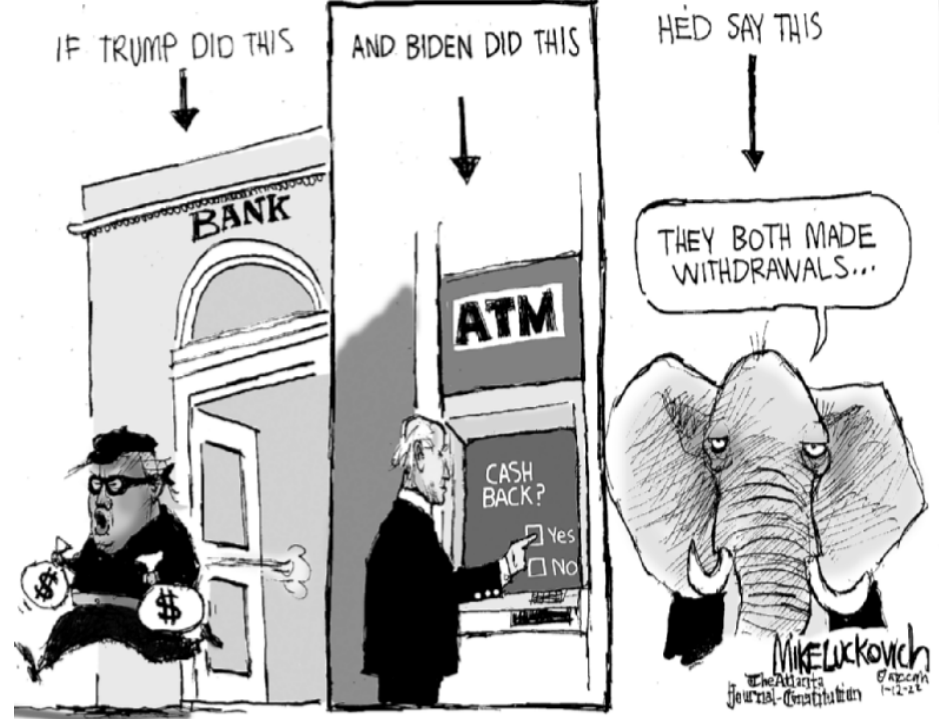


OPINION



SOCIAL VIEWS

Shapiro spoke to the people on inauguration day, and they heard him loud and clear



Joyce M. Davis *jdavis@pennlive.com*

The open letters to Gov. Josh Shapiro are pouring into PennLive's Opinion page, with people from throughout the commonwealth writing eloquent missives imploring him to lower taxes, improve education, end homelessness, stop police brutality and eradicate child poverty. Even two former Pennsylvania governors have weighed in.

Everyone is vying for the new governor's attention, as well they should.

It's a time of exhilaration and hope for thousands of advocates for worthy causes and missions to help Pennsylvanians. They all want to be close to the new centers of power. And in a democracy, everyone deserves to at least speak their minds and know the people they put into office will listen.

On his first day in office, Shapiro vowed to do just that.

Standing on the steps of the state Capitol, with his hand on several Bibles, Pennsylvania's 48th governor took the oath of office and made solemn promises to the "good people of Pennsylvania." And there's no taking them back. They're now etched into the stone tablets of American history.

In his first breaths as leader of Pennsylvania, Shapiro vowed to stand with those who have "suffered hardships." He vowed to stand with those who have suffered the injustices of "wage theft, sexual abuse, predatory lending and opioid addiction." And he vowed to let the people of Pennsylvania serve as his "North Star," directing his path

and his priorities while he holds power for what could be the next eight years. Time will tell.

For now, thousands of Pennsylvanians of all races, cultures and classes heard his words at the state Capitol, even if they interpreted them differently.

But there's no mistaking the content and tone of the new governor's inaugural message: It was all about the people and how he would serve them.

"Your struggles give me purpose," he said. "Your smiles and your tears, they have filled my heart. Your problems have become my priorities. Your causes, my concerns."

Those words put himself squarely in the camp of the disenfranchised, downtrodden and abused in Pennsylvania, and he seemed to speak on behalf of thousands who have felt weak and without a voice in the halls of power.

Make no mistake about it, the people were listening. And they heard the new governor loud and clear.

They heard his words on inauguration day. They will remember his words on inauguration day. And they will hold him to his words in the years to come.

We all know there is such a thing as "realpolitik" in local as well as international affairs. However much a leader wants to stick to his ideals and noble promises, the reality of the need for political compromise inevitably interferes and weakens the staunchest resolve.

And like former Gov. Tom Wolf, Shapiro

will have to deal with the reality of legislators who deny election results, support insurrectionists and try to ensure he will never claim a single victory for the people he's vowed to serve. But this governor's experience in the hard knocks world as a criminal prosecutor provides some reassurance that he is nobody's fool. He's as tough and as shrewd as his erstwhile adversaries. They would do well to stand down.

The new governor has made it clear he knows how close we came these past years to losing our cherished democracy, and he has vowed to not let "those who peddle lies drown out the truth."

Those words from Shapiro on inauguration day were the most reassuring of all.

Our commonwealth has remained strong and intact despite the serious threat extremists posed during the heyday of President Donald Trump because those who peddled lies didn't win. That was thanks to the good voters of Pennsylvania electing more good leaders than bad.

And it was thanks to the good leaders — among them our former governor and former attorney general — standing united in defense of truth over blatant lies.

Keep those open letters coming. We assure you: The new governor is paying attention.

Joyce M. Davis is PennLive's outreach and opinion editor. Follow her on Facebook and on Twitter: @byjoycedavis.

YOUR VIEWS

Workers who serve people with disabilities must earn more

Providers who care for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism (ID/A) are being pummeled by a workforce shortage driven by low wages and high vacancy and turnover rates.

RCPA partnered with The Arc of Pennsylvania and The Provider Alliance to have the Center for Healthcare Solutions examine the state's ID/A workforce. The survey evaluated critical data on pay practices, hourly wages, scheduled positions, filled positions and separations for more than 9,000 employees representing 40 positions in 52 organizations.

The findings are stark. Wages for direct support professionals who help ID/A children and adults with their basic daily living needs average \$16.61 per hour, less than some fast-food restaurants. The turnover rate for DSPs is 38%, with providers reporting a vacancy rate of 28%. The numbers are similar for other residential and program supervisors.

The study also found that 14% of all DSP hours are paid at an overtime rate, and 41% of providers are now engaged in a more costly practice of contracting for staffing services to manage the workforce shortage.

Because human services like ID/A are funded primarily by Medicaid, providers cannot raise prices like private businesses to pay higher wages. So chronic underfunding by the state only exacerbates these operational challenges.

ID/A providers simply do not have the staff they need to serve the thousands of Pennsylvanians receiving or waiting for critical services.

This is a system that is strained past its breaking point, and it needs our support now.

Richard Edley *President and CEO, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association*

Hunting, trapping help manage wildlife populations

Silvie Pomictier's Jan. 12 letter to the editor ("Shun animal skins, fur and feathers") was misguided, at best.

Her assertion that animals are "skinned alive" is absurd on its face. It makes zero sense to process furs in this manner, from any legitimate perspective. Of course, from an animal rights propaganda viewpoint, it's OK to spread this misinformation.

For the record, let us be clear that modern wildlife biologists use regulated hunting and trapping as a tool to scientifically manage certain wildlife populations. It is a well-established biological fact that once a population exceeds the carrying capacity of the habitat, the excess animals will die.

In the absence of regulated hunting and trapping, some will die from starvation; some will die from diseases such as distemper, rabies or mange; some will die from vehicle collisions; some will die at the fangs and claws of other natural predators. But make no mistake, those animals will die (often a lingering, painful, miserable death).

Like it or not, that is how it works in the real world. It's biology. It's science. So, if excess animals will die anyway (and they will), is it better to utilize a renewable resource in a responsible way or totally waste it?

Don Stiffler *Thompsontown, Juniata County*

AS I SEE IT

By failing on climate change, we're failing our kids

Joseph Otis Minott

For many adults, there's no greater responsibility in the world than protecting a child. From longtime parents to part-time babysitters, anyone who commits to taking care of a child understands that keeping them safe and healthy must come before anything else.

And yet, as a society, we've failed to translate that deeply felt commitment into actions and policies that deliver on our shared responsibility to protect all children from preventable harms. Nowhere is that more apparent than in our disastrous efforts to meaningfully address climate change and ensure a safe and healthy world for future generations.

In Pennsylvania, we must rethink our energy systems with a focus on protecting the health and safety of all children.

The evidence is undeniable: Climate change is a health crisis as well as an environmental one, and both are threatening our children in a profound way. Some of the nation's most trusted and respected doctors are sending this message loud and clear. A recent article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* declares, "The fetus, infant, and child are especially vulnerable to exposure to air pollution and climate change, which are already taking a major toll on the physical and mental health of children."

The article, written by leading physicians and researchers at Columbia and Stanford universities, is intended to give other phy-

sicians a full perspective on the "multiple harms" that climate change and air pollution inflict on children.

Children, the report states, are highly susceptible to toxic chemicals, which can impact their development at pivotal times. They're more vulnerable to disruptions in food and water supplies. Their bodies are more vulnerable to air pollutants and allergens. They're more sensitive to severe heat, making their increased time spent outside all the more dangerous. They suffer more from the physical injuries and psychological traumas of weather disasters and being forced to evacuate their homes. They have long lives ahead of them, which means that chronic conditions such as asthma and mental health issues will persist for longer.

By failing to act on climate, we are failing our children.

Here are two actions Pennsylvanians must demand of our elected officials.

First, we can begin taking part in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which Pennsylvania officially linked with this spring by adopting a state regulation that will reduce carbon pollution from power plants.

RGGI offers a market-driven path to reducing emissions from the fossil fuel industry that would spur hundreds of millions of dollars in annual funding for other clean energy and sustainability priorities. The program has delivered proven results

in 11 neighboring states for over a decade, even as some Pennsylvania lawmakers continue to fight and litigate against Pennsylvania's successful bid to share in the benefits.

These fossil fuel-funded legislators have been in court for months seeking to block this regulation, even though it is projected to reduce up to 227 million tons of carbon pollution and provide over \$6 billion in monetized health benefits (that is, avoided health care costs) in Pennsylvania by 2030. Shame on them.

Second, Pennsylvania can begin acting on its stated commitments to environmental justice. Time and again, state Department of Environmental Protection officials fast-track fossil fuel projects and fail to consult with neighborhoods and communities across the state on their potential impact. As the *New England Journal of Medicine* article demonstrates, when leaders don't consider environmental justice, children and communities suffer.

We can't let climate change threaten their future. Pennsylvania has to do its part to move away from a fossil fuel-dependent economy and towards clean, renewable energy that will give future generations a fighting shot at a thriving and sustainable world.

Joseph Otis Minott is executive director and chief counsel of the Clean Air Council.

The Patriot-News PENNLIVE

Tim Kennedy
Regional President

Cate Barron
President

Bob Geiger
Vice President Of Sales

Burke Noel
Vice President Of Content

Joyce Davis
Outreach and Opinion Editor

Teresa Bonner
Director Of Content

Salim Michel Makhlof
Director Of Penn Studios

Jennifer Palik
Senior Editor