Hollywood, MD - The din that was 2017 should die down for a little while. However, you can bet things will be louder in 2018, especially locally, where an election year is certain to prompt more discourse, and, unfortunately, more anger. The issues in Southern Maryland continue to involve growth—residential and commercial development—salaries for government and public school officials, infrastructure (especially roads), public safety and implementing an effective strategy in light of the continuing opioid crisis.

Most national issues, although not seeming to have much of a provincial relevance, certainly prompt heated discussion among locals. Some of the crazier issues—like the “kneeling controversy” in the National Football League or removal of statues of historic figures of some now deemed to be dishonorable—are not likely to be resolved without one side simply throwing in the towel.

This year TheBayNet.com stepped even deeper into the age-old tradition of offering opinions along with straightforward news. We are still assessing just what we have stepped in and how to proceed. With the frequent “Letter from the Editor,” the addition of the occasional “Southern Maryland Focus” and the constant publishing of submissions from various elected officials—all in addition to readers’ letters and comments—there is no shortage of opinion being offered. While some people have labeled us “liberal,” the fact is the elected official with the most opinion pieces published on our site in 2017 was—Republican Delegate Mark Fisher, who had almost double the number of submissions as Congressman Steny Hoyer and U.S. Senator Ben Cardin combined. Other Republicans who had their opinions featured included state senators Steve Waugh and Kathy Szelgia and Delegate Deb Rey.

While we would appear to be a major promulgator of the GOP, Maryland Democratic Party Chair Kathleen Matthews’ “gloat-a-torial” about her party’s gains one year after the 2016 Presidential Election rekindled the conservative vitriol. Once again we got branded with that darn “liberal” label.

Before we take one step further, there’s nothing wrong with being liberal and if you are a conservative who draws or will draw a government or military pension, you might want to tone down your rant about American socialism. If you think about it you are benefitting from it. I am just saying.

Of course the big elephant in the room is our nation’s new leader, President Donald J. Trump. It’s clear he arouses great passion in people. There seems to be no middle ground. President Trump has received almost no criticism from TheBayNet.com. We have reported on criticism others have offered but that’s not the same thing. To be fair, we can, in our opinion, praise Trump for meeting with organized labor the first day of his first week in office, his wise appointment of Paul Gorsuch to the Supreme Court, his policies that likely had a positive impact on economic factors like record highs for the Stock Market, calls for a full audit of Pentagon spending, Justice Department policies to crack down on fentanyl substances and actions to aid military veterans. If Trump has disappointed us, it mostly has to do with his surprisingly thin skin. He spends way too much energy knocking the press and rival politicians. That’s very correctable.

In 2017, our most-read staff opinion piece was written by Joy Shrum. The essay was entitled “Stop the Mommy Wars.” It was all about an individual who chose to render aid rather than sit back and be judgmental. The subtext of Joy’s opinion piece was “lift each other up instead of tearing each other down.”

That might be a great goal for 2018. You can still have strong opinions, you don’t have to like everybody, you can and should guard your trust, be skeptical and ask questions. Just remember we’ve all got baggage, none of us are perfect and we all are entitled to have opinions.

TheBayNet.com thanks all of its readers. We wish each and every one a Happy New Year!

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of TheBayNet.com management.

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