

Friends,

The Steamboat Institute's mission of defending the nation's first principles has been amplified by a steady drumbeat of state and national press coverage. This has allowed our message to echo far beyond the walls of our events, reaching exponentially more people than we could fit in even the largest conference rooms or auditoriums.

This booklet provides a sampling of this media presence over the past year and a half. I am proud to say it is on par or even exceeds the presence of some of the biggest and most well-established state think tanks.

In addition to news coverage, this booklet contains a sampling of the steady stream of op-eds I have written for state and local publications, which allows us to lay out a fuller and more persuasive case for free minds and free markets.

This booklet only contains our print media coverage. The Steamboat Institute has also been regularly featured on Colorado radio stations (with reach throughout the Rocky Mountain region), and our latest Freedom Conference was covered by C-SPAN and CNN.com.

Please take a moment to browse through this booklet to gain a deeper understanding of The Steamboat Institute's priorities, scope, and influence on the public debate we care so much about.

Thank you
Jennifer Schubert-Akin
Chairman, CEO and Co-founder



As Zinke Makes Steamboat Appearance, Hundreds Rally In Protest

By *Grace Hood* | Aug 10, 2018

Hundreds of people filled a Steamboat Springs city street next to the Routt County Courthouse Friday evening to protest a visit to the area by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

Zinke was making an appearance at a private event sponsored by the conservative Steamboat Institute's Freedom Conference.

Cody Perry, who helped organize the Stand for Our Land rally, said he staunchly opposed Zinke's policies that have reduced the size of some national monuments, and made it possible for more private oil and gas exploration and extraction on public lands.

Perry was particularly angered by Zinke's move to shrink the size of Bear's Ears National Monument in Utah.

"I see it as a civil rights issue. I see him as marginalizing the sovereignty of tribes and I see it stealing from the American public," he said.

Zinke has argued that the federal land ought to be managed by Utah state leaders, many of whom supported resource extraction in Bears Ears. The Trump

administration also reduced the size of the Grand Staircase Escalante.

Democratic State Rep. Dylan Roberts, Steamboat's 1984 Winter Olympic gold medalist Deb Armstrong, Rout County officials, native American speakers, and others, took turns at the podium. Many in the crowd carried signs critical of Zinke and President Trump.

Earlier, Zinke told the Steamboat Pilot & Today, "I'm passionate about public lands. I'm passionate about never selling them, never transferring it, but we have to manage it."

The secretary is also proposing to move the Bureau of Land Management, and perhaps the U.S. Geological Survey headquarters from Washington D.C. to an as-yet-unnamed western state, including Colorado.

Grace Hood is Colorado Public Radio's energy and environment reporter. She has reported on wildfires, floods, land use, water, energy and hydraulic fracturing. Grace joined CPR in 2015 after six years with KUNC in Greeley.

Morning Energy: The one-stop source for energy and environment news

Time to say goodbye

By Kelsey Tamborrino | August 10, 2018

FULL STEAMBOAT AHEAD: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke treks to Colorado today to speak at the conservative-heavy “Steamboat Freedom Conference,” where he’s expected to talk public lands — but his appearance is not likely to be a quiet one. Zinke is slated to deliver the keynote address at the annual conference in Steamboat Springs, Colo., where well-known conservatives like former White House aide Sebastian Gorka and Turning Point USA’s Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens will also speak.

In response to his appearance, Steamboat residents and organizations will hold a “Stand for Our Land” rally, featuring an array of outdoor recreation, environmental and indigenous speakers in opposition to Zinke’s moves on public lands. Rally organizer Cody Perry told ME the rally popped up as a “inclusive, community response” to Zinke’s policies, while he attends “a private, political event.” Interior press sec-

retary Heather Swift said the conference isn’t a political event, but instead an official conference at a think tank, featuring a policy speech and has been cleared by Interior ethics officials. The rally will take place at 5:30 p.m. today on the Routt County Courthouse lawn.

Zinke’s speaking engagements have come under fire in the past. But a government watchdog previously determined an earlier speech did not violate the Hatch Act, which bars federal employees from engaging in partisan activity while on official duty. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, co-founder of the Steamboat Institute Jennifer Schubert-Akin told local media Zinke would be the first sitting member of the Cabinet to attend today’s conference. The Steamboat Institute pays the travel expenses for all of the conference’s speakers, she said back in May, including Zinke, but she noted he will not be paid a speaking fee.

‘Get A Sense Of Real Issues’: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Visits Steamboat Springs

By Matt Kroschel | August 10, 2018

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo. (CBS4)— Hundreds rallied in Northern Colorado Friday evening, calling on the Federal Government to do more to protect public lands.

The Stand for Our Lands protest on the Routt County Courthouse lawn comes as Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke visits the area. He spoke at the Steamboat Institute Freedom Conference about his vision for multiple users on public lands.

Zinke sat down with CBS4’s Matt Kroschel prior to the event and says he understands there are people who don’t agree with his new vision for managing public lands. He also says the Trump Administration has some lofty goals to reorganize and streamline bureaucratic red tape.

Zinke addressed the wild horse issue that costs tax payers hundreds of millions of dollars, a current program that people on all sides say isn’t working. Zinke would like to see the horses sterilized until population numbers stabilize. He says current ranges where horses are allowed to live in the West can’t support the growing population.

Wild horses are federally protected. Advocates for the horses don’t agree on a solution, but are “cautiously optimistic” they will be dealt with before the problem grows any worse.

Zinke spoke about wildfires currently raging across the West. He says there needs to be a better offensive game, clearing the fuel loads, more logging, before the massive fires can spread, destroying wildlife habitat and adding to the greenhouse gas problem.

Zinke and his team are working on a watershed program, an endeavor that itself is a monumental undertaking.

“I like to get out in the field, get out of Washington, as much as possible and really get a sense of what the real issues are on the ground by seeing them for myself,” he told CBS4 in his only interview with a Colorado TV station on Friday.

Matt Kroschel covers news throughout Colorado working from the CBS4 Mountain Newsroom. Send story ideas to mrkroschel@cbs.com and connect with him on Twitter @[Matt_Kroschel](https://twitter.com/Matt_Kroschel).

Interior official opines on Endangered Species Act, as protesters await Zinke in Steamboat

By Joey Bunch | Aug 10, 2018

This week, Coloradan David Bernhardt, the deputy director of the Department of Interior, was making a case for the Trump administration's changes to the Endangered Species Act in a Washington Post op-ed.

Meanwhile, protesters in Colorado were making plans to protest his boss, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, as he planned to speak at a private event in Steamboat Springs Friday night.

Bernhardt wrote about a "modern vision of conservation" in The Post. He defended the administration's views on protections for at-risk wildlife, which sometimes can get in the way of business and conservation.

The changes announced last month include, for the first time, factoring in the economic impact of a designation under the 45-year-old law. Threatened species would not automatically receive the same protections as endangered species.

Public lands was expected to be the focus of protests Friday in Steamboat Springs.

Zinke was to address a private event at the conservative Steamboat Institute's Freedom Caucus.

Protesters are unhappy with the administration's decision to reduce the size of Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments.

Zinke brushed aside those concerns last Sunday.

"The president had me look at 27 monuments. The recommendation I made? There are 150 monuments. The recommendation was to modify four of them ..."

"The revised boundaries were still larger than Zion and Bryce Canyon (national parks) combined," Zinke said.

Joey Bunch, Colorado Politics senior political reporter

VIDEO: 30 minutes with US Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke was in Steamboat Springs on Friday to speak at The Steamboat Institute's Freedom Conference. He also sat down with the Steamboat Pilot & Today for an interview.

By Matt Stensland | August 10, 2018

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Some people said it would never happen.

Even those within my journalism circles said there was no way U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, as a member of President Donald Trump's administration, would agree to be interviewed by a journalist in a small community like Steamboat Springs.

Zinke agreed to a 30-minute interview with the Steamboat Pilot & Today, and he even allowed video to be recorded.

Zinke, who is in town to be the keynote speaker at the Steamboat Institute's Freedom Conference, is a controversial figure. Critics were holding a rally on the Routt County Courthouse lawn Friday evening.

Zinke and I planned to talk during a hike in the woods but ended up chatting at The Steamboat Grand because of the 30-minute time window.

I was first expecting to meet his director of communications and maybe even undergo a quick security screening.

I grabbed coffee for myself and his staffer. Then I spotted a familiar face. In the hallway was Zinke, wearing a fishing shirt and long pants with Merrell shoes, and the man needed coffee. He took my spare cup, and we headed to the owners' lounge to chat.

So what does a Steamboat journalist ask Zinke? I solicited ideas from friends, family and coworkers.

With haze obscuring the Colorado landscape and Zinke wearing a Yosemite Fire ball cap, it was clear what was on his mind.

I didn't even ask a question before he started talking about the nation's wildfires. He had plans to spend the remainder of Friday at the Silver Creek Fire burning southeast of Steamboat Springs.

"It is clear that seasons have gotten longer. The temperatures have gotten higher," Zinke said. "It is indisputable that the dead and dying timber has been a driving force of the scale of these fires. ... It is a perfect storm where, whether you're a believer in climate change or not, it doesn't relieve the responsibility of government managing the forest."

Listen to the complete answer: 1:00-8:35

I also wanted to discover Zinke's level of self-awareness.

Q. Are you aware of how your critics perceive you, and why do you think you're perceived that way?

A. "There's a lot of angry people out there, and quite frankly, they don't want to look at truth, and it's just a series of attacks without merit. At the heart of it, you do right, and you fear no one. I'm passionate about public lands. I'm passionate about never selling them, never transferring it, but we have to manage it, and there has been a consequence I believe of almost environmental terrorism, where we're limiting access, shutting down roads, not having the ability to remove dead, dying trees. It comes at a cost."

Listen to the complete answer: 11:13-15:20

Longtime Steamboat Pilot & Today journalist Tom Ross, who recently retired, fed me a great question for Zinke.

Q. You are a fifth-generation Montana resident, former congressman, decorated Navy SEAL veteran and an outdoorsman. Describe your favorite wild place in Montana and what it means to you?

A. "Probably the Bob Marshall Wilderness. I grew up in the foothills of Glacier (National Park). I enjoy

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Glacier, but I think the Bob Marshall is a little more remote. A lot of fire damage in the Bob Marshall.”

Listen to the complete answer: 15:31-18:06

The second part of Ross’s question:

Q. Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in Utah have recently been shrunk in size by the federal government. Do you think they are just as special as that place you described in Montana?

A. “... The revised boundaries are still larger than Zion and Bryce Canyon combined. There was not one square inch of federal land that was removed from any protection. The difference is this: Utah matters. So when every member of the Utah delegation, every member, is against that monument. The governor is against the monument.”

Listen to the complete answer: 18:17-21:41

This question came from a friend of mine who

works for a local outdoor gear company.

Q. What’s it like to work for President Donald Trump? Do you think President Trump is of sound mind and judgement, enough to be running our country?

A. “President Trump is a businessman, and it’s really easy to figure out the direction where the president is going because in the White House he has a huge chalkboard — you know, whiteboard — that has campaign promises. And many of those campaign promises are crossed off.”

Listen to the complete answer: 26:38-30:10

Zinke also discussed Steamboat (9:01-10:33), land management agencies (21:45-23:22) and lead ammunition (23:25-26:33).

To reach Matt Stensland, call 970-871-4247, email mstensland@SteamboatToday.com or follow him on Twitter [@SBTStensland](https://twitter.com/SBTStensland)

At last, a film festival reflecting liberty, individualism and family

By *Jennifer Schubert-Akin* | August 3, 2018

Summer movie season is in full-swing. Yet for those who have had their fill of endless superhero sequels and animated dramedies, there is an alternative: The Steamboat Institute Film Festival in Steamboat Springs, taking place August 9-11. There are not many film festivals that can boast movies about a dog, the Supreme Court of the United States, John Galt, Ted Kennedy and Hercules!

There's a saying in public policy circles that "Politics is downstream from culture." This means that people make their political decisions not based on intellectual analyses of public policy but on higher-order philosophical values prevalent in society. The film festival will expose a new audience, who wouldn't attend a public policy conference, to popular culture reflecting the values of liberty, individualism and family.

Why has the book *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand converted more people to the ideas of liberty than all the policy papers put out by free-market think tanks put together? Because it illustrates the ideas of freedom through an archetypal story, which is how ideas have been shared throughout human history.

Stories tap into people's emotions, which are far more powerful than their intellect. Fear, love, anger and sympathy are better motivators than rational thought. Warm emotions trump cold logic. The great religious texts don't just make an intellectual case for moral values but illuminate them — often implicitly — through stories.

Unfortunately for those who believe in America's founding principles, the political left holds a virtual monopoly on culture. The most popular books, movies, music, comedy, academia and even companies virtually all put forth a leftist worldview. No wonder Millennials prefer socialism to capitalism. Even if their parents spent half an hour at dinner discussing the importance of individual rights, that time is swamped

by the onslaught of leftist popular culture to which they're exposed.

Nowhere is this more true than in Hollywood. In nearly every movie with a businessman, he is portrayed as ruthless, sociopathic or evil. Fathers are treated as bumbling and dispensable. Marriage is treated as confining. Children are treated as burdens. And, of course, indiscriminate sex and drug use are glorified. The real world, of course, is much different. Just look at a recent picture of Johnny Depp or Charlie Sheen for proof.

No wonder rates of youth depression, anxiety and suicide are at all-time highs. Narcissism and nihilism do not bring long-term happiness. Responsibility, productive work and family do.

Businessmen and women are not bogeymen. They are responsible for the incredible products and services that make our lives better. Our politics should reflect this.

Yet it is difficult to convince people of such truths when they are bombarded with culture to the contrary. Hence the film festival, which will showcase five films celebrating individual freedom, personal responsibility, the entrepreneurial American spirit, and the inspiration of faith and family. These include the red carpet world premier of Corbin Bernsen's new film, *Life With Dog*, the true story of Susette Kelo's Little Pink House (the famous Supreme Court case) and, yes, the film adaptation of *Atlas Shrugged*.

These films portray a romantic vision of what people can and ought to be: heroic beings who make the most out of this gift of life.

These are messages that people rarely hear anymore given today's culture. Yet through efforts like this film festival, they could be heard again — uplifting culture and influencing politics. They certainly beat sitting through "Ant-Man 2."



Conservative film fest to preach free-market gospel from Steamboat

Freedom Conference Film Festival includes adaptation of Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged," faith-based "What If..."

By *John Wenzel* | July 13, 2018

Jennifer Schubert-Akin has a good feeling about the inaugural Freedom Conference Film Festival.

It's the same feeling she had shortly after co-founding its parent festival, the Freedom Conference, a free-market policy event produced by the politically conservative Steamboat Institute in the idyllic ski town of Steamboat Springs.

"I didn't know if this would be just another thing actors and producers felt obligated to do in promoting their films," said Schubert-Akin, chairwoman and CEO of the Steamboat Institute. "But they're genuinely excited about it. It's been really refreshing to see the enthusiasm and potential of it. It reminds me of the first Freedom Conference in 2009, when we didn't know if anybody would show up or care."

Not only did people show up for the conference, which returns for its 10th installment Aug. 10-11 in Steamboat Springs, but past years boast guests such as Vice President Dick Cheney, former Hewlett-Packard CEO and presidential candidate Carly Fiorina, and dozens more conservative thought-leaders from the private and public sectors.

But producing a magnetic cultural event is another matter. Liberal artists and progressive causes have long had the lock on popular culture, particularly in Hollywood, said actor and director Kevin Sorbo, who will attend this year's Freedom Conference Film Festival to speak and screen his 2010 faith-based film, "What If"

Launching a film fest that promotes the nonprofit Steamboat Institute's values of individual freedom and limited government isn't as simple as renting a theater (in this case, Steamboat's 92-year-old Chief Theater, among other venues) or securing the rights to a film.

"My wife and I were trying to get our own festival

going opposite of Sundance, because we have a place up there (in Park City), but it just didn't work out," Sorbo said via phone from Los Angeles this week. "So when Jennifer came to us — after my wife Sam was a speaker in Steamboat last year, for a preview of our latest film 'Let There Be Light' — we thought it was perfect. It's a small festival, so you don't have to battle some of the big ones out there. And it's got a nice mix of movies."

Indeed, the Freedom Conference Film Festival will feature only five screenings, each moderated by Ted Baehr, editor-in-chief of the Christian film-rating site Movieguide.

Titles include Sorbo's "What If" as well as "Chappaquiddick" (with co-producer Chris Fenton in attendance); "Atlas Shrugged" (with Ayn Rand Institute chairman Yaron Brook); "Little Pink House" (with co-producers Courtney and Ted Balaker, and real-life inspiration Susette Kelo); and "Life with Dog" (with producer and star Corbin Bernsen, of NBC's "L.A. Law").

"This is a unique opportunity for people to learn about individual freedom, personal responsibility, and the inspiration of faith and family through the art of film," Movieguide's Baehr wrote in an email to The Denver Post. "Having reviewed thousands of movies over the years, I can attest that the five movies included in the film festival are full of ideas that have the power to reach and impact a broad audience."

That's an important point, Schubert-Akin said. While its values are most definitely free-market, the exchange of ideas at the festival is meant to embrace all points of view.

"We're certainly not trying to promote any particular social agenda," she said. "We welcome everybody

whether they're pro-choice or pro-life, anti-Second Amendment or pro-gay marriage.”

The only criteria for selecting films was that they were in line with the Steamboat Institute's principals, said Schubert-Akin, who sees potential in drawing different (and presumably younger) audiences “who would never go to a public policy conference.”

Few conservative-minded film festivals have gained traction in the United States in recent years, and there have never been any marquee events on par with Sundance or Colorado's own, star-studded Telluride Film Festival.

The ones that have been mounted — such as New Jersey's Hoboken International Film Festival, or the now-defunct American Film Renaissance and Liberty film festivals — are never afforded the same press or respect as liberal-leaning events, Sorbo said.

“A lot of big film festivals are these one-note things where there seems to be an agenda on one side of the issue,” said the 59-year-old, best known for his star-

ring roles in the TV series “Hercules” and “Andromeda.” “To me, why not show both sides, and the middle of the road as well? I don't understand the hatred and the anger and the ignorance in this country right now. The movies I do are family-friendly, as is this festival. Let's have an honestly fair and balanced film festival for once.”

Tickets to the Freedom Conference Film Festival are available to the general public for \$12 per film or \$50 for a festival pass, which includes all five screening events. Kids 12 and under are free, but will still need to register for a free ticket to guarantee a seat.

Times, locations and registration details for the Aug. 9-11 event, centered around the Steamboat Grand at 2300 Mount Werner Circle in Steamboat Springs, are available at steamboatinstitute.org.

John Wenzel is a reporter and critic-at-large for The Denver Post who has written about comedy, music, film, books, fine art, video games and other popular culture over the years.

Guest commentary:

Newcomers need to know the many benefits of Colorado's TABOR

By Jennifer Schubert-Akin and Amy Oliver Cooke | June 12, 2018

The latest Census Bureau data released earlier this year show that Colorado's population has grown by nearly two-thirds since 1992, one of the fastest increases in the country.

If you are part of the more than 2 million new residents who have arrived over this time, there are a few things you should know: avoid Interstate-70 on Sundays, we are Coloradans not Coloradoans, and the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights is responsible for much of the state's economic success, which likely drew you here in the first place.

Between 1992 and 2016, median household income in Colorado grew by 30 percent, adjusted for inflation. This growth was more than double the national rate over the same period. Only Minnesota and North Dakota grew by more than 30 percent over this timeframe. Colorado gained \$20 billion in adjusted gross income over these years — again, one of the biggest increases in the nation.

While many other states have struggled with stagnant incomes over this period, what's set Colorado apart? Its Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR), passed in 1992, which requires state and local governments to ask voters for permission before raising taxes or debt.

TABOR helped end years of economic stagnation and laid the groundwork for the state's future success by keeping resources in the hands of Colorado residents who could put them to their highest valued use and check overzealous government spending.

TABOR has protected pocketbooks and state solvency from legislators who believe they know how to spend your money better than you. Its requirement that excess revenue must be refunded to taxpayers also has resulted in more than \$2 billion being returned to the private economy to be spent at local businesses or saved for retirement.

With the exception of a tobacco tax hike in 2004 and a marijuana tax after voters legalized it, TABOR has empowered voters to reject roughly a dozen advocacy-backed tax hike proposals.

That's what makes the recent effort by Colorado's Supreme Court to further chip away at the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights so disappointing. The court ruled in April that the Legislature's move to standardize sales tax exemptions was not in violation of TABOR despite the fact that it resulted in a revenue gains — a tax increase for those of us paying the bill.

This was just the latest effort by the courts to weaken TABOR. Most notably, they have authorized the implementation of myriad state "fees," which are simply taxes by another name. These include the dreaded FASTER vehicle registration fees, which go against the spirit of TABOR if not the letter.

TABOR also is regularly attacked by progressive advocacy groups, the mainstream media and the state Legislature, which would like nothing more than to eliminate this check on its power. They all frequently use TABOR as a scapegoat for the state's problems, whether real or imagined.

A Denver Post editorial last year complained, "TABOR's powerful check on government spending in reality has been a padlock on the pursestrings of the General Assembly." The check on spending is exactly the point, and it still allows spending to grow inline with inflation and population growth. If government wants more money, all it has to do is ask. Requiring consent is hardly a padlock.

In an effort to preserve and even expand the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, the Independence Institute and Steamboat Institute are partnering with several organizations to go on a statewide TABOR road show. With speakers such as well-known economist Dan Mitchell,

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our goal is to educate both Colorado natives and newcomers about TABOR's role in creating their current opportunities. It will stop in Aspen today at the Jewish Community Center starting at 5 p.m.

The Taxpayer's Bill of Rights is about consent of the governed and subjecting the government to the same spending discipline that the rest of us in the real world face every day. As Colorado's population growth demonstrates, giving people a vote on their fiscal futures seems to cause them to vote with their feet.

Jennifer Schubert-Akin is chairman and CEO of the Steamboat Institute. Amy Oliver Cooke is executive vice president of the Independence Institute, a free-market think tank headquartered in Denver.

Interior chief Ryan Zinke to keynote Steamboat event

May 9, 2018

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is scheduled to address the Steamboat Institute's 10th annual Freedom Conference and Festival on Aug. 10 in Steamboat Springs, the conservative think tank tells Colorado Politics.

"As secretary of the Interior and defender of America's great outdoors, I am honored to give the keynote address at the Steamboat Institute's 10th annual Freedom Conference and Festival in such a beautiful setting," Zinke said in a statement released to Colorado Politics by the Steamboat Institute.

"The landscape of the Rocky Mountains, like much of America's public lands, inspires the defense of liberty because it reminds us what we have to defend."

Steamboat Institute CEO Jennifer Schubert-Akin said the organization is honored to have the Trump cabinet member.

"Featuring a sitting member of the president's cabinet — especially the secretary of the Interior whose

policies affect many of us who reside in the Rocky Mountain West — will make the 10th anniversary of the Freedom Conference especially memorable," she said.

Information about registration for the conference at the Steamboat Grand can be found by clicking [here](#).

Zinke is the top name among several well-known conservatives scheduled to speak that the weekend event, including Turning Point USA founder and Charlie Kirk and the organization's spokeswoman, political commentator Candace Owens.

Kirk and especially Owens are new pals with rapper Kanye West, linked to his recent vocal support for President Trump.

The lineup also is expected to include Fox News anchor Shannon Bream, actor Kevin Sorbo and former Trump adviser Sebastian Gorka, a Fox News commentator, as well as Kay Coles James, president of the Heritage Foundation.

Local newspapers are vital part of communities; they can have a resurgence

Colorado is booming, but its flagship paper is being hollowed out.

By Jennifer Schubert-Akin | April 21, 2018

Last week, the Denver Post laid off two dozen journalists, just the latest round of cuts demanded by its New York City-based owner. Its headcount has fallen from 250 to around 60 in the span of several years. At the same time, the city and state populations are growing rapidly, both in sheer numbers and in the educated demographic most likely to subscribe. Newspapers across the state are facing similar pressures.

This week is Colorado Journalism Week, which highlights the contributions local newspapers make to our communities and the important role they play in defending them. It's a moment to reflect on their significance and explore how they can be saved.

The digital revolution has hit local newspapers with a punch combination. Right jab: Free online news has reduced paying subscribers. Left cross: Online advertising isn't nearly as lucrative as print ads. And right uppercut: The bulk of online ad spending goes to Facebook and Google, which feature local news content but don't pay for it.

As a result, newspapers have been knocked to the mat. According to Pew Research, national daily newspaper circulation has fallen by nearly half since the beginning of the century. Ad revenues have fallen by two-thirds. Nearly half of Americans now get their news from Facebook. The number of newsroom employees has fallen by over one-third, and some newspapers, including Colorado outlets like the Rocky Mountain News, have closed entirely.

This has major implications for this country, whose founding is deeply intertwined with newspapers. The debate over whether to even form a country — now known as the Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers — played out in local newspapers nearly 250 years ago. The U.S. is one of the only countries in the world to enshrine a free press in its constitution.

Local newspapers are a vital tool in defending freedom. They act as an unmatched check on local power and its accompanying abuses and corruption. They

also tell the local human interest stories that reflect and project our shared community spirit, reinvigorating it at a time when this is needed most.

Local newspapers are even more important in today's era of "fake news," where we can't be sure that a blog isn't set up by a foreign operative or a corporate PR firm in order to influence public opinion. Readers can be sure that local newspapers are not the mario-nettes of some special interest puppet-master.

This isn't to say that local newspapers don't share some blame for their dire straits. Many have been too slow to respond to the digital revolution, keeping reporters on beats also covered by hundreds of other outlets. Local newspapers probably don't need a reporter dedicated to covering the latest palace intrigue at the White House.

Then there's their unapologetic liberal bias that has turned off roughly half of potential readers. And I'm not only talking about the opinion sections, where 243 daily newspapers endorsed Hillary Clinton for president compared to only 20 for Donald Trump. Their implicit and explicit bias in favor of more regulation, taxes, and government spending is also evident in their ostensibly objective news sections.

To take one of countless examples: I didn't read one story when Colorado was considering a ballot measure in 2016 to raise the state's minimum wage by 44 percent that prominently featured an entry-level employee who would lose her job, or a mom-and-pop store that would be put out of business as a result. This bias must end if local newspapers want to expand their readership.

If local newspapers focus on their comparative advantage, local news, presented in a bias-free way, I predict they will have a resurgence.

There will always be a market for local news. Because there will always be a need for it.

Jennifer Schubert-Akin is chairman and CEO of The Steamboat Institute.

Nigel Farage and Vicente Fox debate at Lafayette College

Billed as Nationalism vs. Globalism.

By Justin Sweitzer | April 6, 2018

EASTON, Pa. - Two international political figures converged on Lafayette College in Easton to debate the hot button topic of globalism versus nationalism.

Former President of Mexico Vicente Fox and Brexit leader Nigel Farage appeared as part of a traveling tour to debate the two ideologies.

Farage, a member of European Parliament with the Independence Party, is often credited as the “architect” of the Brexit movement that led to the referendum to have the United Kingdom leave the European Union. Fox was the president of Mexico from 2000 to 2006, and has been a vocal critic of United States President Donald Trump’s “America First” ideology.

The two addressed topics of trade, immigration and nation-states in an event that showcased their starkly different worldviews.

With immigration being at the forefront of much of the political discussion in the United States, Farage and Fox offered their views.

Farage said an open-door immigration policy is detrimental because it does not allow for “assimilation” and “cohesion” throughout society.

“Is immigration a good thing for a country? If it’s controlled properly, it can be a great asset. But is having an open door the right thing for a country? No, it is madness,” he said. “I’m tired of these arguments being couched in whether GDP goes up .1 percent or down .1 percent. There’s something more fundamental than talking about money, it’s about society. It’s about nation. It’s about family. It’s about belonging. That is why the responsible and the right thing to do is to control immigration sensibly.”

Fox, a supporter of immigration reform in the U.S., said it’s important to control immigration into a country, but that a wall like Trump is proposing is not the answer.

“It’s not the way to go,” he said. “Walls will not serve the purpose.”

The former president of Mexico tied immigration to economic conditions in the country, which are improving due to globalization and free trade, he said.

Fox said a trend has emerged: Mexicans are moving back to Mexico due to the narrowing income gap between Mexicans and Americans. Fox pointed to the North American Free Trade Agreement, commonly referred to as NAFTA, as a policy that has helped improve economic conditions in Mexico, and concurrently, led to Mexican nationals returning to the country.

“There are many more Mexicans going back than coming in to the United States,” he said. “25 years later, now the gap is five to one. So we have improved considerably and that’s why the trend has reversed.”

The debate also touched on the 2016 referendum where citizens in the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, which Farage credited to a desire for the nation to be independent and have more power over its own laws.

“We voted Brexit because we want to be an independent, self-governing democratic nation. We want our laws to be made by people we vote for and people we can remove. In the European Union, 70 percent of our laws were made elsewhere, over which we had no more than a minority say. Nothing too threatening or dangerous there.”

Farage said it is a misconception that trade will cease once the United Kingdom officially leaves the European Union, saying that the EU is too restrictive when it comes to trade.

Fox views such nationalist movements as a step backward that is destructive to global progress.

“Why should you go against success?” he asked.

Continued »



Nigel Farage and Vicente Fox debate at Lafayette College

“It’s destroying what we have built for years, for decades.”

Farage said a globalist society mirrors a bureaucracy over a democracy, and that sovereign, democratic nation-states are a better solution.

Despite the polarizing topics, the two political leaders maintained a civil discussion throughout the tour,

which was organized by The Steamboat Institute.

“When I got the opportunity to come and debate against someone like President Fox, I thought absolutely, why not?” Farage said. “I think it’s really important respecting the rights of somebody else in a free society that have a different point of view.”

Two international figures to debate nationalism vs. globalism Tuesday at UCCS

By Debbie Kelley | Apr 2, 2018

In an effort to bring “reasoned and respectful debate to college campuses,” two prominent world figures will hash out the merits of globalism vs. nationalism Tuesday at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

Vicente Fox, president of Mexico from 2000 through 2006 and the first leader from an opposition party since 1910, and Nigel Farage, architect of Brexit, the United Kingdom’s 2019 exit from the European Union, will take the stage at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Ent Center for Arts, 5225 N Nevada Ave.

Tom Ragan, a columnist for the Washington Examiner, will serve as moderator.

Admission is free to UCCS students; \$20 for faculty and staff; and \$40 for public admission. Tickets are available at www.steamboatinstitute.org/events.

Free trade, tariffs, economic protectionism and immigration reform will be among the hot topics discussed.

“They’re both very interesting people,” said Professor Joshua Dunn, director of the UCCS Center for the Study of Government and the Individual, which is sponsoring the event. “they’re engaging and entertaining, so who knows where it might go?”

“This debate cuts across political divisions around the world. People typically associated with the left are siding with people on the right, and vice versa.”

The event is the second stop on the Campus Liberty Tour presented by The Steamboat Institute, a non-profit in Steamboat Springs that advocates for individual liberty and free-market principles.

“They’re very articulate. They debate with reason and logic, not just emotion and hyperbole,” said Jennifer Schubert-Akin, chairman and CEO of The Steam-

boat Institute. The bigger picture of the four-campus tour is to fill a gap that the institute believes is missing at today’s college campuses, Schubert-Akin said.

“It’s to teach whoever attends critical-thinking skills,” she said. “It’s a skill that needs to be learned and practiced, like playing a piano. We have people on campuses screaming, calling the other side stupid. That doesn’t take a lot of intellectual rigor.”

“If people see two leaders on the international stage using logic and reason to present their arguments, I think they’ll learn from that.”

Under Fox’s reign, Mexico achieved the lowest unemployment rate in Latin America, and inflation and interest rates were brought under control.

Farage was a founding member of the UK Independence Party, leading the group from 2006 to 2009 and again from 2010 to 2016.

The pair appeared at CU-Boulder on Monday and will visit the University of Maryland on Thursday and Lafayette College in Easton, Pa., on Friday.

The program will help broaden ideology and diversity at the campuses, Schubert-Akin said.

Traditionally, U.S. Republicans support free trade more than Democrats do, and the labor movement is generally opposed to free trade agreements, Dunn said. But with President Donald Trump a protectionist, “This is upending these traditional political economic divisions, and it will be fascinating and a valuable experience to see what these two leaders think about this.”

A question-and-answer period will follow the debate.

Debbie Kelley, Staff reporter, education and general news and features

GUEST COLUMN:

UCCS event teaches students how to think critically

By Jennifer Schubert-Akin | Mar 22, 2018

Founding Fathers' separation of powers still serves America well

President Donald Trump's recent move to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports is just his latest policy decision that has disrupted the traditional political order.

Support for the decision has split conservatives between those who favor free trade and those who want to protect manufacturing jobs. But it's also attracted some liberals, who are increasingly skeptical of the merits of trade.

The tariff debate is a microcosm of a broader dispute that's currently dominating public policy: nationalism vs. globalism. The Steamboat Institute has invited arguably its best representatives, Nigel Farage and Vicente Fox, to debate the issue at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs on April 3.

Nigel Farage, the architect of Britain's exit from the European Union, will take the side of nationalism, which generally supports the existing national order and institutions. Vicente Fox, the former president of Mexico, will take the side of globalism, which generally supports the global order and institutions. Both perspectives argue that they are best for Americans.

In practice, this debate has centered on trade and immigration. Nationalists usually argue we must limit trade and immigration to protect existing employees from disruption. President Trump's tariff decision appeals to nationalists because it protects steel and aluminum producers from international competition that has been putting them out of business.

Globalists usually argue that free trade and increased immigration help Americans because they reduce consumer prices and allow Americans to enjoy an increased standard of living. They oppose the tariff decision because it will make products that use steel and aluminum as inputs more expensive.

Sadly this important debate has been distorted by the media and pundits who demagogue the issue. It's rare to hear a sober-minded discussion that highlights the merits of each side's position. That's exactly what the UCCS event featuring Messrs. Farage and Fox attempts to do. The event is part of a broader Campus Liberty Tour, which introduces the next generation of leaders to this key political debate.

Despite holding opposite political philosophies, Messrs. Farage and Fox share one thing in common: They are both masters of rhetoric, logic, and argumentation. While they might disagree on what to think, they don't disagree on how to think.

These skills long formed the foundation of a liberal arts education. They remain a necessary prerequisite for professional success in any field. Yet in recent decades they have been largely denounced on college campuses in favor of a theory known as relativism.

Relativism holds that there are no truths. Therefore, logic is replaced by feelings. Reasoned argument is replaced by personal experience. And - at worst - free and open debate is replaced in favor of force. (UCCS's Center for the Study of Government and the Individual is a welcome exception to this trend.)

In this sense, the debate over globalism and nationalism is secondary at this event.

Though it is the defining public policy issue of our time and will likely shape the country's future for decades to come, it is not as important as how to think critically.

Before people can make up their mind about nationalism and globalism or its many real-world offshoots such as President Trump's tariffs, they must recognize the power of the mind in the first place.

Jennifer Schubert-Akin is the Chairman and CEO of the Steamboat Institute.

Former Mexican President Vicente Fox and Nigel Farage, architect of Brexit, to debate at CU Boulder

By John Bear, Staff Writer | March 7, 2018

Former Mexican President Vicente Fox takes a tour of the facilities at Project C.U.R.E on Aug. 31, 2017, in Centennial. (Seth McConnell/The Denver Post)

The Steamboat Institute is hosting former Mexican President Vicente Fox and Brexit architect Nigel Farage for a debate on nationalism and globalism on April 2 at the University of Colorado's Macky Auditorium.

The CU Boulder talk starts at 6:30 p.m. as part of the Steamboat Institute's 2018 Campus Liberty Tour, which runs from April 2 to April 6 at numerous college campuses across the country, according to a news release.

Fox served as Mexico's president from 2000 to 2006. Farage is a politician, political analyst and former leader of the United Kingdom's Independence Party.

The Steamboat Institute bills itself as a "nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes America's first principles and inspires active involvement in the defense of liberty.

For more information, visit steamboatinstitute.org.

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Morning Education: A daily overview of education policy news

Education Department sends grants to Broward schools after shooting

By *Benjamin Wermund* | March 2, 2018
With help from Mel Leonor and Kimberly Hefling

EXCLUSIVE: FOX, FARAGE TO DEBATE NATIONALISM ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES:

Vicente Fox, the former president of Mexico, and Brexit leader Nigel Farage are launching a tour of college campuses to debate the merits of nationalism versus globalism. The debates take place the first week of April at the University of Colorado in Boulder, University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, University of Maryland-College Park, and Lafayette College in Pennsylvania.

— “Brexit and the election of Donald Trump demonstrate that people have turned against rule by elite, who have been happy to overlook the interests of ordinary citizens in favor of trade and immigration policies that benefit their pocketbooks,” Farage said in a statement, adding he is “honored to speak for these forgotten men and women.”

— Fox said he looks forward to defending the “strivers” who have crossed borders in search of greater opportunities. “Perhaps at no other time in human history have so many people strived to make better lives for themselves and their families by peacefully moving to countries with more opportunity and stronger institutions and engaging in mutually beneficial trade with other cultures,” Fox said in a statement.

— The debate series, dubbed the “Campus Liberty Tour,” is sponsored by the Steamboat Institute, a conservative think tank in Colorado. It kicks off April 2 at the University of Colorado-Boulder. The debates will be moderated by Mary Kissel, editorial board member of *The Wall Street Journal*; Tom Rogan, columnist at *The Washington Examiner*; and Robert Kaufman, a visiting professor in conservative thought and policy at CU-Boulder.

GUEST COLUMN:

Tax bill is a gift to all Americans

By Jennifer Schubert-Akin | Dec 28, 2017

Congressional Republicans have passed significant, across-the-board tax cuts that will benefit all Americans.

The tax bill will reduce individual tax rates at all income levels and slash business taxes to an unprecedented degree. While the plan preserves a handful of distortionary deductions and credits, including a \$10,000 state and local tax credit to help those living in high-tax states, the bill also dramatically simplifies the tax code.

Despite media accounts to the contrary, the bill provides the biggest proportional tax cuts to ordinary Americans. Families with children earning roughly the national median income of \$59,000 will see their income tax liability disappear entirely under this bill. Those earning \$75,000 will see their tax bill fall by half.

How? The bill includes a number of provisions to significantly help ordinary taxpayers. For example, it doubles the standard deduction to \$24,000, meaning the roughly 25 percent of American families who earn below that threshold will pay no tax at all.

The bill also reduces middle class tax rates, including eliminating the 15 percent tax rate, which currently takes effect at just \$18,650, in favor of a vastly expanded 12 percent rate.

Recognizing the increasing expense of childcare, the bill also doubles the child tax credit to \$2,000, which will disproportionately help ordinary families.

One of the most exciting aspects of this bill is the long overdue relief it offers small businesses.

Currently, the vast majority of small businesses pay tax at individual rates, which reach 40 percent of marginal earnings. According to many small business surveys, this tax burden is the main challenge small businesses face. And because small businesses are the backbone of the American economy, providing two-thirds of all new jobs, such over-taxation also hurts employees, jobseekers, and communities.

The tax bill will address this over-taxation by creating a new 20 percent small business tax deduction, which will allow entrepreneurs to keep more of their earnings necessary to hire, raise wages, expand, and thrive.

This tax cut will inspire thousands more would-be entrepreneurs to start their own business, reversing the decades-long slide in new small business creation.

Similarly, the bill's significant corporate tax cuts will put American companies on a level playing field with their international competitors which face a much lower tax burden. This will reverse the flow of U.S. businesses abroad, creating prosperity at home not only for Americans who work at these businesses but also for the communities where they are located.

As someone concerned about the nation's \$20 trillion debt, I am receptive to the budget concerns with the tax bill. (Though I do find it a little ironic that those sounding the deficit alarm stayed quiet while the last presidential administration racked up \$8 trillion of national debt.)

But the reality is that the only way to address the national debt - barring seemingly politically unpalatable spending cuts - is through economic growth. And that's exactly what this tax bill can help the country achieve.

According to a recent U.S. Treasury analysis, the tax bill will generate significant economic growth that will lead to increased tax revenues that will more than cover the bill's costs.

This tax bill is a gift to all Americans, especially those living on fixed incomes, who will be able to keep a little more of their hard-earned money to cover the increasing costs of living.

And the economic growth it will deliver in the years ahead may be the real gift that's still to come.

Jennifer Schubert-Akin is the Chairman and CEO of The Steamboat Institute.

Steamboat Institute Freedom Conference harnesses natural beauty of Steamboat Springs

By Jennifer Schubert-Akin | August 25, 2017

Can Steamboat Springs' beautiful natural setting inspire public policy solutions?

The Steamboat Institute thinks so. That's why our Freedom Conference and Festival, which runs today through Saturday, is taking place in Steamboat. We hope that by bringing together the nation's leading public policy aficionados and communicators, including Steve Forbes, James Taranto of The Wall Street Journal, and Mollie Hemingway of The Federalist, as well as our own Tony Blankley Fellows, we can provide the intellectual spark necessary to solve the country's most difficult and timely public policy problems.

Scientific evidence supports our view. A growing body of research shows that nature inspires creativity. According to a recent study published in the Public Library of Science, nature-filled days are associated with 50 percent higher scores in creative thinking and problem solving.

Coloradans get this. Those from Washington D.C. and New York City, not so much. Perhaps trading the fluorescent lights and bad carpeting of traditional policy conferences for a gondola ride overlooking Mt. Werner and the spectacular Yampa Valley will be the remedy necessary to come up with the solutions we need.

Consider the current health care mess. After Congressional Republicans' failure to pass a fix, middle-class Americans have been left holding the bag. According to a recent Health and Human Services report, average nationwide premiums have doubled under Obamacare. The average Bronze health plan's annual premium cost is now \$6,000, with an annual deductible of \$12,400. Such massive health care costs are a tremendous drag on standards of living and the economy.

A panel featuring health care leaders in the private industry and public policy spaces will drill down on

solutions that can address the health care pain felt by so many Americans. These likely include tax credits instead of subsidies, choice rather than mandates, and high-risk pools rather than cost-sharing. But how can this policy needle be threaded? That's a question for these experts.

Or take the problem of the federal government's continuous and constitutionally dubious growth. This is perhaps the greatest threat to individual liberty that currently exists. It is also one that — as history suggests — cannot be solved at the ballot box as both major parties have been equal opportunity offenders. How to stop and reverse this federal expansion — the worst nightmare of the country's founders — will be addressed by a high-profile panel featuring representatives from the private, academic, and public policy spheres.

The Freedom Conference is unique beyond its setting. It also includes an art exhibit and film festival. President George W. Bush's critically-acclaimed art exhibit, "The Art of Leadership: A President's Personal Diplomacy," will be featured. His paintings explore the relationships President Bush developed with world leaders through his diplomatic efforts while president. Paintings of leaders such as Angela Merkel, Vladimir Putin and the Dalai Lama illustrate — literally and figuratively — how the president saw his contemporaries and his relationships with them.

The film festival features Sean Hannity's debut film *Let There Be Light*, which traces the religious roots of individual liberty. A separate panel discussion featuring co-star and co-producer Sam Sorbo will discuss how Hollywood can elevate the human spirit — while Hannity's film attempts to do the same.

Policy conferences have a long history in this country. As Colorado Constitutional scholar Robert Natel-

son explains, “As far back as 1677, British colonies in North America sent “commissioners” to meet with each other to discuss common issues. These gatherings were essentially problem-solving task forces.”

But it’s unlikely there have been many of these policy conferences throughout the years that have been held in as beautiful a spot as Steamboat Springs. Hopefully, the setting can be the salve necessary to solve the nation’s policy problems.



The art of war: Healing, and protesting, through George W. Bush's portraits of veterans

A one-day exhibit of the 43rd president's paintings in Steamboat Springs inspires strong feelings

By John Wenzel | August 20, 2017

When members of The Steamboat Institute learned they could show several paintings by former President George W. Bush at their Freedom Conference & Festival on Aug. 25, they debated opening the exhibit to the public, given the fact that the 43rd president's art had never been on display in Colorado.

Other concerns quickly won out.

"As much as I would have loved it, it would have added to the security costs, and we wouldn't have known how many people were going to show up," Jennifer Schubert-Akin, CEO of the free-market Steamboat Institute, told *The Denver Post* last month.

That may have been the right call — at least for the sake of the paintings.

"Official Pentagon numbers do not include the many troops who return home and kill themselves as a result of psychological wounds such as PTSD," according to a study from Brown University's Watson Institute for Public Affairs.

Nor do they include, as others have pointed out, the more than 200,000 Iraqi and Afghan civilians who died as a result of the conflicts, according to a Watson estimate.

"If I was in Steamboat Springs, I could not be trusted to look at his artwork in a civilized manner without spitting on it," said one anonymous caller to *The Post*, her voice breaking with emotion, in a voicemail left in response to an article about the exhibit. "It's just disgraceful."

It's no surprise that Bush's presidency remains polarizing, especially since his legacy has continued to evolve through his paintings — a hobby he came to only a few years ago, inspired by Winston Churchill's own art career.

And while the portraits on display in Steamboat will be selected from Bush's series on global figures and di-

plomacy ("The Art of Leadership"), his current project finds him interpreting the faces of wounded military veterans, many of whom served under his watch.

In fact, the nonprofit Steamboat Institute will auction a copy of Bush's book "Portraits of Courage: A Commander in Chief's Tribute to America's Warriors," which was published in February and is signed by Bush himself, as part of its annual fundraiser this month.

But as some military veterans have found, painting portraits in the aftermath of war is not a one-way street, particularly when it comes to George W. Bush.

"A bold choice of subject matter"

Images of war have long been central to the way Americans understand their history, from a romanticized scene of George Washington crossing the Delaware River during the Revolutionary War (painted nearly 100 years after the actual event) to gritty, iconic photographs of the Civil War, World War II and the Vietnam War.

But whether they're interpreted as triumphant, such as Joe Rosenthal's Feb. 23, 1945, photo of Marines raising an American flag on Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi, or haunted and traumatizing, as many were from the Vietnam War, the images force most non-military citizens to think about something they never directly see or feel.

"For every person who has served in uniform, that path after deployment is going to look different," said Lt. Colonel Elizabeth Brienza, 37, who served in Afghanistan in 2011 and now works at the Pentagon. "And they can continue to either serve their country or heal their wounds. For me, when I had a chance to look at what (Bush) was doing, that's what spoke to me: that each person is reflecting and moving on in their own way."

Brienza briefly met Bush in 2008, during his second

term when the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were well underway, and she does not doubt Bush's sincerity in wanting to highlight the struggles of the wounded.

"The president has spoken about the gut-wrenching decision to send anyone to a conflict zone, and if he is continuing to deal with that in his own way, I see that as a healthy step," Brienza said. "I see it as coming from a place of healing."

In "Portraits of Courage," each of Bush's 66 portraits is accompanied by a personal story for that subject, including "their family and caregivers who bear the burden of their sacrifice," according to a description for the book.

"Anytime you can honor any one of these men or women is a good thing, and I would credit Bush for doing it," said Lynne Cottrell, a Denver resident who has helped raise more than \$4 million over the past 12 years for the national Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) program. "These are the forgotten ones, these families who make these huge sacrifices."

"I've met a lot of the veterans who he painted, and he really captured a mood and captured a personality," said Bonnie Carroll, the founder and president of TAPS and the surviving spouse of Army Brig. Gen. Tom Carroll. "(Bush's) book features not just the injury but he really incorporates the spirit of the person."

In 2015 Carroll received the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award from President Barack Obama for her work in supporting veterans' families. As a former staffer in the Reagan and Bush White Houses and a military veteran herself, she also personally knows some of the subjects in Bush's "Portraits of Courage" book — such as Justin Constantine, a Marine who survived a shot in the head by a sniper, and Daniel Gade, a "very high-up amputee" who went on to earn his doctorate after returning from fighting in the Middle East.

"He's a brilliant but very under-the-radar guy, and for President Bush to have included him spoke volumes about honoring those on the front line," Carroll said of Gade. "He wasn't just going for the high-profile veterans, but people who have been advocating for continued care."

Still, some say the book is not as straightforward as it seems.

Considering how widely he has been criticized for leading the nation into two long-running wars, it's a bold choice of subject matter," wrote Sarah Cascone for artnet.com. "The New Yorker dubbed the works

'Painted Atonements' and the Guardian described it as 'one of the most complex relationships between artist and subject in recent memory.' "

Portraits of a Commander

Joyce Wagner, an artist and former Marines avionics technician who was deployed to Iraq in 2004 and 2005, certainly agrees.

"I was shocked," she said of Bush's decision to paint Iraq war veterans. "It made a lot of people very uncomfortable, and if you read psychologically into it, it looks like a strange cry for redemption now that he's had to face how the war has impacted us and think about the decisions he's made."

Wagner, who went to school for art, is putting together a response to Bush's paintings called "Portraits of a Commander," which gathers nearly two dozen portraits of George W. Bush from military veterans who served in the Middle-East conflicts — including Lyons-based artist and anti-war activist Emily Yates' "Portrait of a Dubya," which depicts a childlike Bush playing with a green plastic slider as he clutches a copy of the Patriot Act.

Some are more sinister, such as Peter Sullivan's photorealistic, black-and-white pencil drawing of Bush cackling with cracked teeth, while others have elements of humor. All represent a grassroots, independent response to what Wagner sees as Bush's canned attempt at controlling his legacy through a seemingly earnest art project.

"The conversation is still very one-sided. And who's granting the atonement?" said Wagner, who plans to make a collectible book and, one day, an exhibit from her project. "Bush's paintings put (veterans) in a very limited position, and this project allows us to try to take back our own voices and agency, and share our own perspectives on healing."

Neither the Steamboat Institute nor the George W. Bush Presidential Center outside of Dallas, where the "Portraits of Courage" exhibit is on display until October, responded to requests for comment about the portraits.

But given the fraught relationship between U.S. presidents and the people they send to war, Bush should be commended for voluntarily wading into these murky waters, TAPS founder Carroll said.

"I don't interpret it as him feeling guilty about it. I've always taken things like this to be honoring their service," she said, noting that Abraham Lincoln did some of his most beautiful writing about the devastation of

losing family members in the Civil War. “People are looking at this through the lens of their political views, which is certainly their prerogative, but I see it as a very pure sense of capturing these lives and not necessarily focusing on their disability, but their spirit.”

John Wenzel is a reporter and critic-at-large for The Denver Post who has written about comedy, music, film, books, fine art, video games and other popular culture over the years.



President (and painter) George W. Bush's artwork heading to Steamboat Springs for one-day exhibition

By *John Wenzel* | July 17, 2017

As part of the 9th annual Freedom Conference & Festival, a conservative confab taking place in Steamboat Springs next month, the paintings of 43rd President George W. Bush will be on display for attendees at the Steamboat Grand Hotel.

The one-day exhibition on Friday, Aug. 25, organized by the Steamboat Institute, marks the Colorado debut of Bush's work from "The Art of Leadership: A President's Personal Diplomacy" exhibition, which features paintings of world leaders Bush met during his tenure in the White House including Vladimir Putin, Angela Merkel, Hamid Karzai, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tony Blair.

The Steamboat Springs version will offer 10 paintings from that collection, which originally bowed at the George W. Bush Presidential Center near Dallas in 2014. Steamboat Institute board member Ron Lazoff, a part-time Dallas resident who is involved with the Bush Center, first had the idea to bring the paintings to the conference.

"(Bush) was really putting himself out there and taking a personal risk with these paintings, not knowing what people would think of them," said Jennifer Schubert-Akin, CEO of the free-market, nonprofit Steamboat Institute.

The Institute's board debated making the small exhibit open to the public. But security concerns, a lack of exhibition space and a need to ensure the conference's 350 registrants saw them eventually won out.

"As much as I would have loved it, it would have added to the security costs, and we wouldn't have known how many people were going to show up," Schubert-Akin said. "We've only got 8 hours to display them."

Registration to the event costs \$350 per person, with \$575 and \$1,250 VIP tiers. Schubert-Akin noted that organizers are scheduling a conference-adjacent

film festival that will be free and open to the public, including family-friendly programming and in-person filmmaker appearances.

The Freedom Conference & Festival revolves around conservative and libertarian thought with speakers such as magazine publisher Steve Forbes, author Rebekah Gregory, and editors and columnists from the Wall Street Journal, Colorado Springs Gazette and Washington Examiner, among others. Wyatt Smith, senior director of the Bush Center, will also attend and speak at the event.

"This is the first time the (Bush) exhibit has been shown in Colorado, giving state residents a unique opportunity to view this popular collection," wrote Jackson Shedelbower, of the Steamboat Institute, in an email. "Attendance at the most recent special exhibit exceeded 59,000 visitors in a six-week period."

Although some balked at the idea of Bush as a fine artist when he took up painting in his post-presidential retirement, the 71-year-old has stuck to his guns and humbly worked to improve his art.

"Portraits of Courage: A Commander in Chief's Tribute to America's Warriors," a book of Bush's paintings of wounded U.S. military veterans that was published in February, netted surprisingly favorable reviews from critics and topped The Washington Post's best-selling books list earlier this year.

Bush will personalize a copy of the book that is being auctioned on the Steamboat Institute's fundraiser as part of its \$75-per-person Red, White & Blue Bash fundraiser on July 20, Schubert-Akin said, with bidding starting at \$300.

John Wenzel is a reporter and critic-at-large for The Denver Post who has written about comedy, music, film, books, fine art, video games and other popular culture over the years.

Conservative forum crosses paths with resistance movement in Aptos

By Michael Todd | February 25, 2017

APTOS >> The screeching tires, honking horns and chanting opposition were audible in the Seascape Beach Resort's ballroom during a political forum hosted Saturday by a grassroots conservative organization from Colorado that drew panelists from throughout the U.S.

The inaugural Steamboat Institute forum assembled a collective of conservatives, journalists and farmers. Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Tulare, discussed national security. He is chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He said he has concerns with al-Qaida, which he said likely is "plotting and planning a major attack on the west."

Nunes also raised question about Chinese efforts to choke shipping lanes and establish military posts across the globe. He also said GOP leadership has the chance to "blow up the tax code." Nunes said economic growth was in dire need.

Before the conference Saturday morning, Steamboat Institute co-founder Jennifer Schubert-Akin watched the roughly 350 protesters march along Seascape Resort Drive.

"They're expressing their views over there and we're expressing ours in here. It's OK," Schubert-Akin told other members of her organization. She allowed the press to attend.

"You realize, in most countries, you could not do this," she told the Sentinel. She said Steamboat Institute started while she was working in accounting and recognized what she saw as too many obstacles for small entrepreneurs.

Outside, Army veteran Kathy Bidwell of Soquel was among the members of Santa Cruz Indivisible and other groups, such as Veterans For Peace.

Bidwell said Nunes "ditched his constituents" after The Fresno Bee reported last week's protests, chiding Nunes and Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford, for having

no town hall meetings during the congressional recess.

"This upside-down flag is a sign of distress," Bidwell said. "I fought for this flag."

Casey Carlson, chairwoman of Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers, also cited concerns with Nunes' lack of attendance at town hall meetings. "This protest originated because his constituents could not meet with him," Carlson said.

Dan Lassiter of Soquel used electrical tape to mark his sign with "We the people" while receiving compliments on his star-spangled sweatpants.

"We are the people," Lassiter said. "I am appalled by the refusal to investigate obvious conflicts of interest."

Nunes said he would not investigate American citizens without evidence of wrongdoing. Former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who resigned Feb. 13 amid questions about his communications with Russia, "is an American hero and he was doing his job," Nunes also said. Flynn was invited to the event but did not attend.

There were 230 people who attended the forum and dinner, Schubert-Akin said. She also said the event would be followed by others in the area.

She said the group is not affiliated with the Republican Party. "Some old guard GOP, I think we were scary to them," Schubert-Akin said of Steamboat Institute's beginning in 2008.

Local group Santa Cruz Indivisible's co-founder Carson Kelly welcomed future events by Steamboat Institute and recommended dialogue with the organization.

"It should be constructive," he said. "We'll have more than 1,000 people there."

He said President Donald Trump's election roused a major resistance movement.

"I think there's a new class of political activist ap-

palled by election results and let down by the Democratic leadership,” Kelly said. “The beast has awoken, so to speak. Everyday activism is no longer a choice.”

Laura Zucker, who teaches special education in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, said she came in solidarity to oppose President Trump’s appointment of Betsy DeVos as U.S. Education Secretary. “We’re afraid she is not in the best interest for our children with special needs,” Zucker said.

The event continued with a dinner Saturday afternoon. Mary Kissel, a member of the Wall Street Jour-

nal editorial board, was moderator of a conversation with Nunez and other journalists. The protest started about 7:30 a.m.

Rene Bloch of Santa Cruz said each group is allowed to express its opinion and added that the protest would remain peaceful.

“Everything is legal,” Bloch said.

Michael Todd: Reach the author at mtodd@santacruzsentinel.com or follow Michael on Twitter: [michaeleetodd](https://twitter.com/michaeleetodd).

Amid the Downpour, California's Regulatory Drought Continues

Dams are spilling over, but decades of meddling by green groups means the water can't get to my farm.

By Jean Sagouspe | February 24, 2017

Heavy rain has put Northern California practically underwater, with reservoirs at capacity and dams spilling over. But the downpour won't quench my parched farm farther south in the state's San Joaquin Valley.

I own 1,800 acres of almonds and 835 acres of pistachios. But neither my farm nor the rest of the broader Central Valley—which provides about a quarter of the country's food—can survive off groundwater alone. For decades we have received water from the federally managed Central Valley Project and its state counterpart. This series of canals and aqueducts moves water from the wet northern part of the state to the dry valley.

But a scorched-earth campaign by environmentalists has created a regulatory drought that exceeds anything mother nature has produced. A 1992 federal law, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, diverted 1.5 million acre-feet of water—roughly a fifth of the total water delivery—annually to wildlife and green hobbyhorses. That ultimately means flushing it out into the ocean. “Basically, they've now legislated a permanent drought in the San Joaquin Valley,” Mark Borba, a cotton farmer, told the Los Angeles Times when the law passed.

Subsequent lawsuits by environmental groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council have tightened restrictions even more. The San Joaquin River Restoration Program, the result of a 2006 settlement in a lawsuit over fish habitat, took away another some 225,000 acre-feet of water annually. Environmentalists have repeatedly sued the government for ostensibly violating the Endangered Species Act and failing to protect the delta smelt and other fish.

This has significantly curtailed water flows at two major pumping stations that serve the valley. As a result, more than 1.4 trillion gallons of water has drained out to sea since 2008. California also has fewer places

to store water than it used to. Since 2000, dozens of dams in the state have been removed, according to a tally by the conservation group American Rivers, eliminating storage that could have helped harness floodwaters for crops.

This regulatory drought has real effects on people like me. Over the past three years I have been forced to kill over half my almond trees—more than 980 acres. This has caused me to lose more than \$7 million in almond revenue, and it has eliminated about \$10 million of my farm's value. I've been forced to lay off 25% of the people who helped grow these crops. Some of these employees had worked with me for 20 years.

My story is typical. Across the Central Valley, hundreds of thousands of acres have turned fallow, tens of thousands of jobs have been lost, and billions of dollars of economic activity has evaporated. The Great Recession may be over, but unemployment in the valley is about double the national average.

Other farmers and I have increased our reliance on overdrafted groundwater in an effort to mitigate the damage. I alone have spent about \$2 million since 2015 to dig new and deeper wells. But regulators are worried about the water table, and new state rules are set to take effect in 2020.

The kicker: Fish populations haven't recovered and the smelt is on the verge of extinction. But the water supply may have less to do with this than the ammonia produced by Sacramento's sewage and nonnative predators, like striped bass, which for some reason don't make it into environmentalists' crosshairs.

Perhaps saving the smelt is only a secondary goal. Two years ago Rep. Devin Nunes, who represents parts of the San Joaquin Valley, wrote about a meeting of environmental activists that he attended in 2002, before he was elected to Congress. “Their goal was to remove 1.3 million acres of farmland from produc-

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tion,” Mr. Nunes wrote. “They showed me maps that laid out their whole plan: From Merced all the way down to Bakersfield, and on the entire west side of the Valley as well as part of the east side, productive agriculture would end and the land would return to some ideal state of nature. I was stunned by the vicious audacity of their goal.”

President Trump can put an end to this madness. Last year Congress passed, and President Obama signed, a water infrastructure bill that gives the interior

secretary more latitude to approve new dams and storage facilities. The Trump administration should make good use of this authority to sign off on projects that have been held up for decades by regulatory hurdles.

The alternative is more of California's status quo: drought in a time of flooding, which is something only a bureaucrat could dream up.

Mr. Sagouspe is a farmer in the San Joaquin Valley and a board member of the Steamboat Institute.

Hadly Heath Manning: Modernizing and simplifying health insurance

By Hadly Heath Manning | February 18, 2017

Americans are anxious to see if Congress and the Trump administration will repeal and replace ObamaCare, also known as the Affordable Care Act. The law has been a point of sharp partisan division since its inception, and more Americans (30 percent) say the law has hurt them than helped them (19 percent), according to Gallup.

Clearly, change is needed. But the complexity of our health care system and the politics surrounding it — especially now that ObamaCare has been law for nearly seven years — make change difficult. Nonetheless, Congress, President Trump and new Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price should advance a new series of health reforms that will make our system simpler, more affordable, and more transparent, while also providing a safety net for those who truly need it.

Our health care system is like a huge tangle: Employment is tied to insurance, which in turn is tied to care. But it doesn't have to be this way. To improve access to care, we need to untie these knots.

The serendipity of history has led to a system where most privately insured Americans get insurance as an on-the-job benefit. But increasing numbers of Americans do not work in traditional full-time jobs, and those who buy insurance on their own face a tax disadvantage as a result (because individual plans are not excluded from taxes, as group plans are).

Rather than simply undoing the distortive, regressive tax exclusion (which would be a tax increase) policymakers can level the playing field with a universal tax credit or deduction for health insurance. This is fair and equitable, would eliminate concerns about “job lock,” and would lead to a greater share of Americans opting to buy insurance outside of their employer group, which would in turn spur more competition among plans.

Here's another knot that's fit to be untied: routine health care and health insurance.

Health insurers are no longer functioning as insurers, but as third parties or discount-membership clubs. Premiums no longer reflect risk, and we use health insurance for just about every interaction we have with the health system including routine, expected health care services. No other form of insurance works this way.

This system makes health insurance more costly than it needs to be. And cost is the No. 1 reason uninsured people cite for their lack of insurance.

Basic, more affordable, “catastrophic” insurance plans would be more readily available were it not for federal and state regulations that require insurance companies to cover more and more benefits. But beware: These regulations that are sold as consumer protections are sometimes just gifts to special interests, like medical groups, and end up distorting markets and increasing premiums.

Insurers should have the freedom to offer very basic plans alongside comprehensive coverage, so that consumers can choose. Yes, choosing a catastrophic plan would mean paying out-of-pocket for more care, but it would also mean dramatically lower premiums. These plans could also work alongside a tax-free Health Savings Account.

More people paying out of pocket for routine health care wouldn't be a bad thing: Providers would share more pricing information with customers and compete with one another to offer the best value. This price transparency and competition would result in lower costs and innovative strategies for how to best serve clientele. We already see this at work in the direct primary care model, which could become more prevalent.

Critics of free-market health reforms argue that opening up the system would be fine for healthy peo-

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ple, but would create hardship for those who are sick. But this need not be so. A free, functional marketplace can exist alongside a robust safety net. States can operate high-risk pools especially for those who are uninsured when they are diagnosed with expensive medical conditions, so no one is left behind.

Dr. Hal Scherz of Docs 4 Patient Care, Sally Pipes of Pacific Research Institute and I will be discussing these ideas in depth on a panel at The Steamboat Institute's upcoming winter conference Feb. 24 and 25

in Aptos. The event is open to the public. We invite you to join this discussion as we work toward untangling, simplifying and modernizing our health care and health insurance markets.

Hadley Heath Manning is the 2017 Tony Blankley Chair for Public Policy and American Exceptionalism at The Steamboat Institute. For more information about The Steamboat Institute winter conference, visit SteamboatInstitute.org.