

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

Drain Arizona’s swamp

Sneaky Republican state legislators preserve predatory speed cameras

Sometimes the desert can turn into a swamp. It happened last week in Phoenix, when Arizona politicians gathered for the end of the legislative session to tell their constituents one thing before proceeding to do the opposite. There’s no better example of legislative legerdemain than the state House’s decision, by a 34-22 vote, to send Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs a bill banning speed cameras statewide. The measure’s goal is to “Ensure that the purpose of law enforcement remains to serve and protect and not to generate revenue for governments.”

Everything lawmakers did appeared to be proper and correct on the surface, but state Rep. Justin Wilmeth, Phoenix Republican, called out the shenanigans on the House floor. “This bill will pass, and it will get vetoed. We know that,” he said.

Two years ago, Ms. Hobbs cited fake photo enforcement industry statistics to justify vetoing an identical bill. Instead of wasting time on a doomed proposition, the chamber could have acted on the Senate-passed resolution that would have created a statewide referendum on the issue. Such resolutions bypass the governor’s desk and allow voters to decide.

The Republican leadership delayed final consideration of that resolution until late in the evening two days later, knowing four Republicans would be absent. Had the measure been brought up earlier, it would have had the votes required for passage.

Democrats were also in on the game. State Reps. Alma Hernandez and Consuelo Hernandez voted in favor of the ban they knew would be vetoed, but they mysteriously had a change of heart just when their votes would have helped put the same ban on the ballot.

“It’s almost as if we’re more interested

in making a show of solving the problem than actually solving the problem,” said state Rep. Alexander Kolodin, Maricopa County Republican.

Lawmakers understand public sentiment better than anyone else, and they have no doubt that a plebiscite would guarantee the elimination of these money-printing devices. Residents of Peoria, Sierra Vista and Tucson have already voted by a 2-1 margin to outlaw photo ticketing within city limits.

Politicians have a financial incentive to ignore the people who put them in office. Under the “clean elections” program, a 10% cut of each traffic citation is placed in a fund that is distributed to the campaign war chests of candidates, rescuing them from the indignity of having to work to raise cash.

“The photo radar scam is the way that our friends across the aisle fund their war machine,” Mr. Kolodin explained. “They run candidates in noncompetitive districts and then funnel the money — taxpayer money — over to candidates in competitive districts all on the backs of hardworking Arizona drivers who are denied due process when they receive their traffic tickets.”

Like their counterparts in Washington, Republican leaders in the Grand Canyon State claim they will drive a stake into the heart of the photo radar industry “next year.” The same empty promise has been repeated for nearly 18 years.

The expected veto by Ms. Hobbs tees up the topic in what is certain to be a heated gubernatorial contest. U.S. Rep. Andy Biggs is stepping down in 2026 in the hopes of securing the Republican nomination for that race, a move that President Trump has endorsed.

Given his legitimate efforts to stop photo radar during his former statehouse service, Mr. Biggs may have what it takes to drain the Phoenix swamp.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dinged for using the system you’re told to use

Do you ever get the impression that no one at the big three credit bureaus has ever used their own scoring system? Has anyone there watched their score drop 10 points because their algorithm didn’t like how much of their credit limit was used?

This algorithm assumes that you have no liquid assets to pay off your credit card. You could be the richest man on earth but have a bad credit score because you like to use your credit card to pay bills. Elon Musk could right now be staring at a score of 500,

scratching his head in disbelief.

This algorithm also doesn’t like it when you use it. I doubt if the algorithm writers ever watched their scores drop 10 points because they used it to do something crazy, like apply for a home loan preapproval. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a “soft pull” or a “hard inquiry”; there should be no penalty for doing what the system is meant for.

No gas station owner wants their customers to come to their gas station, pay for fuel and then get hit with a penalty on their way out. For algorithm

writers a little fuzzy on the probability of someone paying their next payment on time with a 40-year record of paying every bill on time, let me help you: It’s 100%. That person’s score should be 850.

I understand that the credit scoring system was created to help lenders, not borrowers, but with 206 million Americans having credit scores, the goal has to be perfection.

BEN FURLEIGH
Port Charlotte, Florida

Israel is right to delay Netanyahu’s trial

President Trump’s recent posts on Truth Social urging the Israeli courts to cancel the criminal proceedings against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu surely broke a deadlock. After many failed attempts by Mr. Netanyahu’s attorneys to seek a postponement of his testimony in the government’s cases against him on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, the Israeli courts yielded this week by granting the prime minister a two-week delay. Sometimes it takes an outsider to see things with clarity.

Mr. Trump didn’t waste a minute. Within days of the U.S.-Israeli tour de force strike on Iran’s well-ensconced nuclear facilities, Mr. Trump posted on Truth Social, “It is terrible what they are doing in Israel to Bibi Netanyahu. ... He is a War Hero ... who did a fabulous job working with the United States to bring Great Success in getting rid of the dangerous Nuclear

threat in Iran.” Explaining that the U.S. and Israel are in the throes of intense hostage negotiations to end the war in the Gaza Strip and that Mr. Netanyahu, as prime minister of the Jewish state, is urgently needed for these talks, Mr. Trump followed up his post the next day with an ultimatum: “LET BIBI GO, HE’S GOT A BIG JOB TO DO!”

In response, the Israeli courts granted Mr. Netanyahu a postponement of his testimony, citing diplomatic and security issues. As an American citizen, I am certainly very proud to have a president who can show courage when the situation calls for it.

But Mr. Trump went further. In his social posts and his statements to the press, he generously expressed gratitude to Mr. Netanyahu for working so closely with him on such an important mission. Mr. Trump recognized how, in strategically degrading and

weakening Iran’s defenses (destroying missile launchers, eliminating nuclear scientists and military commandos and taking control of its skies), Israel prepared the most favorable setting for the U.S. to put on display before the world its 30,000-pound bomb capable of penetrating the thickest of geological structures. The structures it penetrated housed IR-6 centrifuges, which are the most advanced ones used to enrich uranium to weapons-grade levels.

We see that Mr. Trump’s appeals to Israel were indeed heeded. Now it’s time for the Jewish state to question itself. Why is it engaging in a witch hunt against its own prime minister? Are we not our brother’s keeper? Or have we sadly devolved into our brother’s prosecutor?

AMY NEUSTEIN
Fort Lee, New Jersey

Falling for it every time

For over 1,000 years, radical Islam has taken over nation upon nation from the inside out. The strategy is almost flawless. First, come with a few and integrate into society. Two, gather more believers, then make a foothold into local and regional political power. Three, when you have enough of the majority, enact

Islamic law.

This has been going on since the Prophet Muhammad, yet we fall for it virtually everywhere. Why? Because it’s a slow, methodical invasion that takes either a generation or several generations. Look at Western Europe, Dearborn, Michigan, and now New York City, where last month Zohran

Mamdani, an avowed socialist and Jew hater, won the Democratic mayoral primary.

He’s showing everyone what he is, and New York City is still going to fall for it.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS
Decatur, Alabama



When it comes to critical minerals, beware of shiny objects

Nonexperts setting up ‘mining’ companies give the industry a black eye

By Marc LeVier

For the past 30-plus years, the average U.S. citizen has largely forgotten about the contributions, societal impact and inherent value of critical minerals and mining in general.

In 1996, the Clinton administration attempted to put the nail in the coffin and shuttered the U.S. Bureau of Mines. After 85 years of service, the bureau was placed on a shelf and no longer funded. Subsequently, various other related departments either disappeared or were assigned to other federal government agencies, such as the U.S. Geological Survey.

In recent years, the world has started to wake up to the fact that critical minerals are essential to everyday life. Every government created critical mineral lists, which were similar but not identical. The USGS has created a critical minerals list, but it is backward-focused and misses future opportunities and growth factors. For example, it does not include copper. After considerable debate and uproar, the Energy Department added copper and a few more elements to its own list, which contains more than 45 elements that need to be supplied by mineral production. Most of these are supplied to the U.S. by other countries, such as China and Russia.

As a result, mining has quickly returned to favor, and the media publish articles on minerals and mining daily. Thankfully, there is now a push to resuscitate the Bureau of Mines.

However, this growing momentum also has a downside: New “mining” startups are popping up everywhere. Wall Street executives who have never stepped on a mine site are allegedly becoming instant experts. They are found on panels at critical mineral conferences, testifying to congressional subcommittees, getting airtime on cable news and generally making themselves look foolish. Writ large, they are all promising to save America with unachievable timelines and mineral production claims that aren’t economical.

Tech billionaires, who were once fond of funding opposition to mining projects, are becoming overnight investors and supposed heroes. Add to this former presidents, prime ministers, senators, retired military officers and Cabinet members, and you now have the greatest collection of nonexperts setting strategies and seeking government grants and equity loans to develop mineral deposits that have little to no chance of success.

These businesses are not seasoned mining companies. They have one or two potential projects and no revenue production, and they promote these projects to raise capital, hoping that a midtier or larger company will buy them. Meanwhile, their promoters sell their self-issued shares and walk away with their pockets heavily lined.

A prime example of these supposed miners is KoBold Metals. Based in Berkeley, California, the company has generated significant (and misplaced) media attention

with glitter-ridden marketing about the use of artificial intelligence in the discovery of mineral deposits and forecasts of producing mineral products in record time.

KoBold claims it is “building the world’s largest collection of geoscience information.” The reality, however, is that KoBold is an unproven company with no track record and likely little intention to follow through on its commitments. To date, AI has not been successful in identifying any new mineral deposits.

This year, KoBold attracted significant investments from green tech billionaires Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos. Despite this fundraising success, the company lacks the knowledge and expertise to develop a mineral discovery to production. This lack of skills and proper team expertise will cause schedule delays along their entire timelines, resulting in capital overruns and increased operating costs.

The truth is simple: There are no shortcuts to obtaining permits, operating plans or successful production starts, no matter how famous the names associated with it or their total net worth. Meanwhile, the media, Wall Street types and now senior Trump administration officials are blinded by the shiny glitter, along with a desire to be on center stage.

Here’s a case in point. Businessman Massad Boulos, the State Department’s new senior adviser for Africa (and Tiffany Trump’s father-in-law) reportedly helped broker a deal for KoBold to purchase a lithium deposit in Congo. According to a May 7 article in Politico’s E&E News: KoBold “said the Trump administration helped shepherd through the deal and in a message on X thanked Secretary of State Marco Rubio; Massad Boulos, the department’s senior adviser for Africa; and Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi for ‘opening doors for U.S. investment’ and agreeing on a framework for the investment.” The Trump administration may come to regret this support.

The overall project management skills required to form the experienced teams, properly scope the engineering studies and execute engineering (followed by procurement and construction) takes years and substantial, ongoing investment. No matter how shiny the suit, how ivory the tower or how big the net worth, there is no substitution for real mining companies and experienced mining workers.

Responsible mining is a complex endeavor that requires a multitude of disciplines, experiences and skills. Anything less, such as what KoBold is promoting, gives the actual mining industry a reputational black eye. Hopefully, policymakers in Washington and states nationwide will start to understand the difference. Securing America’s critical minerals future is no task for amateurs.

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