

OPINION

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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 or policy that is 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 offer solutions.

Column
Columnists are allowed to include their opinions and viewpoints when presenting their reporting. Inquirer columnists include Will Bunch, Trudy Rubin, Helen Ubiñas, and Jenice Armstrong.

Op-Ed
An op-ed — a name taken from their traditional placement in newspapers “opposite the editorial page” — is an essay or commentary piece that presents the opinion or perspective of the author. Many are submitted to us by Inquirer readers and writers with insight on the news, but we also solicit op-eds from authors on specific topics.

Letter to the Editor
A reader’s written opinion submitted in response to an article in The Inquirer or another issue.

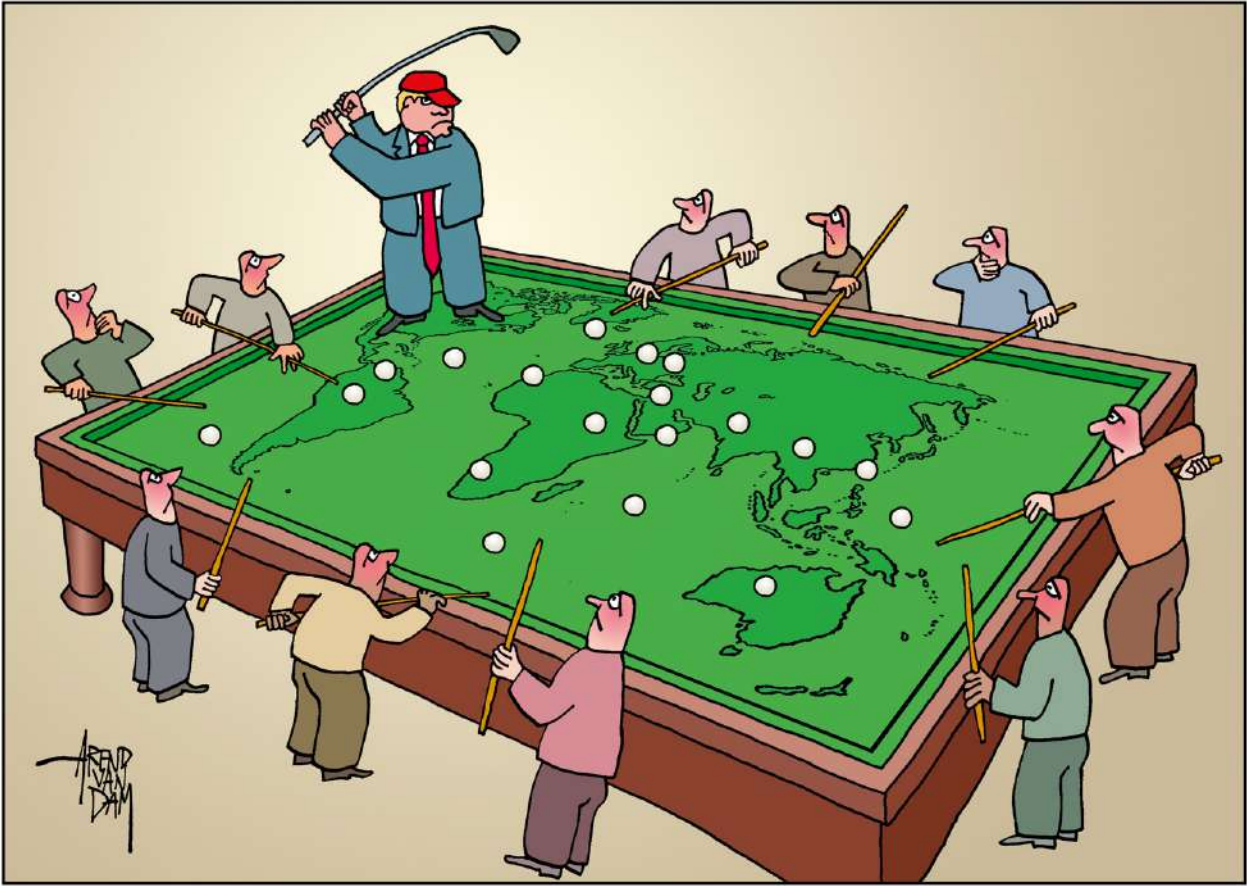
For more on how we work
The Editorial Board includes the managing editor for opinion, columnists, and opinion writers and editors. The board routinely discusses issues of the day to decide what to editorialize about and, during election campaigns, which candidates or ballot measures to endorse. News reporters and editors do not participate in these discussions. The board’s opinions are not a consideration in news coverage.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

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Arend van Dam



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send letters to letters@inquirer.com. Limit length to 200 words and include home address and day and evening phone number. Letters are published in The Inquirer six days a week on the editorial pages and online at www.inquirer.com/opinion/letters/

Better choices

The nomination now in the U.S. Senate of Pete Hegseth for secretary of defense is key for the national security of the American people. Sadly, as with former nominee Matt Gaetz of Florida, Hegseth is in over his head. What’s more, the charges of sexual misconduct and recent admission of alcohol abuse are disqualifying. Hegseth’s testimony confirmed it. Further, Sen. Elizabeth Warren quoted his own remarks: “Women — straight up — should not serve in combat.” While Hegseth then backed down, he insists “moms” should be at home with their children. He has similar biases against gay people in the military. His ex-wife divorced him for adultery, and he settled sexual assault accusations.

In 1981, John Tower of Texas was rejected by the Senate for similar reasons of alcohol abuse. And Tower was a senator of long-standing. Meanwhile, Hegseth’s main claim to fame is as a Fox News host. The Senate should reject Hegseth as unqualified and ethically challenged. We need a far better choice for the CEO of the largest department in the U.S. government, overseeing the health — and readiness to serve — of three million Americans.

Edward A. Aguilar,
Philadelphia

Live together

I was very disappointed at the comments made by NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson concerning the racist texts sent by some deranged person or group after the election. It is one thing to condemn these despicable actions, as we all should, but to add a tagline about President-elect Donald Trump and how racist groups “feel emboldened” to “stoke the flames of fear” adds an unnecessary wind to those same flames. Although there are still too many people in this great country who operate out of generational or personal ignorance, it is imperative that we share a common goal of unity and seek to return to our pledge as one nation under God. Indivisible.

We all must guard our tongues so as not to get snared by an enemy who wants to divide our nation. It would benefit all of us to remember and live by the virtues outlined in Colossians 3:12-15: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly



Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to be defense secretary, appears before the Senate Armed Services Committee for his confirmation hearing Tuesday. Alex Brandon / AP

loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

It is my hope and prayer that we can all as individuals, and collectively as a nation, learn to live as one body and be called to peace.

William Buckley,
Mullica Hill

Children’s health

‘Tis the season for New Year’s resolutions! As a pediatrician and as child health advocates, we urge policymakers to join us in supporting young families and promoting children’s health. As we turn the page on a new year and a new administration, here are our resolutions:

- **An expanded child tax credit:** Supporters of smaller government and young working families should embrace this policy that uses the tax system to disburse benefits with less bureaucracy. President Donald Trump’s 2017 changes to the CTC are expiring. Let’s do more.
- **Paid family and medical leave:** Healthy families are key to our country’s success. Paid leave helps families care for new babies and loved ones without leaving the workforce. This

investment in American families could lower child death and hospitalization rates, decrease postpartum depression, and better spousal relationships, all while honoring the dignity of work.

- **Access to healthy food for children:** In 2023, almost one in five U.S. children lived in food-insecure households. Instead of cutting SNAP benefits, let’s innovate by allowing online grocery shopping for SNAP and virtual services for WIC. Let’s ensure kids are fed so they can learn and be healthy while supporting our farmers who supply these nutritious foods.

In these divisive times, policymakers can unite around evidence-based policies that help working families and promote economic mobility. The American dream inspires us to work hard and achieve goals. By investing in young families and children, we ensure a healthier, more prosperous future.

George Dalember, *senior fellow, Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics at the University of Pennsylvania, and Madeline DeMarco,* *Roberts Center for Pediatric Research, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia*

Power broker

Don’t expect Susie Wiles, Donald Trump’s incoming chief of staff and the first woman to be given this responsibility, to have an easily visible seat on the inaugural platform Monday — if she is there at all. Extremely capable in her leadership skills, and with

a long-standing history in politics, Wiles on most days spends from 2 to 7 p.m. with the incoming president, offering extensive guidance in his presidential appointment selections as his means toward the end they both believe necessary: disruption of the status quo.

Wiles states Trump has no responsibility whatsoever for the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and that there was fraud in several states that caused his 2020 electoral defeat. Other than their mutual political beliefs and comfort with denial, there are strong reasons for the relationship between Trump and Wiles. After she rescued Ron DeSantis’ Florida campaign for governor, he and Wiles had an ugly falling out. This unanticipated upheaval, which followed her 2017 divorce, likely brought an intense blow to one already familiar with trauma: Wiles’ father, the sports broadcaster Pat Summerall, was an alcoholic, causing inordinate pain to his family.

Following Trump’s presidential defeat, as he determined to return to power, Wiles has never left his side. She is a strong, devoted, even-tempered presence in Trump’s life. Hers is the first and last voice he hears during his workday. Despite his history of staff turnover, Wiles has stated publicly that she intends to hold her position throughout Trump’s presidency, where her control over access to the Oval Office will be enormous. Will she succeed in her determination to navigate their mutual success? Forget about Elon Musk, put your questions about Trump’s marriage to Melania on the back burner. Of all of Trump’s complex relationships, the one with calm, cool, collected, and directed Susie Wiles is the one to watch.

SaraKay Smullens,
Philadelphia

Speculative fiction?

A recurring perverse thought keeps creeping into my subconscious mind that teeters on the level of a conspiracy theorist: Are climate change-denying megalomaniacs and plutocrats purposely depleting the world’s natural resources only to monetize them? Why else would billionaires be trying to obtain contracts for water and air rights? It makes movies like *Total Recall*, *Mad Max*, and *The Book of Eli* seem less sci-fi and more nonfiction. What is the cabal’s endgame?

Kenneth Houser,
Philadelphia