

COMMON SENSE II

Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today's series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.

Late Spring 2023

Update Issue

Vol. 18 Issue 2

America vs. the NRA

By Kathleen Blake

Like many of you, I wept as I listened to the frantic pleas of 911 callers, followed by the anguished cries of those whose loved ones died in yet another mass shooting. I didn't know any of the victims, nor did I know their relatives or friends. I didn't even have a connection to the areas where these mass shootings occurred. But I do know grief.

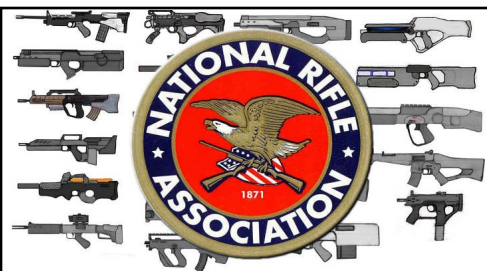
I know the pain of burying parents and siblings



<https://wagingnonviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/highschoolgun.png>

from illnesses and accidents far too early in their lives. And sadly, I also know the pain of burying two of my own children. What I don't know is the shock and

horror of learning that my loved one died alone, separated from family, in yet another preventable act of gun violence. I don't know the frustration of, once again, hearing public officials offer their thoughts and prayers, nor do I know the frustration of being told they will begin a search for the shooter's motives.



https://c2.staticflickr.com/4/3949/15424862028_5498fc8ed_b.jpg

Does the motive of the shooter really matter? The fact is the shooter had access to a

weapon of war, designed to kill as many people as possible in a few short seconds, like the other mass shooters before him.

Some legislators, despite threats from the NRA, have proposed solutions that will begin to address

the problem. Red flag laws are good, and registration laws will help, but neither of these laws can stop the person not yet identified as a potential threat from heading out to murder yet another group of innocents—including children—with a high-powered assault style weapon.

There is a solution to what seems like the almost daily mass slaughter of innocent people: a ban on assault weapons. Assault weapons were banned from 1994-2004 under the federal Assault Weapons Ban, supported and promoted by former Presidents including Ronald Reagan. The ban significantly reduced the number of people killed and injured in mass shootings while it was in effect, but despite its success, under pressure from the NRA, legislators quickly fell in line and refused to reinstate it in 2004. The American public overwhelmingly supports a ban on assault weapons while at the same time respecting the gun owners' legitimate right to bear arms.



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It's time for ordinary Americans of all political stripes to stand up to the NRA and demand that our legislators reenact this essential and proven protection for our children and our fellow citizens.

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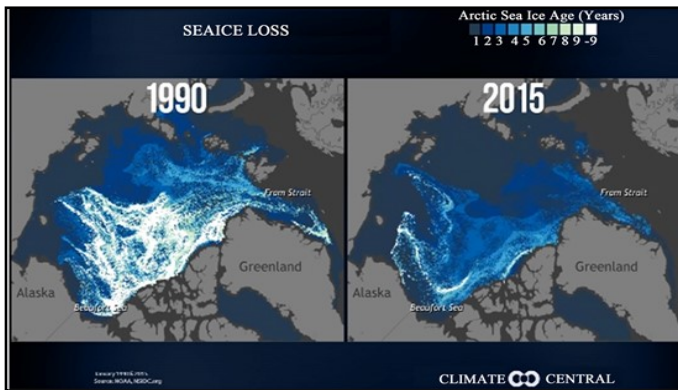
Visit us at www.itascaprogressive.org

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Whatever Happened to the Climate Crisis?

By Vicki Andrews

I've been seeing fewer and fewer newspaper and magazine articles expressing concerns and hearing less worry expressed by friends and family about the climate crisis recently—at least in recent months. It got me wondering: What's up? Is it over? Did we win?



This led to some research into the subject, leaving me somewhat confused but not surprised. It appears to me that like many other issues of concern it all depends on your political party of choice, which “side of the aisle” you favor, *etc.* Of course, most issues are like this. Our views on violence, our views on the economy, our views on international relationships, *etc.* seem to frequently depend on our political beliefs and attitudes. Right now is a time in history that decisions we make regarding the climate will affect the lives of generations to come and the very future of our planet, and we seem to be almost equally divided on what we believe to be true. Perhaps we can find the answer if we can learn to work together on major issues (such as climate change), seriously listen to both sides of the issue, and come up with a solution we can all agree on. (No, that’s crazy! It would never work!!)

Here are some quotations on the climate crisis that raised my concerns to a higher level:

Fiona Harvey, Environmental Editor of the *Guardian*, “We are pushed to the brink of irrevocable damage that only swift and drastic action can avert.”

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, “Our world needs climate action on all fronts—everything, everywhere, all at once.”

Comprehensive Review of Human

Knowledge of the Climate Crisis by IPCC, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “We are pushed to the brink of irrevocable damage that only swift and drastic action avert,” and, “Act now or it will be too late.”

James Taylor, President of the Heartland Institute, in a recent *Newsweek* article, “Yes, the Climate Is Changing. No, It’s Not an Emergency,” wrote that according to the IPCC, the Heartland Institute “has low confidence of any negative observed impacts between global and warm temperatures, and believes it is important to have affordable and abundant energy; that’s the lifeblood of any economy.” Shame on *Newsweek* for publishing such trash!

On a more local level we find:

“**A Field Day for Powerful Mining Interests**,” Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* editorial, May 8, 2023, illustrates a part of the problem on a more local level. State Representative Pete Sauber (R MN 8) chairs the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources and is also involved with Talon Metals, a firm seeking to open a copper-nickel-cobalt mine which will provide new job opportunities in our area but also raises concerns about the safety of modern mining technology in relation to the environment, The editorial states that “a visit to the proposed



site would make clear the project’s alarming proximity to the shoreline of a lake that drains into the BWCA....” It made clear that Stauber’s priority is “protecting mining interests over the treasured wilderness within his home district.”

After reviewing the above and other available articles, I’m left believing that the climate crisis is just as much a crisis as it has been in recent years and is getting worse all the time. We urgently need to proclaim this, express our concerns, and work together to find solutions. We need to elect people to county, state, and federal office who share these concerns and want to see something done before it is too late. If we don’t act quickly, it may well be too late.

“Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night!”

By Bob Passi

Environment

As the sea level rises,
As the extinction rate of animal species rises,
As the extinction rate of plant species rises,
As the number of weather extremes rises and grow in intensity,
As the body blows against the web of life on this planet continue to rise,



<https://images-wixmp->

Humankind

As the cries of those suffering from war and violence continue to rise,
As the screams for help of those who suffer from their displacement from climate change and economic collapse rise,

How will we respond?

Will we continue to use walls, barriers, economics, and technology to keep others out?
Will we continue to suppress the voices of those who need help?
Will we continue to shun those who prefer negotiations and peace?

The Dynamics of Evolution and Survival

The universe is dynamic. It is forever changing and growing. It is evolving. The planet Earth is a part of this process. Evolution continues unfettered in the universe. However, on this planet it has been inhabited by human interference. By abusing the planet, we, as humans, have interfered (some would say broken) the process of natural evolution. When the natural process of evolution is interrupted, the life of the system begins to be

weakened and eventually decays to unsustainable levels.

That is what has been happening on this planet, and the planet is responding.

What has interrupted the process is a system based on accumulation of wealth and power, seeing most of human life as a resource to be used and abused, exploited and dominated. That system has seen the planet itself as another resource to be used and abused, exploited and dominated to achieve those ends. It is a system of using up resources and moving on without regard to consequences.

That system's most recent incarnation is free market capitalism which has led to incredible destruction of the planet and of human lives.

The solutions of free market capitalism tend to be economics and profitability. Or their solutions are mechanistic and technological without regard for the heart or soul of humanity. Without nurturing that human heart and soul, without regard of the life forces of the planet itself, everything becomes empty and hollow, and human life becomes unsustainable as does the planet. One possible human response is to blindly strike out with violence before the final demise, and we see such responses every day.

The Dilemma

So, here we are facing a dilemma: our options—to quote Dylan Thomas—are to “go gentle into that goodnight,” or to “rage, rage against the dying of the light.” I think we are ready to let that rage bubble up rather than quietly accepting our demise, when it is clear that we are facing this dilemma simply because the old system will not relinquish power and is willing to take us all down with it rather than stop its destructiveness.

The current system cannot function without our support and tacit consent. If we find the courage to step up and take up the mantle of our individual empowerment as citizens of the world and reclaim our birthrights, our lives, our futures, and our planet, we will at least make a valiant effort to find solutions to the existential issues we now face.

The New Millennium

This new millennium was to be the culmination of the blossoming of the human spirit with democracy winning out and providing new leadership serv-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

ing the people and not some ideology, some religion, some army, some new technology, or some aristocracy or wealth and power. It was to be the resurrection of the individual human being, claiming his or her right to autonomy and individually empowered lives.

But as with all major change, the old system continues to hold onto power, often by any means possible, rather than acknowledging that its time has passed. Often those older systems are even willing to destroy everything rather than relinquish power. In the present case, that system is free market capitalism, and it seems willing to destroy the planet rather than give up its controlling dominance.

Even after decades, centuries, and even millennia of bad leadership, and after multiple attempts to rise, after seeing those attempts being violently put down again and again, and even after watching positive leadership assassinated and forced from power, that powerful evolutionary force of humankind still survives below the surface, always ready to rise again to fulfill its evolutionary purpose to save humanity and rejoin the web of life on this planet.

Transformation

Such a transformation is rising to the surface now—within humankind and within the planet itself. It is the last attempt to wrest control away from those who insist that manipulation and control are the only things that can resolve our problems. They believe only our service to economic leadership and technology can save us. Meanwhile, humankind is in the process of a great rebirth that will wash over the planet in a final attempt to save this experiment of the human race as a viable companion in the life cycle of this planet.

What would happen if we simply called off all wars and worked together to deal with environmental issues, universal health issues, and immigration? In the process we would rediscover our human connections, and it would be hard to return to those wars.



https://openclipart.org/image/2400px/svg_to_png/19151/openvan-Peace-Doves-of-South-Africa.png

Once we have worked together to solve a common problem, it would become much more difficult, if not impossible, to see each other as enemies again. We are the saviors we have been waiting for. We are the Second Coming. We are the heroes of our own lives and of our futures.

It is time take back our lives and our futures, to return to a balanced system of fellowship, peace, community, and cooperation.

“Do not go gentle into that good night/Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”—Dylan Thomas



<https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-PAHNBYM3ePM/Vt-cutIMEBIAAAAAAAAAABIs/9NGinlOlyE/s200/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date /Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Thursdays 2:00-5:00	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30	DFL Headquarters
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
Volunteer at Food Bank	2nd Wednesday 1:30-3:30	Second Harvest
A Parade Near You	As Scheduled	
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	February 11, 2022	conray@arvig.net

A Dangerous Game of Political “Chicken”

By Steven Fuller

Editor’s Note: Steve wrote this a few weeks prior to the settlement of the debt ceiling conflict. His message still has relevance because of what we avoided and why we need to prevent future such conflicts.

On April 28, I received via email a legislative update from our Congressional Representative Pete Stauber (R-MN8). The Congressman proudly announced the passage of the Limit, Grow, Save Act by a partisan vote of 217-215. Rep. Stauber reports that the act will “restore fiscal sanity” to Washington while allowing our economy to grow and avoid defaulting on public debt. The features of this 320-page act that the Republicans so admire include: \$20 million reduction in Medicaid, \$80 billion taken back from the recent increase in the IRS budget, a 22% reduction in the Veterans Administration budget resulting in an 81,000 reduction in its workforce meaning a reduction in outpatient visits and an increase of disability backlogs of 134,000.

It was back in January that Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had to start manipulating the books to avoid default; that ploy is soon to end. Yellen, on Monday, May 1, wrote to House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA20) warning him that the treasury will be unable to pay the government’s bill in early June, possibly as soon as June 1.



<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/>

She wrote, “I respectfully urge Congress to protect the full faith and credit of the United States by acting as soon as possible.”

On May 9, Congressional leaders began meeting with President Biden to discuss raising the debt limit. President Biden’s position has been that the debt limit—which



<https://images.wired.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/07193648/Joe-Biden-president5.jpg>

has been raised at least 79 times since it was codified in WWI and three times in the Trump administration without negotiations—should be passed without conditions, because the debt limit deals with money already authorized by Congress—not new spending.

Speaker McCarthy’s position, on the other hand, has been to force future budget cuts by holding the debt ceiling hostage and threatening a default on the United States debt. Default has never ever happened before, so we really don’t know the extent of the impact, but we can make an educated guess. At stake with default is the nation’s inability to pay its bills that we all depend on: Social Security, Medicare, debt payments on bonds, payments owed to contractors, obligations made by past Congresses and signed by past Presidents. This would lower our international credit rating which in turn would increase the interest we’d owe on that debt. I think the chaos would be worldwide with a possible international recession similar to the 2008 Great Recession only worse, possibly rivaling the Great Depression of the 1930’s. Speaker McCarthy and Rep. Stauber, do you really think default is a good idea?



<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/kevin-mccarthy-house-leader>

This is the game of political “chicken” that the Republicans have been playing. What they are attempting could affect the entire planet. They need to pass a clean debt ceiling bill as they did during the Trump Administration. Then they can negotiate budget cuts with President Biden as the founders designed the system in 1987.

Activism Works!

By Valerie Conner

On May 20th, a group of Indivisible members and supporters from Itasca County traveled to Hermantown to picket Rep. Stauber’s office and corner. As we expected, he wasn’t there on that Saturday, but we like to think that the resulting publicity including great coverage by a local TV station may have put him into the win column on the debt ceiling vote. Along with the entire DFL delegation and one other Republican Representative, Stauber voted to support the debt ceiling bill. This is a reminder that if you



are represented by someone from the other party, you should still make your voice heard. If our representatives in all levels of government only hear

A Glimmer of Hope

By Valerie Conner

It's been a long, tough slog. Some count it from the George W. Bush Administration, some from 9/11, others from the Trump emergence. In any case, the political trends in this country—to a lesser extent in other parts of the world as well—have been increasingly discouraging for progressives and even for traditional Republicans.

I believe in what I call the pendulum theory. That is, attitudes, trends, fashions, political successes all tend to go only so far in one direction before swinging back the other way. I keep looking for signs that our political and cultural norms are about to turn back toward at least a mid-point and at best a more liberal reality.

Biden's victory over the former guy was a start. His legislative successes have been heartening. The DFL trifecta in Minnesota that allowed a truly liberal agenda to be effected this legislative session has given me hope. But the overreach of the states that promote anti-women, anti-labor, anti-1st Amendment, anti-safety net, anti-“other,” and anti-sane gun legislation, all of which promotes hate, tells me that a real turn-around is not happening yet.

There are other small hints that that turn-around may be on the mid-horizon, however. Representative Pete Stauber (R-MN8) rarely does anything I consider good. He often votes against legislation that would help the district specifically and the nation as a whole but then loudly takes credit for the positive impact resulting from that legislation. The classic case is the infrastructure act. He was more than happy to cut ribbons on building projects even though he voted against the act. That said, I have to give him credit for voting for the debt limit solution.

More importantly, signs of evolving change can be seen as regular people and small-time office holders begin acting on their better instincts and change their outlooks and actions. A case in point caught my eye in the paper a couple



of weeks ago. I took note because the dateline was Cedar Falls, Iowa, home of the University of Northern Iowa, my alma mater.

The story was that the local Human Rights Commission requested the city proclaim June as Pride

Month. The resolution stated, “Pride Month...is an opportunity to take action and engage in dialogue to strengthen alliances, build acceptance and advance equal rights.” That seems to be mild and not terribly controversial. Although he did say any council member was free to sign, Mayor Rob Green refused to sign the resolution, citing his Christian beliefs.

The next council meeting was packed by people urging him to change his mind; only one person spoke in favor of the mayor's stance. The mayor listened as people told about the embarrassment and fear his decision had caused them. He proved that he is a serious person who takes his job seriously. He listened and thought. The paper quoted him as he expressed his reassessment:

“I'm not a hateful person,” he said as some attendees laughed. The laughter stopped when Green admitted to being among “hundreds” in the city “who don't understand” the LGBTQ+ community.

A few minutes later, Green said he would sign the proclamation as spectators applauded. “We don't have to agree in order to love each other and to try to understand each other,” the mayor said.

In a later statement, Green said he didn't realize his initial decision would leave some residents feeling unsafe. “One of the mayor's primary responsibilities is to ensure public safety and welfare, and it was evident from the many comments that I needed to take direct action to ensure the safety and well-being of my constituents in Cedar Falls. When looking at the decision in those terms, signing was an easy choice to make.”

Later he admitted to learning to juggle his personal beliefs with his responsibilities as mayor saying, “We can't (and shouldn't) check our faith at the front door, but we should be sensitive about our moral compass and seek to find universal values that apply to everyone. I'm still working through this particular philosophical challenge.”

Reasonable people, who are willing to listen, willing to think about things from the other person's point of view, willing to reassess their positions and operate from kindness toward others, and willing to buck their party's creed, are going to get us through this tough slog.

The nation is ready. Let the turn around begin!