LESLIE

Holiday blues

Ignorance is going to destroy us. In this

holiday season, I'm having a hard time mustering any positive sentiments for those who insist climate change is a hoax, vaccines are a plot to harm our children, and President Trump is a victim of a deep state conspiracy.

The news on climate change gets worse every day. The permafrost is melting faster than scientists predicted and releasing more carbon than expected. But Republicans continue to deny science, thereby keeping their fossil fuel overlords happy as the planet's time bomb ticks toward our own oblivion. Belief in science has now become a partisan issue as shown in November's Pew Research Center study that found 90 percent of Democrats believe government needs to be more active addressing climate change while just 24 percent of conservative Republicans feel the same.

President Trump's fragile ego was so deeply wounded when he wasn't chosen as Time Magazine's 2019 Person of the Year, he tweet-lashed the winner, 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, chosen for her unabashed and direct challenge to all of us to please save the world for her generation. There are no words. And no excuses for Republicans who seem content to risk our grandchildren's very future by refusing to acknowledge the plain and convincing facts about climate change, right in front of their eyes.

Nevada is also experiencing the willful scientific ignorance of the anti-vaxers, who were out in full force at a recent Interim Health Committee meeting. The immunization agenda item that day was innocuous, simply an overview of the status of immunizations in our state, but the opponents of vaccinations showed up en masse during the public comment period to demand their right to reject immunizations and potentially harm those unlucky enough to come into contact with unvaccinated persons during an outbreak of infectious disease.

And, of course, impeachment and the presidential campaign are wearing us all out. Michelle Goldberg, a New York Times columnist, recently wrote about "democracy grief," a perpetual state of depression many of us are feeling caused by the continuous spurious attacks on our institutions—the FBI, the CIA, our diplomats, law enforcement and public employees of every kind. We feel overwhelmed by the hypocrisy and complicity of Republican leaders who endorse these attacks with their silence.

But perhaps the worst legacy of the Trump years is the Senate's approval of large numbers of federal judges, mostly unqualified ideologues who will be making judicial decisions that affect all of us for the next three or four decades.

The best example of this particular horror is the recent confirmation of Lawrence VanDyke as Nevada's representative on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. VanDyke has barely lived in Nevada although he was appointed by former attorney general and Virginia transplant Adam Laxalt as his solicitor general where he served without distinction. His thin resume was reviewed by the American Bar Association, which rated him as "not qualified" to be a federal judge.

Our two U.S. Senators opposed his nomination, saying they were not consulted by the President on the nomination per Senate tradition. Nevertheless, all Republicans but one, Senator Susan Collins, voted to confirm VanDyke.

VanDyke is known for his historical opposition to LGBTQ people, his antichoice views and his pro-corporate leanings. The ABA interviewed five dozen people about his work, and they said VanDyke is "arrogant, lazy, an ideologue, and lacking in knowledge of the day-to-day practice including procedural rules." Now he has a life-time appointment to "serve" us.

Republicans are foolishly ignoring the large numbers of young voters who have no use for their fealty to ignorance for short-term political gain. But as the planet collapses and we risk epidemics of preventable diseases, the only question is if we'll survive their time in power.

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