LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trump's excuses getting wilder

To summarize the position that ex-President Donald Trump has taken regarding the documents found at Mar-a-Lago weeks ago when the FBI executed a search warrant on his property to recover documents for the National Archives:

Since the search warrant was executed, we have heard a variety of narratives/reasons as to why the documents were there. Apparently, Trump had the documents declassified that were not top secret and were just news clippings that the National Archives had been asking for since January and a federal judge felt warranted a search warrant.

In addition, the FBI planted documents to catch Trump in a crime of holding classified documents that were not classified and only news clippings.

This is what Trump is asking America to believe, and tens of millions believe him.

John Pauli, *Las Vegas*

Use floodwaters to our advantage

Water is our most important resource. Nothing on this world can live without it. In a time when we are having extreme problems with drought and our government will not listen to normal people about what is causing the problem, maybe someone reading this will at least think about saving some of the water we allow to run off to the ocean each year that nature never intended to go there.

We have extreme flooding back East almost every year. Back when these rivers flooded the planes, all of that water soaked into the ground, allowing the grass to grow, which fed grazing animals. But now we have built cities and levees up and down these rivers, and still these cities are flooded, causing millions of dollars of damage.

All of that water is supposed to do as nature intended, but we are forcing it to flow into the ocean. So why don't we make pipelines to move all that water? If we can build pipelines over 800 miles and three mountain ranges to transport oil from Alaska, we can do the same with water.

In 1950, the world's population was 2.5 billion. It is 7.4 billion and by 2050, will be 9.9 billion. If we are going to grow this much while our planet's resources are already being consumed faster than nature can keep up, we must save what we can instead of just allowing it to run off.

Scott Weatherly,
Winlock, Wash.

MAGA aims to crush democracy

The writer of the Sept. 17 letter "Biden wrong, irresponsible" stated that "President Joe Biden's caution against MAGA extremists is a hoax perpetrated by Biden on the American people."

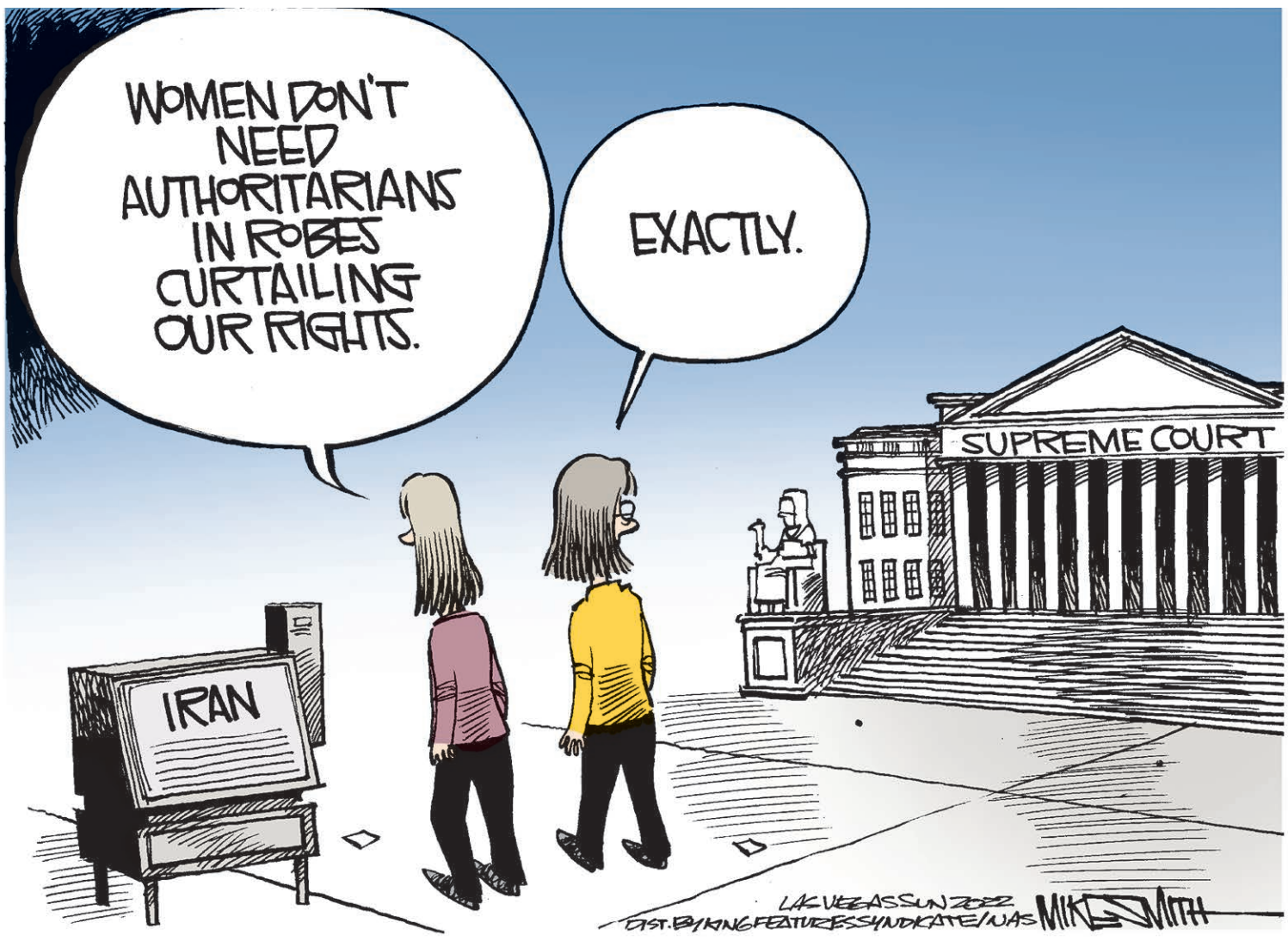
What I watched on my television Jan. 6, 2021, was no hoax. It was an armed mob of MAGA extremists hell-bent on forcefully overthrowing the will of the majority of the American people by attacking the heart of our government.

Yes, there *is* an extremist movement going on in America that is working very hard to destroy our democracy. To preserve our freedom, we must be prepared for their next assaults on our country.

John Soltesz, *Logandale*

SMITH'S WORLD

Mike Smith is the award-winning editorial cartoonist for the Las Vegas Sun. Smith's work also is distributed nationally by King Features Syndicate. See archives of his work at **lasvegassun.com/smithsworld**.



HEARD ELSEWHERE

The following editorial appeared in The New York Times:

Trump team's latest threat to democracy is hiding in plain sight

In the weeks after the 2020 presidential election, Donald Trump and his allies were unable to get far in their attempts to prove widespread voter fraud. There were two reasons for that.

First, there wasn't any, as numerous investigations by journalists, expert reports and court rulings showed. But second, Republican election officials in multiple states repeatedly said that their counts and recounts were accurate, and they defended the integrity of the election. For all the pressure that the Trump camp brought to bear, well-trained, civic-minded election workers carried out their duty to maintain the machinery of American voting.

This is where Trump's allies have focused much of their scheming since his reelection defeat. Their mission is to take over America's election infrastructure, or at least key parts of it, from the ground up by filling key positions of influence with Trump sympathizers. Rather than threatening election officials, they will *be* the election officials — the poll workers and county commissioners and secretaries of state responsible for overseeing the casting, counting and certifying of votes.

A key element of this strategy is dismantling the bulwarks that stopped the assault on democracy in 2020. In Georgia, the top state election official, Brad Raffensperger, its secretary of state, refused Trump's request to help steal the election by agreeing to "find" 11,780 additional votes. In Michigan, the Board of State Canvassers certified Joe Biden's victory despite Trump's aggressive meddling. A host of other state and local officials, many of them Republicans, pushed back on similarly anti-democratic machinations.

Trump and his allies have set about removing and replacing these public servants, through elections and appointments, with more like-minded officials. In some cases, the effort has failed. But in other states, Republicans have embraced election deniers as candidates, including for secretary of state.

In Nevada, the Republican secretary of state nominee, Jim Marchant, maintains that the 2020 presidential race was rigged and that he would not have certified Biden's win. He blames fraud for his own failed House run that year and has said that Nevada voters haven't truly elected their leaders in years because the system is so rigged.

Marchant is a part of the America First Secretary of State Coalition, whose candidates are campaigning for measures that would make it more difficult for Americans to vote.

The Republicans' pick in Michigan, Kristina Karamo, is also an America First candidate. She has promoted the baseless conspiracy theories that Dominion voting machines flipped votes in Biden's favor and that Jan. 6 was a false flag operation conducted by "antifa posing as Trump supporters."

The most outrageous GOP choice may be Arizona's Mark Finchem. He has in the past identified as a member of the Oath Keepers, a far-right militia group, and spoke at a QAnon convention last year. He was at the Capitol on Jan. 6, although he denies being within about 500 yards of the building. As a member of the Arizona House of Representatives, he introduced a resolution to decertify the 2020 election in multiple counties and was a sponsor of a bill to empower the GOP-led Legislature to overturn election results.

Finchem wants to ban early voting and put limits on mail-in voting. In April, he filed a federal lawsuit to block the use of electronic vote-counting machines in Arizona in the midterms. (It was dismissed.)

Installing election deniers as top election officials is just one element of this plan. Much less visible, but just as important, is the so-called precinct strategy, in which Trump allies are recruiting supporters to flood the system by signing up to work in low-level election positions such as poll workers. A prominent promoter of the precinct strategy was Steve Bannon, the former Trump adviser. Last year, Bannon rallied the listeners of his podcast to sign up as precinct committee members. "We're going to take this back village by village ... precinct by precinct," he proclaimed in May 2021.

The precinct strategy has been endorsed by Trump — who declared it a way to "take back our great country from the ground up" — and adopted by segments of the Republican Party.

Bannon is appealing to his supporters' sense of civic duty by asking them to be more involved in their local election process. But unsettling details of what this effort entails emerged this summer after Politico acquired videos of Republican operatives discussing strategy with activists.

New election recruits would attend training workshops on how to challenge voters at polling places, explained Matthew Seifried, the Republican National Committee's election integrity director for Michigan, in one of the recordings. These poll workers would have access to a hotline and a website staffed by "an army" of Republican-friendly lawyers prepared to help with challenges. "We're going to have more lawyers than we've ever recruited, because let's be honest, that's where it's going to be fought, right?" Seifried said at a meeting last October.

The real threat to America's electoral system is not posed by ineligible voters trying to cast ballots. It is coming from inside the system.

All those who value democracy have a role to play in strengthening and supporting the electoral system that powers it, whatever their party. This involves, first, taking the threat posed by election deniers seriously and talking to friends and neighbors about it. It means paying attention to local elections and supporting candidates who reject conspiracy theories and unfounded claims of fraud. It means getting involved in elections as canvassers or poll watchers or precinct officers. (Bannon has the right idea about civic participation; he just employs toxic lies as motivation.)

And it means voting, in every race on the ballot and in every election. To this end, employers have a role to play as well, by giving workers time off to vote and encouraging them to do so.

The task of safeguarding democracy does not end with one election. Trump and others looking to pervert the electoral process are full of intensity and are playing a long game. Only an equally strong and committed countervailing force will meet that challenge.

We welcome your viewpoint

Letters to the editor should be no more than 250 words, cite the sources of any figures or other data, and include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. The Sun reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and length.

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