

**QT Opinion**

**Supply Chain Issues Affect Almost Everything, But Surge In Port Pollution Threatens Our Lungs**

SUPPLY chain problems have caused a massive backlog of diesel-spewing cargo ships outside the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and disrupted the movement of goods across the nation. But the logjam has also brought an explosion in health-damaging air pollution.

The California Air Resources Board estimates that ships alone are pumping an additional 20 tons of smog-forming nitrogen oxides into the air each day — the equivalent of adding 5.8 million passenger cars to the region — while adding as much lung-damaging diesel particulate matter as nearly 100,000 big rig trucks. Monitoring data also show that black carbon, an indicator of diesel exhaust, has increased in the port area.

That's bad news for harbor-area communities like Wilmington and West Long Beach that already suffer the region's highest cancer risk from air pollution. Communities far from the ports are feeling it too. The greatest impacts have been in Inland Empire communities such as Mira Loma, which according to air quality officials have seen levels of fine particulate matter worsen with the influx of ship pollution. A state analysis earlier this year estimated that 20 premature deaths from cardiovascular disease could be attributed to increased pollution from ships idling off the coast.

Despite that, LA and Long Beach leaders still show no urgency to cut port pollution.

The foot dragging has gone on far too long, and it is time for regulators to step in to protect public health. The ports are the region's largest single source of pollution. Yet leaders at the South Coast Air Quality Management District have spent years negotiating voluntary agreements with the ports to get them to commit to reducing their emissions, to no avail. They should end that process and finally do their job: Impose regulations to force the ports to clean up.

Southern California is still the nation's smoggiest region and cannot clean its air to federal health standards without dramatic pollution cuts at the ports.

In 2017, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia pledged to transform the publicly owned port complex into a largely zero-emission operation by 2035. But they have done little since then to cut emissions in the near term, even as air quality improvements at the complex have tapered off and smog has worsened to its highest levels in decades.

In March 2020, the ports agreed to set a fee of \$20 per shipping container to raise funds to help truckers switch to zero-emission and methane-gas-fueled models. Not only is the fee

too low to meet smog and greenhouse gas reduction targets, but the ports delayed it from taking effect, even as a pandemic-fueled buying surge and e-commerce boom pushed record volumes of cargo through the complex. The ports won't start collecting the fee until next spring.

Tackling port pollution is complicated by the fact that most of it is generated by ships, trucks, locomotives and other mobile pollution sources that local air quality officials do not directly regulate.

But there's a way around that. For well over a decade the South Coast AQMD has talked about using its authority under state law to regulate the ports as indirect sources of pollution, but hasn't followed through. The ports, and key members on the air district's governing board, have opposed regulation. So instead the district has spent the last few years in closed-door negotiations with the ports to try to get them to sign a voluntary agreement to clean their pollution.

In August, the air district board voted to give the ports a few more months to reach an agreement before pivoting to rule-making mode. That time is soon running out, with no sign of a breakthrough, especially with the Port of Los Angeles.

Port leaders, and the politicians who appoint them, have long gauged their success by the number of shipping containers moved. Perhaps if they were forced to measure progress by the number of bad air days, cancer cases or asthma attacks prevented, there would be more urgency to transform their operations.

Freight pollution is a major, ongoing threat to public health, air quality and the climate, and we cannot settle for half-measures and hope they make a dent. We need regulations with strict and enforceable timelines, targets and penalties that will ensure health-damaging emissions ratchet down steadily in the coming years until they reach zero.

The failure to swiftly clean the air does ongoing damage to the health of millions of people in Southern California, including children whose developing lungs are stunted by pollution. They cannot wait any longer for clean air and its health benefits.

Fortunately, regulators have a model. In May, the South Coast air board adopted a similar rule on indirect pollution that requires thousands of warehouse distribution centers to reduce emissions from trucks and other equipment associated with their operations. If the private sector can be required to reduce its pollution, surely the publicly owned ports, and their leaders, who so often voice their commitments to climate action and environmental justice, can be held accountable for their pledges too.

**Do Americans Really Want Politics To Be Normal Again?**

*Democrats and Republicans disagree about what a return to normalcy would look like, so they should just focus on the basics of governing*

ROBERT A GEORGE

AFTER five years of political, economic and social upheaval in America, this month has seen some hints of a return to normalcy. The question is whether the two political parties (and their rabid ideological bases) are willing to settle for the benefits of "normal" politics instead of going for the "transformative" variety — which is tempting but almost always destructive.

Consider the events of November so far: Republicans won a gubernatorial race in Virginia by running an issues-based appeal to voters, particularly on education. Democrats passed legislation filled with hundreds of billions of dollars to build and repair physical infrastructure in all 50 states.

Are the parties reverting to form? It's not quite that simple. But they're getting there.

In Virginia, for example, Democrats say that Republicans won by appealing to racism, which is how they view the education issue, especially the attack on "critical race theory." But education was a flashpoint in Virginia long before CRT was on the political radar. The "normal" that Virginia voters wanted to return to was one in which schools are open on a regular basis. That frustration boiled over into other subjects, such as curriculum (which was much more accessible to parents due to remote learning).

It's not unusual for a governor's race to turn on the issue of education, after all — or on property taxes, which was the issue in New Jersey, where Gov. Phil Murphy nearly lost reelection because of it. When he doubled down on a prior statement that New Jersey is "probably not your state" if all you care about is taxes, it nearly proved fatal. But, again, this was a perfectly normal partisan fight, even if the potency of the issue caught Democrats by surprise.

In Washington, meanwhile, House Democrats passed a bipartisan infrastructure bill already approved by the Senate. Once upon a time, this process would barely



warrant a mention. But in this partisan era, bipartisanship is a dirty word.

One of the challenges of any "return to normalcy," of course, is a question: Which normal?

Part of former President Donald Trump's appeal in 2016 was a rejection of the "normal" politics of the previous few decades, which largely failed working-class America. With his anti-establishment, "I alone can fix it" rhetoric, he promised to make Washington functional.

To say that he failed to deliver would be a huge understatement. To take just one example: His repeated declarations of "infrastructure week" became a running joke that President Biden himself poked at. What fewer people remember

is that, in April 2019, Mr. Trump struck a deal with Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer to spend \$2 trillion on infrastructure. Weeks later, Mr. Trump reneged because congressional committees were investigating him.

Fast forward to this month, when Mr. Trump criticized Republicans for voting for an infrastructure bill costing less than half the one he supported just two years ago. Trump acolytes such as Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene called the Republicans who supported the bill traitors.

This is the dilemma for Mr. Biden: Americans desperately want to return to pre-pandemic normal, but not necessarily Trump-era normal, or even pre-

Trump-era normal. Mr. Biden was elected to return to the "good" parts of normal (schools staying open, for example) without the bad parts (petulant presidential meltdowns).

The test for Democrats is whether they can resist the temptation to transform American society and government through social welfare programs. For Republicans, it's whether they can resist the siren song of Trumpism. The main challenge for both parties, and the key to any return to normal for the country, is simply to show competence at the basics of governing.

*(Robert A. George writes editorials on education and other policy issues for Bloomberg Opinion.)*

**For Caregivers, The Menu Or Venue Shouldn't Define Thanksgiving**

PETER ROSENBERGER

WHILE the public face of Thanksgiving projects a Norman Rockwell painting, stress and sadness better describe the holiday for many of America's millions of family caregivers.

Numerous caregivers fear that this may be the last Thanksgiving with their loved ones. Others feel obligated to get it right and make sure all traditions are followed. Undergirding everything lies an ample supply of guilt over missteps and things undone.

Fear, obligation and guilt surround those caring for chronically impaired loved ones. Caregivers often find themselves careening into the darkness of isolation, resentment and despair. Yet, the way through for caregivers is the same when driving in a fog: slow down, use low-beam headlights and stay calm.

Although most caregivers daily live as high-functioning multitaskers, holidays often send us into warp speed.

The faster the pace, however, the worse the collision. Compounding the heartache, caregivers often envision the crash before it happens and choose to live in future wreckage.

Like an amputee with phantom pain from a limb no longer there, caregivers hurt in reverse from things yet to occur — or indeed may never happen. Slowing down allows us to live in the present, deal with the moment and respond without reacting.

Drivers using high-beam lights in a fog quickly find themselves blinded by the glare. Trying to peer too far ahead does the same for caregivers. With compromised vision and a treacherous road, the rule of thumb is to "go at the speed you're comfortable slamming into the ditch at." The hustle of shop-



ping and attempting to fulfill every request made by a loved one leads caregivers to race recklessly until the inevitable wreck occurs.

Arriving tardy but safely always trumps sitting in the cab of a tow truck or the back of an ambulance.

If the pace of the holiday causes you to plop down at the table with clenched fists, we missed the point.

Not only do millions of family caregivers daily face severe challenges, but they also struggle against lapsing into self-pity and

anger. Although grievances usually overpower things that invite thankfulness, resentment cannot thrive in the presence of gratitude.

When dealing with impairments like Alzheimer's, traumatic brain injuries, mental illness or addictions, countless caregivers push themselves to extremes to appease a disease. Words that erupt from an impaired mind can leave devastating wounds on those who serve. Feelings get hurt when disease-affected nostalgia collides with a caregiver's fear and guilt. Regardless of what others demand, dressing can come from a box. Cranberry sauce out of a can is still tasty. Lumps in mashed potatoes are not cardinal sins.

Gratitude defines the Thanksgiving holiday — not the menu or the venue.

At this year's table — whether in the dining room, a restaurant, diner, hospital, rehab center or hospice — grab the hand next to yours a bit tighter. If alone, clasp your

own as you give thanks. Take an extra moment to identify one thing for which to be grateful. If it helps, use the alphabet, and find something that starts with "A." Identify something or someone that begins with each successive letter and offer thanks. In only a matter of moments, watch how your demeanor changes, your stress level lowers, and your heart receives the air it so desperately needs.

Grief and gratitude are not mutually exclusive — and postponing either only diminishes one's quality of life. While the heartache associated with caregiving seems to leave little room for feeling grateful, even dire circumstances cannot drive away all beauty or soul-stirring moments.

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others." — Marcus Cicero.

*(Peter Rosenberger hosts the radio program "Hope for the Caregiver.")*