

# NORTHWEST VOICES

## Public safety

### More police and reform

Re: "Side with public safety, not criminals" [June 5, Opinion]: State Senate Republican leader John Braun argues that voters should side with safety and police, not criminals. But it is possible to do both simultaneously.

Many of us want to hire more police, make our streets safer, protect our homes and prosecute property crimes. But we can also support prison sentencing reform to reduce mass incarceration and improve our abysmal prison system. Braun fears that sentencing reform will "flood neighborhoods with hardened criminals, including rapists and murderers."

But many young men (disproportionately minorities) do not enter the prison system as hardened criminals. Many entered the system through plea bargaining to avoid threat of longer sentences. Mandatory sentencing laws eliminate rewards for good behavior, remove incentives for turning one's life around and cost the state millions of dollars that could be used to improve social conditions.

A compassionate society must recognize the harm caused by a criminal justice system built on retributive rather than restorative justice.

— John C. Bean, Vashon

## Duwamish Tribe

### 'It is time we all work for justice together'

Re: "Real Duwamish: Seattle's first people and the bitter fight over federal recognition" [May 29, Local News]:

The Duwamish Tribe appreciates spotlighting our fight for federal recognition and is grateful for the editorial board's thoughtful endorsement of our 167-year quest ["Give the Duwamish Tribe long overdue federal recognition," June 6, 2021, Opinion]. However, the recent Seattle Times news article was unbalanced and incomplete, overlooking more than a century of evidence of how the federal government has repeatedly recognized our tribe as a sovereign political entity.

From 1860 to 1924, Congress passed almost 60 statutes denominating the "Duwamish and other allied tribes in Washington," and appropriated funds to the Duwamish Tribe and other treaty tribes. In 1925, we established one of the first tribal constitutions in Washington. In 1957, the Indian Claims Commission recognized the Duwamish Tribe as an "identifiable tribe of American Indians," finding that we were entitled to a \$62,000 judgment for lost ancestral lands comprising present-

## THE MECHANIC...



## ON THE WEB

**More Horsey:** See more of David Horsey's cartoons at [st.news/davidhorsey](https://st.news/davidhorsey)

day Seattle. Department of Interior records between the 1950s and 1970s repeatedly recognize the Duwamish Tribe as the signatory to the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott. Our lawsuit details more examples that support federal recognition.

We have endured enough pain and discrimination as the mother's tribe of Chief Seattle. The city's history is so intertwined with the Duwamish Tribe. It is time we all work for justice together.

We are still here.  
— Cecile Hansen, Seattle, chair, Duwamish Tribe

## LGBTQ+ youth

### Create more sober safe spaces

I came out as queer at 16. I found myself immediately looking for LGBTQ+ friendly places for people under 21 and had a difficult time. Most spaces I found were bars, and I ended my search in defeat. I knew barely any LGBTQ+ people at school and had no one to share my experience with. In college, I later came out as trans and felt further isolated.

Data indicate that 86% of transgender and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) youth have experienced thoughts of suicide. When compared to the suicidal ideation rate of the cisgender population (9.2%), it is clear how urgent this issue is. These thoughts of suicide in trans youth were found to decrease with access to at least one LGBTQ+ affirming space.

Creating sober queer-centered spaces for LGBTQ+ youth will improve mental health. Fostering queer joy is essential to providing a future where transgender people can feel unapologetically themselves and loved.

— Audrey Byrne, Seattle

## Gun laws

### Bring initiatives to the ballot

In Matthew Yglesias' "The flaw in the progressive stance on guns" [June 5, Opinion], he suggests that liberals want to take away all guns, thereby fulfilling the maxim that if guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns.

The column has little more to say, certainly not providing a solution to the real problem of what has become an American phenomenon. Avoiding that the majority of Americans are willing to have limitations on gun type, age restrictions and strict background checks, he brings up one dubious instance in Buffalo to back his theory that the best approach is to do nothing.

It looks like the people will have to bring their own initiatives to the ballot to make actual progress while their "leaders" sit on their hands, while accepting more National Rifle Association donations.

— Steve Grappo, Seattle

## Abortion ban

### Minority rule?

Re: "Abortions later in pregnancy: three women's stories" [June 1, Nation]:

The story of the woman who exercised her right to choose after she was raped makes all the more poignant the Supreme Court's leaked draft opinion repealing Roe v. Wade.

The draft claims that the right to

abortion can't be recognized under the precedents because abortion raises a "critical moral question" of "profound moral and social importance." Justice Samuel Alito finds "profound moral and social importance" in "passionate and widely divergent views." Surely if only a 20% to 30% minority of the public had differing views on abortion for rape, it would not constitute a wide divergence.

But Gallup Polls show that from 1975 to 2001 only about 19% have opposed abortion for any reason and in years when rape/incest and maternal health were queried, only 24% and 21% supported a ban for rape/incest and 15% for maternal health. How can Alito justify canceling a fundamental liberty to obtain such abortions due to wide divergence on a "critical moral question" when in fact less than 30% finds rape and maternal-health abortions to be morally unacceptable?

— Brian Faller, Olympia

Letters, not exceeding 200 words, must include your full name, address and telephone numbers for verification. Email: [letters@seattletimes.com](mailto:letters@seattletimes.com); mail: Letters Editor, The Seattle Times, P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111.

# Soaring newsprint prices worsen local journalism crisis

## SAVE THE FREE PRESS

### By Brier Dudley

Seattle Times Free Press editor

Everyone is affected by the rising cost of necessities. It's even worse when you're already on the edge of bankruptcy.



That's the case for local newspapers, which were in a tailspin before getting walloped by the pandemic, inflation and now soaring newsprint prices.

Bipartisan coalitions in Congress want to help, with proposals for temporary tax credits and leverage with dominant tech platforms, but that window of opportunity is closing soon.

Thousands of papers closed and nearly two-thirds of their newsroom staff was let go over the last 15 years. Misinformation, civic disengagement and rancor are filling the void at democracy's peril.

Now this local journalism crisis is exacerbated by a global plunge in newsprint production. That's leading to soaring costs for remaining newspapers that are generally hanging on by a thread.

Combined with high fuel prices and delivery labor shortages, this will lead to further cutbacks in

distribution, the size of newspapers and potentially newsroom employment.

"More than a quarter of all newspapers have closed in the past 15 years and the recent inflationary pressures are taking a toll," said Dean Ridings, CEO of the America's Newspapers trade group.

Newsprint prices rose more than 30% over the last two years. A major factor is mills closing or converting production to packaging materials used by e-commerce companies such as Amazon.

"Mills have been shutting down pretty much everywhere — it's really a global situation that has been a bit worsened by the pandemic," said Francois Chastanet, director of graphic papers at Numer Analytics, a Montreal research firm affiliated with the Pulp and Paper Products Council trade group.

In North America, newsprint production capacity declined 28% from 2019 to 2020 and another 18% last year. Demand fell 26% in 2020, 6.6% in 2021 and 5.3% in just the first four months of this year, Chastanet said.

Until recently, Washington state had three newsprint mills with national customers.

The Ponderay Newsprint Mill north of Spokane went bankrupt and closed in 2020. It was partly owned by a consortium of national

newspaper chains that contracted, merged and were acquired by hedge funds. In January it restarted as a cryptocurrency mill.

NORPAC, a mill in Longview, converted some newsprint production to packaging material and rumors are swirling that its remaining newsprint line will also be converted. It provided a statement saying that it hopes to continue supplying newsprint customers but has "replaced lost newsprint sales volume with other grades."

That could leave Inland Empire Paper in Spokane as the only newsprint producer on the U.S. West Coast, according to Stacey Cowles, president of the Cowles family company that owns the mill and The Spokesman-Review newspaper.

That doesn't necessarily insulate the Spokesman as they are operated as separate businesses.

"We can certainly guarantee a supply but we can't guarantee ourselves a price," he said.

The Spokesman may add a gas surcharge for print subscribers. To absorb higher newsprint prices, "we're going to be able to trim a few pages I think and get through that particular crisis."

But the larger picture, Cowles said, is that these responses will further test the loyalty of subscribers who have already endured price increases and delivery problems as

papers struggle with costs and labor shortages.

This comes as surviving local papers are trying to invest in new digital business models while preserving their cornerstone print businesses as long as possible.

Large and small chains already were cutting the frequency of print editions.

The private-equity firm that acquired the bankrupt McClatchy publishing giant in 2020 converted its "daily" papers to six print editions a week after outsourcing print production across the country.

Gannett, the nation's largest publisher, recently paused print cutbacks while it assesses customer feedback. In an investor call last month, executives said newsprint, fuel and delivery costs last quarter were \$15 million higher than the same period last year. Overall it lost \$3.1 million on sales of \$748.1 million during the quarter.

In Washington, The Peninsula Daily News in Port Angeles dropped Sunday editions in March. The Walla Walla and Yakima dailies, owned by The Seattle Times, cut print frequency to three days each in April and May.

Executives at the state's largest independent dailies all told me newsprint prices may force cutbacks. Their price increases vary, as each negotiates separately and costs vary by factors such as volume and proximity to mills.

At The Columbian in Vancouver, Chief Financial Officer Brandon Zarzana said its newsprint prices are up 12% this year which "has definitely impacted our bottom line." Further increases in news-

print and other costs "may put us in a position where we need to consider options for reducing page count."

At The Seattle Times, a 30% year-over-year price increase equates to more than a \$1 million hit to expenses, President Alan Fisco said. Prices are the highest prices by far according to records going back to 2013.

"The combination of newsprint and gasoline price increases is a double-whammy impacting all print readers," he said via email, noting that carriers drive about 25,000 miles a day to deliver the Times.

As a result, price increases, surcharges and cutbacks are likely across the industry, Fisco said.

"I would expect to see an acceleration of print frequency reductions across the country at the very least," he said. "My bigger concern is that this may not be enough, leading to further staff cuts, particularly newsroom cuts, and newspaper closures."

At a time when democracy is threatened from within and without, one of the last things America needs is to lose even more of its independent, local free press system.

Congress has much to do this summer. But it must also recognize this crisis, agree that local journalism is a civic necessity and help the industry stabilize before it's too late.

Brier Dudley: on Twitter: @BrierDudley, is editor of The Seattle Times Save the Free Press Initiative. Its weekly newsletter: <https://st.news/FreePressNewsletter>. Reach him at [bdudley@seattletimes.com](mailto:bdudley@seattletimes.com)