

Truth Matters NP

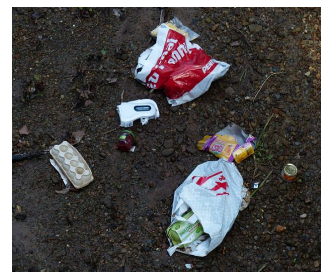
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Berkeley Heights Joins the Expanding Ban on Plastic

On February 4th the Berkeley Heights Township Council passed a ban on single use plastic bags, Styrofoam containers and plastic straws. The final vote was 5 to 1. The lone negative vote was from councilwoman Gentiana Brahimaj. Her position was that the bill required additional research and input from the public. The supporting members of the council each spoke about why they were voting in the affirmative. The consensus was a concern for the future and need to take steps to address one portion of our negative impact on the environment. There were a number of citizens speaking in favor of the ban including young people, speaking about their futures and efforts they are making and endorsing to improve our environment. Unlike other hearings I have attended regarding this issue, there were a few citizens who expressed opposition.

The Council amended the Ordinance by changing the date of implementation from June 2020 to December 2020. The change is intended to provide additional time for businesses to make the transition required to comply with the ordinance. Berkeley Heights joins Summit and Cranford in Union County to pass some form of single use bag ban and the seventh in this area to pass such an ordinance. They join Maplewood, Millburn, Summit, Chatham, Chatham Township, and Madison. The New Providence Borough Council has not taken a position on the issue and appears to have no plans to do so in the immediate future.



Leadership and Empathy

I recently wrote an article about the need for politicians, elected and running, to allow complete transparency of their actions in order to serve the people's interest.

(see: <https://lookingleftnj.com/index.php/2020/02/09/demand-transparency/>)

Another essential characteristic of our leaders is "empathy". The ability to understand and share the feelings of others from their frames of reference.

Leaders who lack empathy can be hurtful, callous, exploitive and worst of all, dangerous to others. Donald Trump, the current resident of the White House and arguably the most powerful person on earth, lacks any sense of empathy. That being the case, it allows him, without hesitation, to dub fellow leaders as "horrible" or "dishonest", to allow children to be ripped from their families and placed in cages on the border, to transfer wealth from the middle class to the rich, and finally, to threaten nations and people with "ultimate destruction".

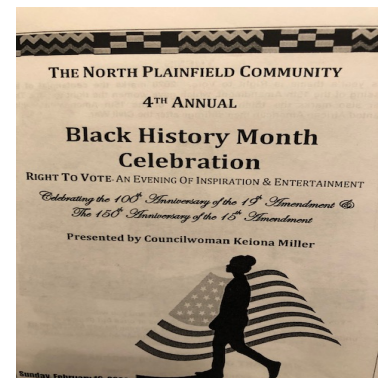
When asked, most everyone would say the above actions would not be appropriate for a President of the United States. Yet, here we are, under the leadership of an individual who does all of the above.

It is essential that all of us making decisions about our leadership at all levels, take into account our current and aspiring leader's ability to empathize with those they govern and those affected by his or her decisions.

Without the ability to understand and share the feelings of others it is simply not possible for a leader to make decisions which are in the best interest of all.

North Plainfield Black History Month Celebration, Observations

On February 16th, I had the pleasure of attending the 4th annual Black History Month Celebration in North Plainfield NJ. I was invited by the organizer, host and friend Keiona Miller, Councilwoman, North Plainfield. This year's theme was honoring the Right to Vote. A celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment; the 15th allowing all men regardless of color or "previous condition of servitude" to vote and the 19th allowing women to vote. The evening was filled with inspirational speeches and entertainment celebrating the history and culture of our Black Community and the right to vote. As I sat in the audience, I couldn't help thinking about the fact that it is *only* 100 years that women have had the right to vote and less than 160 years since the emancipation of slaves in this nation. During those years our nation had to go through continued discrimination. "Separate but Equal" was affirmed by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Supreme Court 1896) until *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. We endured rampant institutional discrimination until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and voting discrimination until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the 150 years since the 15th Amendment we have achieved some improvements as a result of the courts and legislation. However, we remain a nation divided along racial, economic, religious, gender, and sexuality lines. In 2013 the Supreme Court (*Shelby County v. Holder*) gutted some provisions of the voting rights act which has led to free reign in 15 states, mostly in the South, to impose discriminatory voting rules. We must acknowledge what is happening and return to rules, laws, actions and enforcement which will allow us to move forward as a nation and actually achieve "liberty and justice for all". It is certainly about time.



Trump Tax Law's Gift to Large Corporations

Analysis of Fortune 500 companies financial filings reveals that 60 of the nation's biggest corporations did not pay any federal income taxes in 2018 as reported in [Corporate Tax Avoidance in the First Year of the Trump Tax Law](#). INSTITUTE ON TAXATION AND ECONOMIC POLICY

These same companies were reported to receive \$4.3 billion in rebates. Among the companies on the list are some of the most profitable companies with the wealthiest owners and CEOs. They include Amazon, Netflix, Chevron, IBM, Delta Airlines, General Motors, and many more. The methods these companies use to avoid taxes are too complex and numerous to explain to anyone but an expert. In addition, the tax breaks available to corporations allowed many more to pay well below the 21% corporate rate established in the 2017 tax law. The previous rate was 35%. Suffice to say, those methods are not available to the average citizen who has to make up for the lack of tax revenue lost.



Truth Matters NP is produced and edited by Allen Swanson and Brian Haas. All articles are written by Allen Swanson unless otherwise indicated. Questions or comments or requests to be added to the mailing list, may be directed to truthmattersnp@gmail.com.

"The two chief obstacles to responsive government are money and secrecy: the scandalous capacity of money to buy political outcomes, and the bad habit of doing the public's business behind closed doors." John Gardner (1912-2002), 1975, founder of Common Cause.