

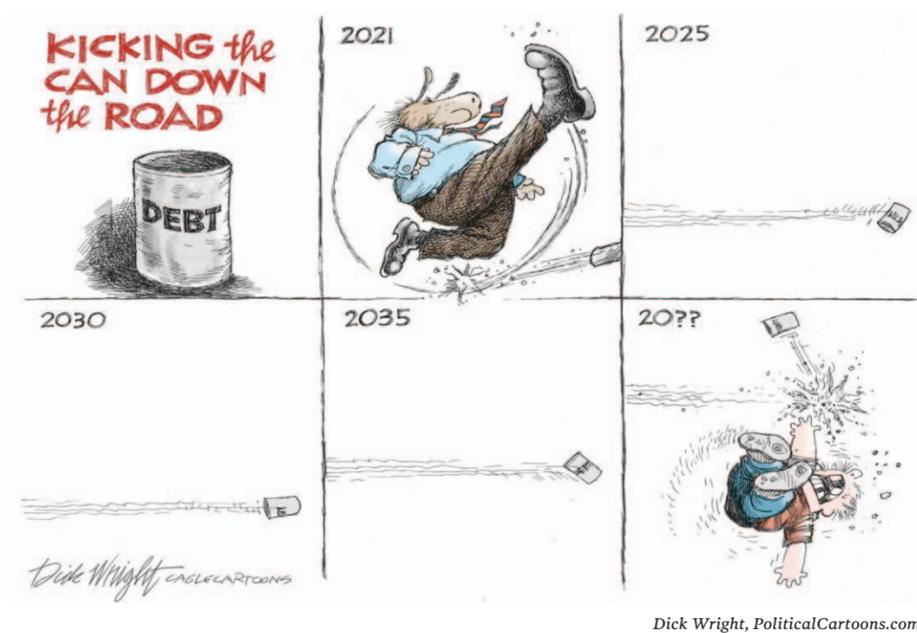
OPINION

THE DENVER POST
established 1892

“There is no hope for the satisfied man.”

Post founder, Frederick G. Bonfils, 1861-1933

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Federal law would incentivize non-opioid pain relief treatments

In Colorado and nationwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has understandably dominated headlines. Yet another public health crisis, one that takes about 190 American lives every day, has only worsened in the past year. In the 12 months ending in November 2020, about 1,400 Coloradans died from a drug overdose according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, a substantial increase from the previous year.

Three-quarters of these deaths are attributed to opioids.

The opioid epidemic has had a devastating impact on Colorado communities. As the interim CEO of Denver-based Young People in Recovery, I work with leaders across the country to address this crisis every day. As someone whose family has been directly affected by substance use disorder, I've felt this issue on a personal level as well.

One essential step in reducing the human toll of the opioid epidemic is stopping addiction before it begins. Luckily, legislation recently reintroduced in Congress would do just that.

The Non-Opioids Prevent Addiction in the Nation (“NOPAIN”) Act would increase access to safe, innovative non-opioid pain management options by updating reimbursement protocols to incentivize the use of these types of treatments.

With this legislation, health professionals will be better equipped to tailor treatment options to each patient's individual needs, which could prevent millions of Americans from going on to long-term opioid use after a surgery.

I urge senators John Hickenlooper and Michael Bennet and Rep. Diana DeGette to support this critical legislation that will give health professionals access to more tools to manage

their patients' pain.

That's an approach we should all get behind.

Ann Herbst, Denver

Editor's note: Herbst is interim CEO of Young People in Recovery.

We see gun violence and suicides far too often in Colorado

The Colorado community has been jolted by violent gun acts including the Columbine High School, Aurora movie theatre, and the Boulder grocery store shootings. In addition to these publicized traumatic events, as pediatricians, we diagnose and treat countless injuries involving gun violence in our day-to-day work.

With Children's Hospital Colorado declaring a State of Emergency for pediatric mental health on May 26, it is imperative that we focus on firearm regulation to protect the safety of our children and community.

Our emergency rooms and hospitals are filled with children and adolescents reporting suicidal ideation or attempts to die by suicide. Studies show that more lethal means, such as firearm use, lead to more completed deaths by suicide than other methods, such as ingestion.

We want to extend a sincere thank you to Colorado legislators who are taking these experiences seriously.

The creation of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is one step towards protecting the health of children and families.

We are particularly impressed by the commitment to reducing gun violence without contributing to mass incarceration, working to improve rather than exacerbate inequities within our community. Thank you.

Kathryn Kalata and Molly Crenshaw, Denver

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How to destroy the truth

By David Brooks
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Great nations thrive by constantly refreshing two great reservoirs of knowledge. The first contains the knowledge from the stories we tell about ourselves. This is the knowledge of who we are as a people, how we got here, what long conflicts bind us together, what we find admirable and dishonorable, what kind of world we hope to build together.

This kind of knowledge isn't merely factual knowledge. It is a moral framework from which to see the world.

For America, the dominant story has been filled with resonant characters — Irving Berlin and Woody Guthrie, Aaron Burr and Cesar Chavez, Sojourner Truth and Robert Gould Shaw.

This national experience invited Americans to share Walt Whitman's passion to contain the whole vast carnival of stories, to see themselves in its themes and to feel themselves in this story.

This emotional and moral knowledge should give us a sense of identity, a sense of ideals to live up to and an appreciation of the values that matter most to us — equality or prosperity or freedom. Finally, these are shared stories should help us discover a shared destiny and our shared affection for one another.

The second reservoir of knowledge is propositional knowledge. This is the kind of knowledge we acquire through reason, logical proof and tight analysis. Some of this knowledge is empirical knowledge that can be established by carefully using evidence. No, the 2020 election was not stolen. Some of this knowledge is contained in powerful ideas that can be debated: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”

As Jonathan Rauch brilliantly writes in his book “The Constitution of Knowledge,” the acquisition of this kind of knowledge is also a collective process. It's not just a group of people commenting on each other's internet posts. It's a network of institutions — universities, courts, publishers, professional societies, media outlets — that have set up an interlocking set of procedures to hunt for error.

These are the same principles as those of the scientific method. An individual may be dumb,

Rauch notes, but the whole network is brilliant, so long as everybody in it adheres to certain rules:

No one gets the final say (every proposition might be wrong). No claim to personal authority (who you are doesn't determine the truth of what you say, the evidence does). No retreat to safety (you can't ban an idea just because it makes you feel unsafe).

Today many of us feel that America is suffering an epistemic crisis. We don't see the same reality. People say that they often assume the problem is intellectual. Our system of producing propositional knowledge is breaking down. Why can't those people fact-check themselves?

But Donald Trump doesn't get away with lies because his followers flunked Epistemology 101. He gets away with his lies because he tells stories of dispossession that feel true to many of them. Some students at elite schools aren't censorious and intolerant because they lack analytic skills. They feel entrapped by moral order that feels unsafe and unjust.

The real problem is in our system of producing shared stories. If a country can't tell narratives in which everybody finds an honorable place, then righteous rage will drive people toward tribal narratives that tear it apart.

Part of the blame goes to conservatives who try to whitewash history. Part goes to progressives who tell such a negative version of history that it destroys patriotism. But the core problem is our failure to understand what education is. Over the past decades, we cut education in half. We focused on reason and critical thinking skills — the core of the second reservoir of knowledge. The ability to tell complex stories about ourselves has atrophied. This is the ability to tell stories in which opposing characters can each possess pieces of the truth.

Now as we watch state legislatures try to enforce what history gets taught. We see how debauched and brutalized our historical storytelling skills have become. It is unfashionable to say so, but America has the greatest story to tell about itself, if we have the maturity to tell it honestly. The Fourth of July weekend seems like a decent time to start.



David Brooks became a columnist for The New York Times in 2003.

Patriotism is getting the job done for Colorado

By Leroy Garcia
Guest Commentary

I grew up in Pueblo, the 6th generation of my Garcia family tree to call Southern Colorado home. Like many people in Southern Colorado, my parents raised me to get the job done.

That same lesson from my upbringing took on a new meaning when I enlisted in the Marines and was deployed to Iraq. I didn't care about the political opinions of the person next to me because we all were determined to accomplish the mission at hand.

It was that same determined attitude that made me decide to run for office because Coloradans deserve elected officials that can deliver results they can feel in their communities. Years of gridlock in D.C. convinced far too many Americans that expecting their representatives to put their differences aside and get the job done was a waste of time. Coloradans deserve so much more than elected officials who shrug their shoulders and give up when it comes time to work with their colleagues. So, I won my seat in the Colorado House of Representatives and

showed up to work ready to do what wasn't being done in Washington D.C.

As I introduced myself to my new colleagues, I noticed that our name tags displayed just our name and our titles. The purposeful absence of any symbol of party affiliation quietly reinforced my belief that if you put your head down and focus on real issues rather than petty political grievances, campaign promises can turn into tangible results that Coloradans can feel. It was nearly a decade ago that I first assumed my role as an elected official, and approximately twice as long since I first enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and deployed to Iraq. I have spent over half of my life challenging and reaffirming my understanding of patriotism and what it means to me.

This weekend, as we celebrate the Fourth of July, I am overwhelmed by the contrasts between today's festivities, and our circumstances precisely 365 days ago. Over the last year, we experienced one of the most tumultuous moments in our history, marked by ever-increasing partisan division, dangerous extremism, and an unexpected pandem-

ic that claimed the lives of over 600,000 Americans. People lost their jobs, their life-savings, their loved ones and — in many ways — their drive to keep going. When the pandemic hit our nation, we looked to our elected officials to push their political differences aside to help Americans in need.

So, as harmful and divisive behavior expanded beyond the confines of the internet and spilled over into the real world, I retraced our steps and revived the “people first,” and “political party last” rule I internalize when I was first sworn into office.

When I and the other leaders in Colorado's General Assembly convened a special session last fall, we didn't let partisan bickering keep us from helping the people we represent. We took matters into our own hands — because we weren't going to let struggling Coloradans continue to suffer without the support they need to bounce back and recover — that's simply not the Colorado Way. We rose to the occasion and passed meaningful legislation with significant bipartisan support to provide targeted relief to uplift families, small businesses and our workforce while working to generate a strong economic

recovery to make Colorado more financially resilient going into the future. But we knew that we needed to do much more than simply recover.

During the 2021 legislative session we were faced with immeasurable challenges going into this year, but we didn't let our differences get in the way of helping Coloradans. This session, we exemplified patriotism in its purest form as we began to turn the page on the darkness of the last year and pave the way for a brighter future — a future where every Coloradan can achieve the American Dream.

My path toward achieving the American Dream was made possible by my decision to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. In the years since I enlisted, deployed to Iraq, and returned back to civilian life, my understanding of what patriotism means evolved as I did.

I have learned that patriotism isn't a synonym for superiority or a justification for tribalism — rather, it's about serving with a purpose greater than your own. It's about putting partisan divides aside and using the diversity of the community around you to achieve excellence. As your Senate presi-

dent, I have always led with these values in mind and remain devoted to protecting, serving and meeting the needs of Coloradans who graciously entrusted me to fulfill my duty to serve.

When I think about patriotism and the challenges we have faced throughout the course of our long history, I think about the countless times we have come together as Americans — not just as Democrats and Republicans — to simply do what's best for the people we serve. This session was an example of that, and the many things we accomplished with the help of our friends from across the aisle are certainly something to celebrate and be proud of this Independence Day.

The Fourth of July is more than just a day off — it's a reminder of the need to recommit ourselves to the vision of patriotism engrained with an ideal much older than America itself: a more perfect union is possible if we continue to work for it.



Leroy Garcia is the president of the Colorado Senate and represents Senate District 3 in Pueblo.