

Editorial Opinion

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Beyond straws, ban other plastic from home



Your Turn
Pamela Hughes, D.O.
Guest columnist

Within the past year, Marco Island, Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel have joined a growing list of coastal communities that have banned plastic straws from beaches for environmental reasons.

They're harmful to wildlife and pollute the ocean, not to mention they're an eyesore for beachgoers.

Our local communities join SeaWorld, Starbucks, Hyatt, American Airlines, Royal Caribbean and other corporations that have announced plans to reduce or eliminate the use of straws. The national publication Eater declared that 2018 "might just be the year that the world kicks its plastic straw habit."

Let's hope so. Let's hope it's just the start of a war on plastic. Ocean Conservancy tracks items collected during its annual International Coastal Cleanup Day and plastic is the biggest offender. The list, in order, includes cigarette butts, food wrappers, plastic beverage bottles, plastic bottle caps, plastic gro-

cery bags, other plastic bags, straws, plastic takeout containers, plastic lids and foam takeout containers.

See the trend? Plastic, plastic and more plastic. If global usage and littering of plastic continue at the current rate, the World Economic Forum estimates that oceans will contain more plastics than fish by 2050.

Beyond concerns for the environment, I'd like to offer another reason to ban plastic straws: They're bad for your health. Plastic straws are made from polypropylene, a byproduct of petroleum that's proven to adversely affect estrogen levels. It's not clear how much of the chemical can leach into your drink, and ultimately into your body.

Sipping through straws also introduces air into the digestive tract, causing gas and bloating. It can increase the likelihood of cavities and tooth decay by directing a stream of liquid to a concentrated area.

There have even been debates about whether excessive use of straws can cause wrinkles around the mouth.

Like plastic straws, there also are health concerns related to reusable plastic containers and water bottles. Many types of plastic contain bisphenol

Guest commentaries

A guest commentary can be 600 words or less on a topical subject. Authors must have considerable experience, public involvement or expertise in the subject matter. Due to the large number of guest commentaries we receive, these may be returned to the author with a recommendation to resubmit it as a letter to the editor within the guidelines for letters. Submit to letters@naplesnews.com.

A (BPA), an industrial chemical added during the manufacturing process to make plastic more durable. However, BPA isn't always sealed into the plastic, allowing the toxic chemical to seep into liquid or food.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has ruled that polypropylene and BPA are relatively safe because humans aren't ingesting the toxic chemical at high levels. The term "relatively" doesn't offer much comfort, though. High exposure levels to BPA can impact the liver, kidneys and possibly the reproductive, nervous, immune and cardiovascular systems.

I offer myself as a research example.

Like many Americans, I grew up with plastic everywhere in my home. We drank from plastic bottles, packed sandwiches in plastic bags, occasionally ate with plastic utensils and stored leftovers in plastic containers. As I learned more about the dangers of BPA and polypropylene, I began clearing my home of plastics. Yet seven years later, medical testing proved my body still contained BPA levels over the acceptable limit for humans.

The government has yet to declare medical evidence is "beyond a reasonable doubt" to precipitate a ban on the manufacturing and sales of plastic straws and containers, but scientists have introduced enough doubt to inspire lifestyle changes. Start by purchasing a stainless steel or glass straw, or ditch straws altogether and sip from the glass. Substitute ceramic or glass containers to store and heat food.

If each of us can commit to reducing our use of plastics, we can reverse the dangerous impact on our environment while putting us on the road to a healthier lifestyle.

Hughes is the founder of the Hughes Center for Functional Medicine in Naples.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 20, the 324th day of 2018. There are 41 days left in the year. On this date in:

1789: New Jersey became the first state to ratify the Bill of Rights.

1945: 22 former Nazi officials went on trial before an international war crimes tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany.

1969: A group of American Indian activists began a 19-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay.

1985: The first version of Microsoft's Windows operating system, Windows 1.0, was officially released.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

Actress-comedian **Kaye Ballard** is 93. Actress **Estelle Parsons** is 91. Comedian **Dick Smothers** is 80. Actress **Veronica Hamel** is 75. Broadcast journalist **Judy Woodruff** is 72. Musician **Joe Walsh** is 71. Actress **Bo Derek** is 62. Country singer **Dierks Bentley** is 43.

TODAY'S QUOTE

"The problem of power is how to achieve its responsible use rather than its irresponsible and indulgent use — of how to get men of power to live for the public rather than off the public."
— Robert F. Kennedy

BIBLE QUOTE

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.
— Matthew 5:14

LETTERS

Thank veterans daily

I am an Air Force Vietnam War veteran. On Veterans Day, we see patriotism and support for our service. Too often after a holiday we are forgotten, put on the back shelf.

I must commend two national companies, with outlets in Naples, which remember us all year-round. Lowes always acknowledges our service and on Veterans Day awarded us with an American flag for our service. Every time I visit, I am thanked for my service. Home Depot also allows recognition for our service.

In our community, so many of us have served in every conflict dating back to World War II. Please, do not forget the commitment to protecting fellow Americans, each and every veteran represents. Every day we should be thankful for the right we have earned to live in freedom, borne on the backs of our military. God bless America.
M. Richard Mellon, Naples

Patients should choose

I recently read about NCH Healthcare System's proposed new policy that would prevent me from choosing my admitting physician. I am concerned that will leave me under the care of a doctor who does not have my full patient history and may not know the best course of treatment for me.

While I understand that my doctor may visit me in the hospital, he will have no ability to record notes, order tests or advocate for me in an official capacity.

I have built a long-standing relationship with my doctor who understands my culture, my treatment preferences and has a complete picture of my overall health. It took me a long time to find a good fit with a doctor being that I moved to Florida in 2015.

I urge the leaders at NCH to reconsider this policy and allow all Collier County and Lee County residents to maintain our right to choose our course of medical treatment through a doctor whom we know and trust.
Karen O'Connor, Bonita Springs

Voter suppression

Blockbusting, Y2K and voter suppression. There is a strong parallel here.

Blockbusting was used by real estate agents and developers to convince white property owners to sell their houses at low prices out of fear that racial minorities would soon be moving into the neighborhood. They then sold the houses at much higher prices to black families escaping overcrowded ghettos.

The late 20th century saw articles about the coming apocalypse of the year 2000 (Y2K). All computer operations were going to crash because of the rollover from 1999 to 2000. I saw a few problems, but not the predicted disaster. Many of my firm's clients took the bait. We assured them it was not a problem, yet they gave us lucrative contracts to pour through all the code and give them voluminous reports proving the code was safe. We sold our company in 1999 and I

Letters policy

Letters can be 275 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity or taste, to eliminate personal attacks and to prevent libel. Letters may be edited for accuracy, rejected or returned to the writer to resubmit a new letter. The source of a statistic should be attributed within the letter. No poetry, letter-writing campaigns, or airing of a personal grievance against a business. Submissions cannot be handwritten. Publication presently is limited to one per person within a month. City of residence and a contact phone number are required. By email: Use the form at naplesnews.com to receive confirmation of receipt or send to letters@naplesnews.com.

stayed in my office at full salary as a Y2K hostage until July 2000 to be sure we got through year-end, the first quarter and the midyear. What a waste of money.

Republicans are using the same technique to get away with voter suppression. For years they have been screaming about Democrats committing widespread voter fraud. After all the study, there has been no proof of widespread fraud. Supporters of President Donald Trump firmly believe in widespread voter fraud, so turn a blind eye to voter suppression. There is ample evidence of many examples this past election.

The parallel is to build a false narrative, scare the masses and then take advantage of them. There's a long sad history of this trick.
Bernie Kennedy, Naples

Downsize and share your stuff

"Stuff" doesn't (and never will) make you happy. Instant gratification dissipates quickly.

"Stuff" requires moving, packing, dusting, taxing and cluttering your space. All that "stuff" can be thrown away, but where? Landfills? Mountains of trash? The oceans? How will you answer when your grandchildren ask, "What did you do to prevent our Earth from dying?"

So please, simplify your life, share your excess things with the poor and skip Black Friday's crowds, chaos and insanity by sending your money to your favorite charity instead.

Simplifying is freeing and good for our dying environment. Please help.
Georgia Hopefl, Naples

Scoundrels everywhere

With regard to Ron Wobbeking's letter of Nov. 9 alerting us to the apparent lack of American flags at a Democratic rally:

Be careful when comparing the level of patriotism to the number of flags seen behind an individual at a press conference. Are you that easily duped? So if I have one flag behind me or no flag behind me and you have 10, you are somehow 10 times more patriotic than me? Really? That is exactly what the flag wavers want you to believe.
Samuel Johnson said, "Patriotism is the

last refuge of a scoundrel." Cadet "Bone Spur," President Donald Trump, has so many flags behind him that it has become a fire hazard. Yet when his time came to show what he was made of, he took a pass. None of us, his contemporaries, who answered the call will be fooled by his newfound patriotism. Give me a break.

It's easy to wave a flag and be photographed with one. Let's measure patriotism and love of country by one's actions and behavior. Beware, the scoundrels are everywhere.
Tom Strang, Naples

Union a factor in election

During the Nov. 6 election for fire commissioners, the three candidates I supported were all defeated. How could I be so wrong?

My choices for fire commissioners were all very qualified; they had good business experience, were all educated and civic-minded individuals. Their goal was to keep us safe and reduce or eliminate wasteful spending by the fire district. Sounds like the type of individuals we would all welcome as our new fire commissioners.

However, the firefighters' union would have none of this. They wanted fire commissioners who would give them higher wages, more benefits, better working conditions, more job security and do as they are told. How selfish. But that's what unions do.

Here's what happened: During early voting and on Election Day, the union strongly suggested that every off-duty firefighter volunteer to spend three or four hours at individual polling locations, handing out literature encouraging voters to elect commissioners supported by their union.

Why wasn't it obvious to us that the candidates the union supported would be beholden to the union after the election? Don't we understand the meaning of "a favor for a favor" or "tit for tat" or "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours?"

After the new fire commissioners are in office, do you think they will do what's best for the citizens or the union firefighters who helped them get elected? Of course, the union will say that's democracy and their candidates won because they were elected by the people. Nonsense.

Shame on us for forgetting everything we previously learned about how unions operate.
Ed Graf, Naples

Legal, illegal votes count?

I received a text message from a volunteer for the Democratic Party of Georgia, asking if I had any problems voting and how every vote must be counted.

Only thing is that I've lived in Florida for 20 years and haven't been registered in Georgia since 1986.

I guess to Democrats, "every vote" means just that, whether it's legal or not? Kind of similar to Florida?
Tom Snelling, Bonita Springs