

Fairs showcase what makes Nebraska great

Summertime fair season is in full swing across Nebraska. Twenty-six of our state's counties are hosting fairs this week. Fairs are wonderful gathering points where communities come together in celebration of the many things that make our state great. They also offer an abundance of enjoyable, family-friendly entertainment options. From live music to livestock, and parades to pie-baking, fairs have something fun for everyone.

County fairs are also good venues to showcase Nebraska agriculture, the heart and soul of our economy. Nebraska's farm families work incredibly hard to cultivate the crops and raise the livestock that enrich our state. Fairs display the fruits of their labor and help familiarize the rest of the state with the valuable contribution they make to Nebraska.

Groups like 4-H and FFA are mainstays at county fairs, and their passion for agriculture points to a bright future for our state's biggest industry. Their members do a wonderful job presenting their work in agriculture and educating Nebraskans about its importance. Their ambassadorship also helps inform young Nebraskans of the many exciting and rewarding job opportunities available in agriculture.

Agricultural fairs have a long history in Nebraska, predating our statehood. The first Nebraska territorial fair took place in Nebraska City in 1859. From early on, it built a big reputation for itself. Did you know that our state fair even appeared on the big screen when "The Wizard of Oz" premiered 80 years ago? When Oz departs the Emerald City, he takes flight in a hot-air balloon with "State Fair: Omaha" printed in large letters on it. Historically, the Nebraska State Fair was held in Omaha several times. In fact, Lincoln and Omaha rotated as host cities from the 1870s to 1901. Lancaster County Fairgrounds then hosted the event from 1901 to 2009 before the State Fair moved to its present location in Grand Island in 2010.

The 2019 fair season culminates with the Nebraska State Fair, held at Grand Island's Fonner Park Aug. 23-Sept. 2. Annually, more than 300,000 people take part in our biggest fair's festivities. Here are a few things to look forward to at this

year's State Fair:

» **Music:** The 2019 Nebraska State Fair has a concert lineup featuring some of the biggest names in music. Little Big Town, Trace Adkins, Maren Morris and Brett Eldredge are just a few of the artists scheduled to perform during the 11-day fair.

» **Education:** Spanning 25,000 square feet, the Raising Nebraska exhibit invites fairgoers to take an in-depth look at Nebraska agriculture. Visitors can hop inside the cab of a combine to go for a simulated drive. Kids can get their hands dirty while exploring the various soil types that sustain and nourish Nebraska-grown crops. They can also see how satellite technology and fiber optic sprinkler heads are making center pivots smarter, more effective machines. One station within the Raising Nebraska exhibit explains why some eggs are white while others are brown. Another traces how milk gets from a cow's udder to a carton on the shelf of a grocery store. Together, all of these activities reinforce agriculture's central role in the life of our state.

» **Food:** There's nothing quite like food at the fair. From waffle dogs, to gelato-filled cannoli, to bacon-wrapped cinnamon rolls, the Nebraska State Fair has no shortage of delicious, diet-defying treats.

» **Competitions:** Nebraskans can enter contests to see how their prize crops, pies, jams and cakes stack up against their peers.

» **Fun:** Of course, no fair would be complete without a carnival, and the State Fair offers the largest one in Nebraska with plenty of rides, games, and shows.

The Midwest is known for its fantastic fairs, and Nebraska certainly does its part to uphold that reputation. I'd like to thank the many Nebraskans who volunteer their time to plan, organize, and put on fairs throughout the state. I'd also like to thank the parents who help their children show livestock or prepare artwork to exhibit. Their involvement is passing on an appreciation for agriculture to the next generation, as well as sustaining our tradition of hosting fairs.

As fair season shifts into high gear this week, I encourage Nebraskans to attend a nearby county fair. A schedule of county fairs is available by clicking here. If you'd like to tell me what you like best about your county's fair, email pete.ricketts@nebraska.gov or call my office at 402-471-2244. Meanwhile, details on the 2019 Nebraska State Fair can be found at www.state-fair.org. I plan to attend and hope you will too!

Gov. Pete Ricketts



Pete Ricketts is the governor of the state of Nebraska.



Trump reveals his fear of losing

WASHINGTON — President Trump's decision to put away his racist dog whistle and bring out his racist bullhorn has just one plausible explanation: desperation.

Disregard, as usual, what Trump claims about his political standing and his prospects for winning a second term. He is acting as if he knows he is likely to lose the election, perhaps by a humiliating margin — and fears what will happen to him and his dodgy business empire once he's out of office.

Hence Trump's undisguised appeals to white racial resentment and anger: the vicious and absurd demand that four House members of color "go back" to other countries; the unprovoked and sustained Twitter screed against well-liked veteran Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., and, unbelievably, the entire city of Baltimore; the gratuitous and slanderous claim that the Rev. Al Sharpton "Hates Whites & Cops!" Nothing subtle in any of this.

It overly flatters Trump to fear he's playing three-dimensional chess or employing some kind of exotic political jiu jitsu. What we're hearing in his harangues and reading in his tweets is naked fear. And he has reason to be very afraid.

Some traumatized Democrats may have lost all faith in polls following the 2016 election, but Trump hasn't. We know he pays close attention to the numbers. We also know he watches Fox News obsessively, not as a way to follow current events but as a barometer of his support among his base. So it's no wonder he sounded so hurt Friday in a tweet about the latest Fox poll:

"@FoxNews is at it again. So different from what they used to be during the 2016 Primaries, & before

— Proud Warriors! Now new Fox Polls, which have always been terrible to me (they had me losing BIG to Crooked Hillary), have me down to Sleepy Joe."

Indeed, the Fox national poll of registered voters showed Trump losing to former Vice President Joe Biden by 10 points, 49% to 39%. It also showed him losing to Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., by 6 points and edging the other top-tier Democratic candidates, Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Kamala Harris, D-Calif., by a single point each.

Another survey released last week must have made Trump break out in a cold sweat. A Quinnipiac poll of registered voters in Ohio — a state Trump won in 2016 and absolutely needs to win again — showed him trailing Biden by 8 points, 50% to 42%, and statistically tied with all the other leading Democratic contenders. Losing Ohio would almost surely mean a landslide electoral defeat.

Most politicians faced with such numbers would look for ways to broaden their appeal. But Trump has just one political move: inflame the base. As an incumbent, he cannot credibly run again as an avenging outsider who will raze the temples of the evil place called Washington. Instead, he is running as the defender of white, non-urban America and encouraging his loyal voters to blame the problems they face on black and brown people who

live in cities and college-educated snobs who live near the coasts.

Trump's tools are jingoism, xenophobia and old-fashioned racism. It is dangerous and, yes, deplorable to unleash and amplify such forces in a diverse, multicultural society like ours, but Trump could not care less about doing what is in the public interest. He obviously cares only about his self-interest, and he sees how precarious his position is.

It is telling that Trump was fairly subdued after former special counsel Robert Mueller's testimony but became irate when reporters asked about one thing Mueller had said: A president can indeed face criminal charges after leaving office. I don't believe the fear of eventual legal jeopardy is the only reason why Trump is so frantic to win reelection, but I do believe it's a factor. I don't know what federal prosecutors would discover if they launched full-court-press investigations of the Trump Organization, the now-shuttered Trump Foundation and the Trump inauguration committee. But Trump knows.

For now, Trump has every reason to believe he and his business interests are protected by Attorney General William Barr, who apparently believes the powers of the president are those of a Sun King or an imperial czar. Come January 2021, he should — and, I believe, likely will — feel much more exposed.

Trump knows how to use fear, resentment and a sense of grievance to motivate his base. He can make it angrier and likelier to vote — but he has no idea how to make it bigger. And in elections, as in many things, size matters.

Contact Eugene Robinson: eugen-robinson@washpost.com.

Eugene Robinson



Eugene Robinson is the 2009 Pulitzer Prize winning writer for Commentary.

► GUEST OPINION

Federal 'safety net' ensnares farmers

By JOSHUA SEWELL

As goes agriculture, so goes Nebraska. Nearly 47,000 farms, 22.2 million acres of cropland, 21.5 million acres used for pasture and \$21.9 billion in agriculture products sold, 75% of that coming from Nebraska's 3rd Congressional District. In fact, Nebraska's 3rd District ranks first in the nation in overall value of production with total sales reaching \$16.6 billion. But the recent Census of Agriculture, which underlines how critical agriculture's success is to the state's economy, has a troubling bottom line: Agriculture isn't going so well in the Cornhusker state.

The census highlights the increasing danger Nebraska farming and ranching businesses face from Washington policies that are supposed to provide a financial safety net, but instead engender dependence on D.C. That needs to end. Federal farm policy needs to be an instrument for farmer and rancher success, not an obstacle to opportunity. And the often cited "50% drop in income since 2013" statistic is misleading, because 2013 was the highest revenue year in nearly the last half century (since 1973). Meanwhile, a well-intentioned but poorly executed trade conflict with China has resulted in agricultural exports, historically a perennial bright spot, falling 4.4% from last year.

That's dented Nebraska, where

soybeans and hogs make up 16.9% of ag-related receipts in the state and depend heavily on exports. Nationally, soybean exports dropped 20.5% in 2018 from 2017 levels. Pork isn't doing any better, with an 8.2% drop in sales so far this year. The outlook for both commodities is grim and complicated by the wettest year on record.

Financial feast or famine is a story Nebraskans know all too well, one increasingly common in agriculture. Enter federal legislative responses, which simply add fuel to the fire.

Washington has enacted a five-year farm bill projected to spend \$200 billion on farm income support, passed two emergency disaster spending bills with \$5.4 billion to the ag sector, and earmarked \$28 billion of federal aid in place of trade. Yet the financial health of farming and ranching businesses continues to deteriorate. The bankruptcy rate of farmers is rising in the Midwest. USDA's projected \$69.4 billion in net farm income will still fall far below the average of \$90 billion experienced from 2000-2017. All of this has led to what USDA refers to as "direct government payments," i.e. subsidy checks sent from the Treasury to farm businesses, reaching their highest level in nearly 15 years.

This isn't sustainable.

The federal government has a role in agriculture. Taxpayers for Common Sense supports a federal

safety net for American farming and ranching businesses, provided tax dollars are invested wisely and efficiently. Subsidies should focus on those who actually need them, and when risks are too costly or complex to manage independent of Washington. This means reducing barriers to trade, not erecting new ones. Investing in tools to discover what conservation practices actually achieve their intended outcomes, while reducing farm operating costs, and disseminating that information through robust state extension systems. And dismantling burdensome regulatory barriers and arbitrary mandates where Washington wisdom replaces individual responsibility and economic liberty.

Too often fiscal conservatives and farmers and ranchers see each other as adversaries instead of allies. In fact, we are incredibly alike. We both agree that the government shouldn't be the deciding factor in business decisions. Instead, farmers and ranchers should be empowered to operate their business according to their own abilities, estimates, and values. We can afford a financial safety net for agriculture. But reviving an era where government payments decide who survives or fails is too costly for everyone.

Joshua Sewell is senior policy analyst for Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan budget watchdog group in Washington, D.C.

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The First Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.