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Prestige Diner Reduces Use of Plastics

When I entered the Prestige Diner the other day, Dimitrios Vardas, owner with his brother Harry, told me right away “We are plastic free.” Many regular visitors to the popular New Providence eatery already were aware of the change to biodegradable containers but now they have gone to paper bags and paper straws as well. Dimitrios spoke about the amount of research they did to decide on products and negotiations with distributors. He points out there are plenty of supposedly eco-friendly companies taking advantage of the current demand for “green” products to make money. It’s obvious Dimitrios is proud of their initiative and willing to absorb the added expense because in his words “it’s necessary”. Vardas estimates a reduction of 2400 containers and 5000 straws every week. Those figures translate into hundreds of thousands of plastic items remaining out of our environment. Vardas will also point out they have changed to an environmentally friendly sweetener company, “ecoStick”. Researching the company’s web site (ecostick.net) appears to support his confidence. As for local government imposition of bans on single use products, Vardas says the politicians need to “get in touch with the businesses” and don’t just impose regulations without input. As an aside, I would add that in my extensive research on the single-use issue, the actions of the owners of the Prestige Diner is quite unusual. When you stop in for a meal you might pass on a good word to the owners for their environmental and civic responsibility.



Impeachment is Not a Trial

We have a legal process in this country called a “Grand Jury”. It is the purpose of a grand jury, made up of citizens, to hear information from prosecutors to determine if someone suspected of a crime should be indicted and have their case sent to a trial. This process is supposed to be applied to everyone in a nondiscriminatory manner.

In the case of impeachment, certain officials, specified by the Constitution, are sent before a grand jury investigation and possible indictment if it is determined they were involved in certain illegal acts. Among those officials identified in the Constitution are the President of the US. Today, President Trump faces a grand jury, the House of Representatives. As with all grand juries they are exposed to the facts which surround the accusations against the President. Upon hearing those facts, the grand jury, the House, determines if an indictment is warranted. Such an indictment is defined in this case as Articles of Impeachment. That indictment is sent to the Senate of the US as specified in the Constitution and a trial is to take place. During that trial the accusers, the House and the accused, the President, may present any and all relevant testimony in order for the trial jury, the Senate, to reach a verdict.

This is not a hard concept to comprehend. Therefore, I am perplexed by the notion that Trump and his supporters are using the argument that the grand jury, the House, must allow testimony against the investigation when no conclusion (indictment) has been determined. It would seem that the President and his supporters want the House to function as the trial jury rather than the Senate. Someone needs to tell them. It simply does not work that way. It never has and it never will.

Today We have No Howard Baker

“What did the President know, and when did he know it?” These were the words, spoken in 1973, that some of us know and will not forget. They were the words spoken by Howard Baker, Republican Senator, Tennessee 1967 to 1985. Baker was the ranking minority member of the Senate Watergate Committee chaired by Senator Sam Ervin. Baker posed the question to former White House Attorney John Dean. Baker had been a Nixon loyalist until he recognized that the rule of law was more important than loyalty to the Republican party and President Richard Nixon. It was Baker and Republicans like him who chose country, principle and facts over party, corruption and lies. Today we have Mitch McConnell in charge of the Senate.

McConnell has already announced the Senate will end the impeachment. Other Republicans are even advocating changing the Senate rules and not even accepting articles of impeachment from the House of Representatives. It remains to be seen, but if the House investigation results in a yes vote for articles of impeachment, the Senate will need a leader who will move forward with a trial as the Constitution provides. Howard Baker was such a leader. Sadly, **today we have no Howard Baker.**



What Do I Do with My Yard Sign?

How do you dispose of that yard sign you displayed for your favorite candidate? They are a challenge because they consist of multiple materials. Here are some ideas:

Break down the sign and take the wire stand to your local scrap metal recycle site (check your town). 2. Corrugated plastic signs, most of them, must be broken down and disposed of in the trash. 3. Thin plastic film signs can be recycled with plastic bags, not at the curbside. Check with your town. 4. You could consider saving the sign for a future use. A new message, for you or by a local school or group, etc. Try to be creative.



Gunderman Addresses Sierra Club

Stacey Gunderman, candidate for Assembly from the 21st district of NJ, spoke and took questions at the Loantaka Group meeting of the NJ Sierra Club on October 9, 2019. She wisely used the proverb attributed to many “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” Her talk and responses were true to the saying and a good reason why the Sierra Club of NJ has endorsed her along with her running mate Lisa Mandelblatt. From an environmental awareness stand point, there is little to criticize in any Democratic candidate’s positions. Another issue of local interest which was brought up was the Chatham Board of Education implementation of paid armed security in their schools. Gunderman’s stated position, without specifics, was that the gun violence issue will not be solved by arming guards in schools, it must be addressed at a state and national level

Summit Moves on Plastic and Styrofoam

Look for future information regarding three ordinances being introduced in Summit NJ on November 8, 2019. One will prohibit use of single-use plastic bags at the point of purchase, One will ban polystyrene (Styrofoam) food containers. The third will require businesses to provide plastic straws only upon request by a customer. Public hearing and possible vote on the ordinance will occur on November 18, 2019.

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