

# PERSPECTIVE

## How to kill local journalism in Florida



**Your Turn**  
Pamela C. Marsh and Virginia Hamrick  
Guest columnists

We write in celebration of Sunshine Week, a nationally recognized event dedicated to open government. Sunshine Week began here in Florida 20 years ago as “Sunshine Sunday,” originally launched by The Florida Society of

News Editors. The goal was to bring attention to the importance of access to government records, public participation in government meetings, and your “right to know” what your governments are doing at every level.

Each and every time Florida voters have been asked to approve a constitutional amendment expanding public access to government meetings and records, citizens have voted overwhelmingly in favor of greater transparency. Many elected officials, however, do not share their constituents’ love for open government.

This year, as we come to the end of

### Special edition of Letters to the Editor

Our readers share their opinions today about the Florida legislators approving a bill banning most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Read the letters inside.

the 2022 legislative session, there is little to celebrate. The well-documented decline of local journalism, and the resulting development of news deserts, has buttressed Florida’s wall of secrecy. The assault on transparency has, in

turn, resulted in greater damage to the free press, making it harder for journalists to do their jobs — and for Floridians to evaluate their leaders and hold them to account.

Public records and meetings laws meant to ensure government accountability, are under siege by the Legislature. Journalists, of course, are not the only ones who suffer. The decline of local journalism leads to a less-informed, and less politically active, public. State and local leaders are likewise less accountable to the people they serve.

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### WAR IN UKRAINE



Juan Morales, owner of Western Fence Supply in Fort Myers, painted a “We stand with Ukraine” sign that stands along Evans Avenue in Fort Myers. He painted the sign earlier this week. Morales said “I think the world should stand against him and unite to fight this bully and bring peace to the country.” ANDREW WEST/THE NEWS-PRESS

## What if Putin feels cornered by sanctions?

**Your Turn**  
Lew Paper  
Guest columnist

As the Russian assault on Ukraine moves forward to the horror of the world, there is reportedly a growing concern among American decision-makers that the sanctions and other commercial pressures on Russia will eventually make Russian president Vladimir Putin feel cornered and then lead to disastrous consequences for the world.

According to one account in the New York Times, American intelligence officials have advised the White House and Congress of Putin’s tendency “to double down when he feels trapped” and that one of his reactions might be a willingness “to take the war beyond Ukraine’s borders.”

As evidence of that tendency, those officials pointed to Putin’s recent announcement that he had elevated Russia’s nuclear arsenal

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## What would Reagan have done on Ukraine?



**Your Turn**  
Karna Small Bodman  
Guest columnist

Having the honor of serving six years in the Reagan White House, first as Deputy Press Secretary, then as Senior Director of his National Security Council staff, some Naples friends, distraught over the plight of Ukrainians under attack by the murderous Vladimir Putin have asked the question, “What do you think President Reagan would have done?”

While I would not presume to “know” what would be in the mind of the man I consider to be the best president in my lifetime, I can look back and reflect on many of his instincts and actions, especially his commitment to freedom and use of the phrase “We Win, They Lose,” when it came to dealing with the (then) Soviet Union.

**First**, he believed in leading by example. One of his first acts as president was to propose a large increase in our depleted defense budget to show the world he truly meant to achieve “Peace Through Strength.”



President Ronald Reagan talks with Deputy Press Secretary Karna Small Bodman in the State Dining room at a luncheon for Editors in 1983.

WHITE HOUSE ARCHIVES/SPECIAL TO THE NAPLES DAILY NEWS

**Second**, he worked to enhance our country’s and Europe’s energy resources by supporting the Alaska pipeline, reducing regulations on energy companies, pushing for more drilling on federal lands, encouraging the Netherlands and Norway to develop new natural gas resources while stopping

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# Bodman

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an early Russian pipeline.

**Third**, when presented with an opportunity to help countries yearning for freedom from the Soviet yoke, he set up a (then secret) operation with Lech Walsesa and Pope John Paul II to shore up the Solidarity Union Movement with funds, communications, and enhanced intelligence, thus laying the groundwork for their uprising against massive Soviet occupiers and eventual declaration of Poland’s independence.

**Fourth**, he pioneered a breakthrough program to develop a missile defense system, then worked with allies to de-

ploy the technology to stop missile attacks in many parts of the world.

Yes, my friends say, “but what about now?” OK, let’s apply some of those same principles to today and see how they might have precluded the assault on Ukraine.

Here is what I believe Reagan would **NOT HAVE DONE**:

He would **not** have offered such a minuscule raise in today’s defense budget while requesting trillions more for domestic spending, which not only is raising inflation to historic levels but shows our enemies we’re simply not serious about maintaining the best defense ever.

He would **not** have directed the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan and abandoned not only Americans but

thousands of Afghans who aided our forces there, indicating to all how we could behave in such a weak and feckless manner.

He would **not** have been so slow to send defensive weapons such as anti-tank Javelins, Stingers, other missile defense systems and fighter jets to Ukraine when it was obvious from Putin’s declarations months and years earlier that his aim was to reconstitute the old Soviet Union.

He would **not** have unilaterally sabotaged our own energy independence, killing the Keystone pipeline, cancelling permits, and increasing regulations thus necessitating our continued importation of Russian oil and gas.

He would **not** have waited to declare massive sanctions on Russia’s financial

systems, oligarchs, and Putin himself, but worked with our allies to put them in place before any invasion of Ukraine, saying that they would only be lifted after Russian troops were withdrawn. Reagan’s actions would have echoed Wayne Gretzky’s line, “You don’t skate to the puck; you skate to where the puck is going to be.”

Granted, some actions such as sending more aid and arms to Ukraine are now taking place, but we all pray it isn’t “Too Little, Too Late,” as the brave Ukrainians fight on to save their country.

*Karna Small Bodman, a Naples resident, served as Senior Director, National Security Council staff in the Reagan White House and is the author of the book Trust but Verify. www.karnabodman.com.*

# Paper

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to a “combat ready” status.

History provides ample support for that concern of American officials.

Foreign leaders — especially those bent on war — may have no compunction about expanding hostilities if the only alternative is economic capitulation.

There is no better example than Japan in 1941.

The United States had initiated sanctions against Japan in 1938 to reverse Japan’s military aggression in China. By the summer of 1941 — as Japan’s military incursions spread to Southeast Asia — those sanctions were broadened to prohibit the export of much needed oil to Japan as well as all other American-made products.

American officials hoped and expected that the sanctions would bring the Empire of the Rising Sun to its knees.

The sanctions did in fact cripple the Japanese economy. Rice was being rationed.

There was little gasoline for cars because Japan’s stockpile of oil had to be reserved for military uses, and so most of the few cars traversing Tokyo’s streets had to be fitted with a charcoal engine.

Even imported coffee was unavailable. It had been replaced by another brew, about which, the New York Times correspondent reported, “it was better



**A protest sign says what many people are thinkin in light of Russia's attack on Ukraine.** TAYA GRAY/THE DESERT SUN

not to ask too many questions.”

By the beginning of November 1941, American Ambassador Joseph Grew reported to Secretary of State Cordell Hull that American sanctions had achieved their intended goal: “the greater part of Japan’s commerce has been lost, Japanese industrial production has been drastically curtailed, and Japan’s national resources have been depleted.”

But Grew warned Hull that he should not take comfort from the result. “In Japan,” he advised the Secretary of State, “a psychology of despair leads characteristically to a do-or-die reaction.” And so, said the American ambassador, it would be “short-sighted” to believe that the

sanctions would force Japan to yield to American demands.

Quite the contrary.

Grew stressed that Japan was prepared to initiate a “suicidal” war with the United States and that “armed conflict with the United States may come with dangerous and dramatic suddenness.” For Japanese leaders, said Grew, annihilation in a suicidal war with the United States was better than the humiliation of succumbing to American pressure.

Hull did not give much credence to Grew’s warning, and the rest, of course, is history.

To be sure, there are differences between the circumstances surrounding

Japan’s leaders in 1941 and those surrounding Putin today. But there is a remarkable commonality.

By 1941, Japan’s relations with the United States — like Putin’s more recent relations with the United States — had been marked by long-standing hostility. (Japan was reviled by President Theodore Roosevelt’s compromise in 1905 for termination of the Russo-Japanese War because it deprived Japan of the fruits of its successful military campaigns, and, while working in China in the early 1900s, Hull adviser Stanley Hornbeck vividly remembered hearing about Japanese students talking about the “war which Japan was going to have with the United States.”)

Like Putin’s affiliation with China, Japan’s leaders believed they could find solace only with America’s enemies (and thus signed a Tripartite Alliance with Nazi Germany and fascist Italy in 1940). And like Putin, Japanese leaders’ personal pride had a higher priority than their country’s economic well-being.

None of this means that the United States and other countries should retreat from sanctions and other economic pressures against Putin and Russia. But it does mean that such sanctions and pressures could have unintended consequences.

It’s all a matter of remembering that forewarned is forearmed.

*Lew Paper is a Naples resident and is the author of In the Cauldron: Terror, Tension, and the American Ambassador's Struggle to Avoid Pearl Harbor.*



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