



Readers Letters

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Mark Twain famously declared that there are “lies, damn lies, and statistics.” But statistics are just information, like how many inches of rain fell last night. It is people, not numbers, that tell statistical lies. Call it what you want, but there are a number of significant statistical yarns being told around town by city hall and a new business group.

In the Sentinel’s July 10 issue, the new (and much appreciated) weekly “City Connect” column reported on the results of the Wilson & Company’s “Comprehensive Plan Survey.” These self-selected surveys were completed by as few as 3% of the adult population (not the 6% Wilson claims), who likely responded because they had an axe to grind. It therefore does not reflect “the priorities and concerns of” nor “what matters most” to most T-or-C residents.

The survey documents were full of typos and errors, had duplicate questions, and many misleading choices (do you want clean water or safe streets?). It was put together so sloppily I would have flunked any student in my undergraduate statistics classes who tried to pass it off as a legitimate survey.

Bottom line: The city is seeking to justify its priorities based on 100% bogus survey data. Lies, damn lies and statistics.

Not to be out done, in her Dear Boss column last week, Frances Luna said that the city has “thrown good money after bad” for several years by “dumping money into downtown ‘art’ and Mainstreet district projects... while the GRT revenue generated by this same group is pennies, compared to retail, food service, construction and even health care.”

She is complaining about the small allocation of city money to the Main Street organization: \$20k for Fiesta, \$45k for Main-Street operations, \$15k for Main-Street promotion/marketing. The purpose of lodgers tax allocations is for promotional events that attract tourism and overnight guests – “heads on beds.”

Ignoring economies of scale, she continues by pointing out that in 2024 retail business generated \$1.8 million GRT, accommodation and food \$865,848, and health care \$532,000; and therefore, the less than \$10k from “the downtown “art” and Mainstreet” was short-changing the city’s investment. Her assertions do not even match up with the visitors from thirty-four states and a dozen countries in Europe and Asia that have signed our Gallery Guest Book.

Her narrative parrots that of the new private-sector (invite-only) group called “Sierra Strong,” led by former city manager and now “Business Development Manager” for PreReal Investments, Bruce Swingle.

The data Frances presents came from a presentation about business revenues and GRT payments by Mr. Swingle at a recent meeting of the group. Having reviewed the data I have determined that most of the categories used to describe the businesses do not match the categories used by the State of New Mexico nor the US Department of Labor, making them hard to verify. I also noticed that the data presented was incomplete; in some cases, as much as 15% of sales and/or GRT data was missing.

It also ignores the fact that tourists do not visit our town because they like our Walmart and Tractor Supply. A New York Times feature last year and June

Smithsonian Magazine that tout our town as a “must visit” historic and artistic location are examples of what draws them here. But these tourists do not just frequent downtown.

They also shop all over town, including Walmart, and eat in restaurants from Los Arcos to Johnny B’s. Many stay at the hotels on the other end of town near Walmart. All this revenue is in the data, but Sierra Strong assumes it does not count because it’s not counted in their “Arts” category and therefore is not considered a return-on-investment for the money invested.

Bottom line: This group is defending its priorities based on manipulated, under-reported and mis-reported government data. Lies, damn lies and statistics.

So, the city is basing its priorities on a phony survey and Sierra Strong is ignoring the significant economic contribution of the Historic/Arts District to business revenue all over town. I suppose we should not be all that surprised. There have been political statisticians around this town for a long time.

s/Art Burger
Owner,
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(Over 350 words paid)

WE ARE MORE THAN OUR FEAR

Fear doesn’t always arrive with sirens. Sometimes it comes quietly – through hesitation, suspicion, or silence. It feels rational. Even protective.

And sometimes, it is. Fear evolved to keep us alive. It’s not the enemy. But when left unexamined, it becomes something else: a quiet architect, shaping how we think, who we trust, and what we’re willing to hear.

Neuroscientist Daniel Goleman calls this an amygdala hijack – when fear overrides rational thought. It reacts quickly, bypassing nuance. Over time, repeated exposure to fear – especially through media, conflict, or uncertainty – can condition us to see threat where there is only difference.

We simplify. We categorize. We cling to what feels familiar, even when it limits us.

Fear does more than close doors – it closes minds. It makes listening feel risky. It turns disagreement into danger. And slowly, it costs us: the courage to speak honestly, the humility to admit we don’t know, and the trust that allows neighbors to disagree and still belong.

In fear, we don’t grow – we bunker. We don’t build – we fortify. And eventually, we forget what it felt like to be open.

But fear isn’t destiny. It’s a signal, not a sentence. We can ask: “Is this fear protecting me – or just keeping me from seeing clearly?”

We can choose curiosity over caution. Understanding over reflex. Humanity over habit.

Courage isn’t the absence of fear – it’s the quiet decision to keep our hearts open anyway.

We are more than our fear. And our communities need the parts of us that fear tries to silence.

s/Aster Lumen
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T-or-C,

AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

“And as in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noah entered into the ark. And they knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be.” (Mt. 24:37-39)

The recent floods in Kerrville, Texas (7/4) and Ruidoso, New Mexico (7/8) are a warning from



Krystie Wear

goals. For example, you might have said that you wanted to pay for most of your children’s college education, or that you’d like to retire at age 55, or that you hope to travel internationally every year during retirement. In fact, you could have many different goals for which you’re saving and investing. When you meet with your financial advisor, you’ll certainly want to ask whether you’re still on track toward meeting these goals. If you are, you can continue with the financial strategies you’ve been following; but if you aren’t, you may need to adjust them. The same is true if your goals have changed. You and your financial advisor will want to build a strategy to address any new or different goals such as emergency cash needs, having adequate insurance protection or estate planning.

Am I taking on too much — or too little — risk? Put market declines in perspective. The financial markets always fluctuate, and these movements will affect the value of your investment portfolio. Suppose you watch the markets closely every day and track their impact on your investments. You may find yourself fretting over their value and wondering whether you’re taking on too much investment risk for your comfort level. Conversely, if during an extended period of market gains your own portfolio appears to be lagging, you might feel that you should be investing more aggressively,

God that we are living in the End Times. Only this time, upon Jesus’ second coming, he will burn up this earth and the heavens above it with fire.

St. Peter says, “But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness? Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat?” (2 Pt. 3:10-12)

Take heed and stop putting your faith in this “whole world seated in wickedness.” (1 Jn. 5:19) Every nation in this world is godless, especially the USA, other Western nations, and apostate Israel.

BTW: The flood in Texas, which killed over 200 people, was on July 4th, a warning to USA idolizers. No nation in this world worships and obeys the one true

— FINANCIAL FOCUS —
Questions To Ask Your Financial Advisor

sively, which entails greater risk. In any case, it’s important to consult with your financial advisor to determine your risk tolerance and use it as a guideline for making investment choices.

How will changes in my life affect my investment strategy? Your life is not static. Over the years, you may experience any number of major events, such as marriage, remarriage, loss of a spouse, birth of children or grandchildren, changing jobs or illness leading to early retirement. When you meet with your financial advisor, you will want to discuss these types of changes, because they can affect your long-term goals and your investment decisions.

How are external forces affecting my investment portfolio? Generally speaking, you will want to create an investment strategy based on your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. And, as mentioned, you may need to adjust your strategy based on changes in your life. But should you also make changes based on outside forces, such as interest rate movements, political events, inflation, new tax legislation or news affecting industries in which you have invested substantially? Try not to make long-term investment decisions based on short-term news. Yet, talk with your financial advisor to make sure your investment portfolio and spending strategy are not out of alignment with relevant external factors.

By making these and other inquiries, you can help yourself stay informed about your overall investment picture and what moves, if any, you should make to keep advancing toward your goals. A financial advisor is there to provide you with valuable guidance — so take full advantage of it.

[This article was written by Edward Jones and provided by Krystie Wear, your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor, 405 North Date St. T-or-C, NM, 575-894-9054.]

Edward Jones, Member SIPC

God, the true Catholic God.

Jesus said, “Yet the Son of man when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?” (Lk. 18:8) So stop idolizing apostate Israel and the USA. “Pride goeth before destruction, and the spirit is lifted up before a fall.” (Prv. 16:18)

The USA is going to suffer the same fate as pagan Rome, which was lifted up as the greatest empire ever, only to fall all the harder. “Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth.” (Amos 9:8)

Just remember, when all is said and done only very few men will be saved. “How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life and few there are that find it!” (Mt. 7:14) So stop idolizing family members and friends. Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth. I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s enemies shall be they of his

own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” (Mt. 10:34-37)

This current flood did not discriminate. It killed men, women, and children. Contemplate upon this: Everyone who is in hell is either a father, mother, husband, wife, son, or daughter. If you idolize them, you will go to hell for that alone. And there is no love in hell, but only abject hatred, pain, agony, and despair.

Repent and convert before it is too late. For your only hope of salvation, please visit my website at www.JohnTheBaptist.us

s/Richard Joseph Michael
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WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO

SIERRA COUNTY SENTINEL

A subsidiary of GPK Media, LLC • A New Mexico Corporation • July 17, 2025 • Volume 58, Number 3912

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Published each week on Friday by GPK Media LLC, dba Sierra County Sentinel (USPS 495-940), 217 E. Third Ave., Truth or Consequences, New Mexico 87901. Circulation of the Sierra County Sentinel exceeds 4,000 printed copies weekly, with an additional 600+ e-subscribers.

Copies of the Sierra County Sentinel are available via second-class mail, home delivery, store racks and on-line subscriptions.

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Periodicals: Postage Rates paid at Truth or Consequences, New Mexico 87901-9999.

DEADLINE: Ad Copy Reservation – 5 p.m. Monday • ALL OTHERS 5 p.m. Tuesdays.

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