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EDITORIAL & OPINION

The Inquirer offers news, which strives to present unbiased, factual reporting, and opinion, which showcases viewpoints. Here is what you'll find on these opinion pages.

EDITORIAL: An opinion about a matter of public interest and policy researched and written by our Editorial Board, a group of journalists separate from the newsroom who meet frequently to discuss and debate issues. Unlike news stories, which are fact-driven and written by reporters, editorials advocate, champion, argue, critique, and suggest ways to make the region better.

COLUMN: Unlike reporters, columnists are allowed to include their opinions and viewpoints when presenting their reporting. Some columnists, like Will Bunch and Trudy Rubin, appear on these pages. Others, like Jenice Armstrong, Maria Panaritis, and Helen Ubiñas, appear elsewhere.

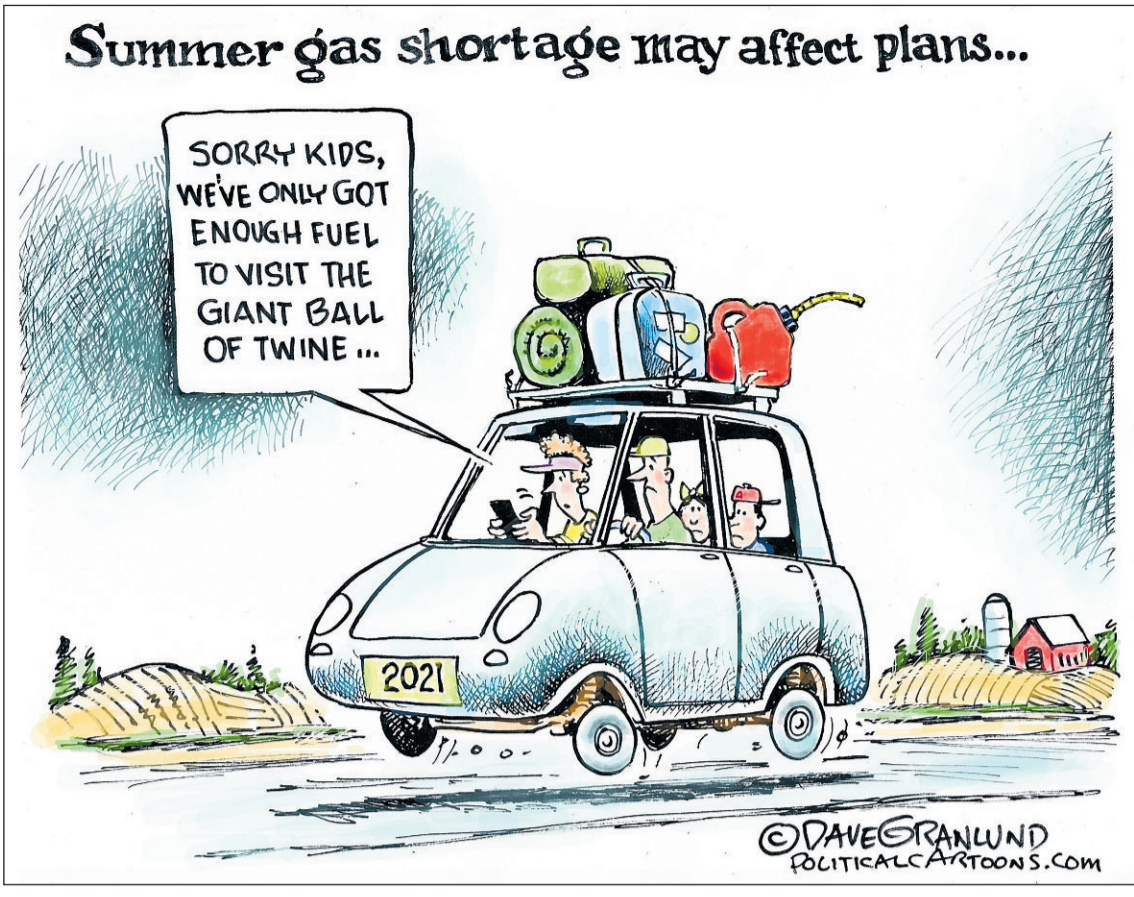
OP-ED: An essay or other type of article, including cartoons, that presents the opinion or perspective of someone with insight on the news. Many are submitted to us, but we also solicit op-eds from writers on specific topics. For more information: inquirer.com/opinion-guidelines

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: A reader's written opinion submitted by mail or email in response to a story in The Inquirer or another issue.

FOR MORE ON HOW WE WORK:
 The Editorial Board consists of the managing editor for opinion, the deputy opinion editor, opinion coverage editor, columnist, and writers. The board routinely discusses issues of the day to editorialize on and, during election campaigns, which candidates or ballot measures to endorse. News reporters and editors do not participate in these discussions. The board's opinions are not a consideration in news coverage.

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DAVE GRANLUND

EDITORIAL

Prepared for Pa.'s top court

With Brobson, voters know what they're going to get in a conservative jurist.

Between the coronavirus pandemic and the 2020 election, the past year has been a case study on the importance of state Supreme Courts. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court was busy with a flurry of Republican challenges to the state's voting law, issuing decisions on issues from naked ballots to mail-in deadlines and ballot drop boxes.

A different path on the court could have meant a very different path for the pandemic, and, considering Pennsylvania's pivotal role in presidential politics, potentially for the nation.

Pennsylvania is one of seven states that have partisan elections for Supreme Court justice when one of the seats is vacant (once on the bench, judges get reelected through retention elections).

In November, voters will choose who will fill the seat of retiring Justice Thomas Ager, a Republican who reached retirement age after 23 years on the bench — including as chief justice for the past five years.

In the primary, only one Democrat is running: Pennsylvania Superior Court Judge Maria McLaughlin.

The stakes for Republicans are high. Saylor

is one of two Republicans on the bench, and if his seat goes to a Democrat, it will further entrench a Democratic majority.

Three Republicans are competing to be on the ticket in November: Commonwealth Court Judge Kevin Brobson, Commonwealth Court Judge Patricia McCullough, and Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Paula Patrick.

Being a judge, let alone a Supreme Court justice, is extremely hard. It requires people to check their own policy preferences at the door and instead be guided by a consistent judicial philosophy — avoiding not only bias but the appearance of bias.

The best choice in the Republican Supreme Court justice is **Judge Kevin Brobson**.

With Judge Brobson, voters know what they are going to get: a conservative jurist who will rule with limited government and a limited judiciary in mind. In his endorsement interview, he discussed the importance of clearly written opinions so that all Pennsylvanians can understand the law and what it means. This is a value that we share. Brobson was elected by his Commonwealth Court peers as president judge last year, a meaningful vote of confidence.

Brobson seems more prepared to be a Supreme Court justice than either of his two opponents. Judge Patrick, a Philadelphia Democrat who became a Republican in 2009, has no appellate experience. But what really gave this board reservation was her decision to participate in an interview for a QAnon-promoting podcast.

Patrick also promoted on social media and attended a rally billed as "STOP THE SHUT-DOWN." Considering the number of legal challenges related to coronavirus policy, promoting and attending such an event is unbecoming for a prospective Supreme Court justice. Judge McCullough also attended this rally.

In her interview with the board, McCullough emphasized how rewarding she found her time as a family court judge. Her passion for diversion programs is laudable. She didn't, however, make the case for why the Supreme Court bench is the place for her.

These elections aren't what bring voters to the polls. But the Supreme Court is extremely important. Both the primary and the general election in November deserve your attention — it is the vote for the branch of government that can overturn the work of the other two.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send letters to letters@inquirer.com. Limit length to 150 words and include home address and day and evening phone number. Letters run in the Inquirer six days a week on the editorial pages. Letters not published online.

Pa.'s clean natural gas is key

Despite an April 26 editorial's misleading narrative, clean Pennsylvania-produced natural gas is key to achieving President Joe Biden's climate, economic, and national security goals. As a result of the natural gas development and subsequent transition to natural gas power generation, a recent Berkeley Lab study found that "not only did the nation significantly reduce its carbon footprint, but it did so while also reducing total energy bills and health burdens."

Further, 2019 Energy Information Administration and EPA data demonstrate that Pennsylvania's natural gas industry represents one-half of 1% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. All while lowering energy costs to the consumer and providing good-paying jobs. And according to studies by the North American Building Trades Union, these jobs are desired and provide "better overall careers." The U.S. needs sound solutions that recognize natural gas development as a necessary component for our clean energy future and long-term, family-sustaining jobs.

Dave Callahan, Marcellus Shale Coalition, Pittsburgh



A shale gas drilling site in St. Mary's, Pa. AP, File

Backlash over handling of MOVE remains

As a graduate of the Penn anthropology program, I, too, am dismayed by the revelations that the remains of one or perhaps two children killed in the MOVE bombing were kept for over 35 years at Penn and then Princeton, and can understand how using them in a broadly accessible online course seems callous and disrespectful to members of the family and community. But calls to terminate Janet Monge, the lecturer for that online course, would be making a scapegoat of someone, long committed to righting past injustices, in particular that of the MOVE bombing.

The irony in targeting Dr. Monge is that she is a forensic scientist (and so has been trained to disassociate the living from the dead to do that work), and in that capacity had wanted desperately to tell the story of the MOVE horror that was, in some sense, Philly's worst-kept secret: that younger generations of Philadelphians, and most students at Penn, are only now learning the details of that horrible violence that the city perpetrated on some of its Black residents barely a stone's throw from Penn's campus. From the time she was

brought on to work on those remains as a doctoral student in 1985 — when her work actually contradicted the conclusions of the city's special commission on MOVE — Dr. Monge always wanted that story told and reckoned with, and made sure people knew about it. She talked about it in her classes in order to combat that injustice, not perpetuate it.

Alexander Bauer, associate professor of anthropology, Queens College, CUNY, and editor, International Journal of Cultural Property

All voters should vote on ballot questions

The municipal primary election will take place on May 18, and it is important that every voter, including independents and third-party voters, take the time to vote in this election. There are four ballot questions that all voters should pay attention to and vote on because they propose changes to the Pennsylvania Constitution.

The League of Women Voters has prepared nonpartisan "plain English" descriptions and background information for all these ballot questions, including an informative video about them, on its election website, www.vote411.org. A lot of partisan information about these ballot questions is being distributed by mail and through social media. Voters should take the time to understand the

implications and then vote whether these proposed changes should be made to the state constitution.

Monica Weninger and Jean Weston, co-presidents, League of Women Voters of Bucks County, Doylestown

Health insurance companies end waivers

One simple thing that could be done by the insurance companies is to continue waivers for COVID-19-related illnesses for anyone who has been fully vaccinated. If you're not vaccinated, you get hit with the entire out-of-pocket costs. If you are, then there are no costs. A small incentive to get vaccinated, which doesn't cost anyone very much.

Sam Goldwasser, Bala Cynwyd, sam@seas.upenn.edu

Contrast in health care

The Inquirer ran the story announcing that Tower Health will be selling hospitals. So now Tower Health Allegheny and Tenet as health-care corporations that have sold off hospitals in the Philadelphia area. Nationally, there have been hundreds of hospitals that have closed. Thinking about all those sell-offs and closures, we might ask the question: Why isn't the nation of Cuba closing hospitals?

While Cuba has only a tiny percentage of the wealth of this country, every Cuban has a lifetime right to health care. Doctors treat patients in the neighborhoods where they live. During the pandemic, health-care workers visited Cubans to determine if they had pandemic-related symptoms. What have been the results of the health-care systems in this country and Cuba?

Pennsylvania and Cuba have similar populations, but Pennsylvania has had over 26,000 COVID-19 deaths, while Cuba has had fewer than 700 COVID-19 deaths. Why is there such a stark difference with respect to health care in this country and Cuba? While Cuba doesn't have many resources, their priorities are about human needs and not profits. This reality demonstrates that when a health-care system makes a priority of human needs, this makes all the difference.

Steven Halpern, Philadelphia, hnbjps@gmail.com

Clearing the Record

A May 2 op-ed incorrectly stated that a Chicago police officer shot 13-year-old Adam Toledo four times. Reports indicate that the officer killed Toledo with a single shot.