vote to approve the undesirable design option was made without any discussion among the commissioners.

This lack of verbal interchange before the vote would be hard to understand had not the subject been covered at the commission's May 16 agenda discussion session. The focus of this discussion was the potential for golf carts utilizing the shared-use pathways and liability issues.

If full-out utilization of these pathways is the underlying rationale for voting against a design solution which has been favored by the citizens along the corridor, then why is the commission even approving the project to widen the corridor as this will potentially lead to increased instances of speeding?

It is hard to believe that one violation is enforceable while the other is not; both limits would be announced by signage. Both are equally enforceable by law enforcement.

Maybe the commissioners will hear the voice of their constituents at the next election.

Margaret Key, Lake Wales

Are developments affecting water in Polk?

In The Ledger on May 27, there was an article entitled "City OKs ordinance for Stoneridge Project" [Page 1A]. It reads, "Lake Wales opposes likely to annex land for a 2,950-home development."

The question was asked whether Lake Wales will be able to provide water to all of the approved development, which it was said that Stoneridge would cre-

ate a demand for 665,000 gallons a day.

On the same day there was another article in The Ledger on Page 4A entitled "Study: Inevitable threat of sinking U.S. cities."

The study showed that cities all over the country are sinking because of seepage of water. Early warning signs in buildings are cracks in walls, foundations, backing of pavement, etc.

According to researchers these problems will become worse in the future.

Just recently my well dried up. But luckily I discovered Well Drilling was able to extend a pipe into the well to reach more water. And now, Thank God, I have clear, crystal water again.

But I wonder if the development which is being built not too far from the woods beyond my house on Palton Green Road could be the cause.

Joselynn Costello Sawyer, Lakeland

Keep kids safe this summer

As we celebrate the graduating class of 2025, let's remember the summer months are approaching and we need to keep the underclass students safe.

Parents, please be mindful there are several summer programs that are available for students in kindergarten through fifth grade in Polk County.

They include: The Risk Club Program for all youth; Jeffery Williams, The Boys & Girls Clubs; The Learning Resource Center of Polk County; Girls Inc.; The City of Lakeland; Simpson Park Center; Lakeland's Police Athletic League Youth Program; Camp Fire Sunshine Central Florida; The CenterSource of Polk County's Young Leaders Program; and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

According to the Safe and Sound Security report, the crime rate in Florida in 2024 was 25.30 incidents per 1,000 residents. During the summer months, the most common crimes youth commit are theft, simple assault, drug abuse, disorderly conduct, curfew violations, gun assaults, sexual assaults, domestic violence, robbery and carjacking.

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Please stay active with our young children and young adults.

Shawna Terrell, Lakeland

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Reps. Laurel Lee, Scott Franklin and Darren Soto must support these changes if the House revisits the bill. Polk County deserves better than a \$20 trillion long-term debt bomb. Let's demand fiscal responsibility. Contact your senators today.

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...on is the Dr. Sarah D. and L. Kirk...
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...eople, PO Box 408, Lakeland, FL...
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...But AI is going to reshape the labor market whether...
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...way through it is wishful thinking.

See HORNBECK, Page 15A

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I urge Sens. Rick Scott and Ashley Moody to lead on amendments. Eliminate the Department of Education, saving \$80 billion yearly, fulfilling Trump's promise to empower states. Restore Article I bankruptcy uniformity to make student loans dischargeable, saving taxpayers \$250 billion to \$400 billion over 10 years by curbing student loan lending (\$1.9 trillion outstanding) and college costs.

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D.W. 😊



LETTERS | Opinion *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Protect Lakeland farmers market from internet provocateurs | Voice of the People (June 1, 2025)

Lakeland Ledger

June 1, 2025, 5:02 a.m. ET

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Need a break? [Play the USA TODAY Daily Crossword Puzzle.](#)

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Voice of the People (May 25, 2025) [Ed Vetter, longtime Bartow IB principal, was a cut above](#)

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Voice of the People (May 18, 2025) [Is Polk County getting its money's worth for public transit?](#)

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Voice of the People (May 11, 2025) [Seniors could use a break from school taxes](#)

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Want to contribute?

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