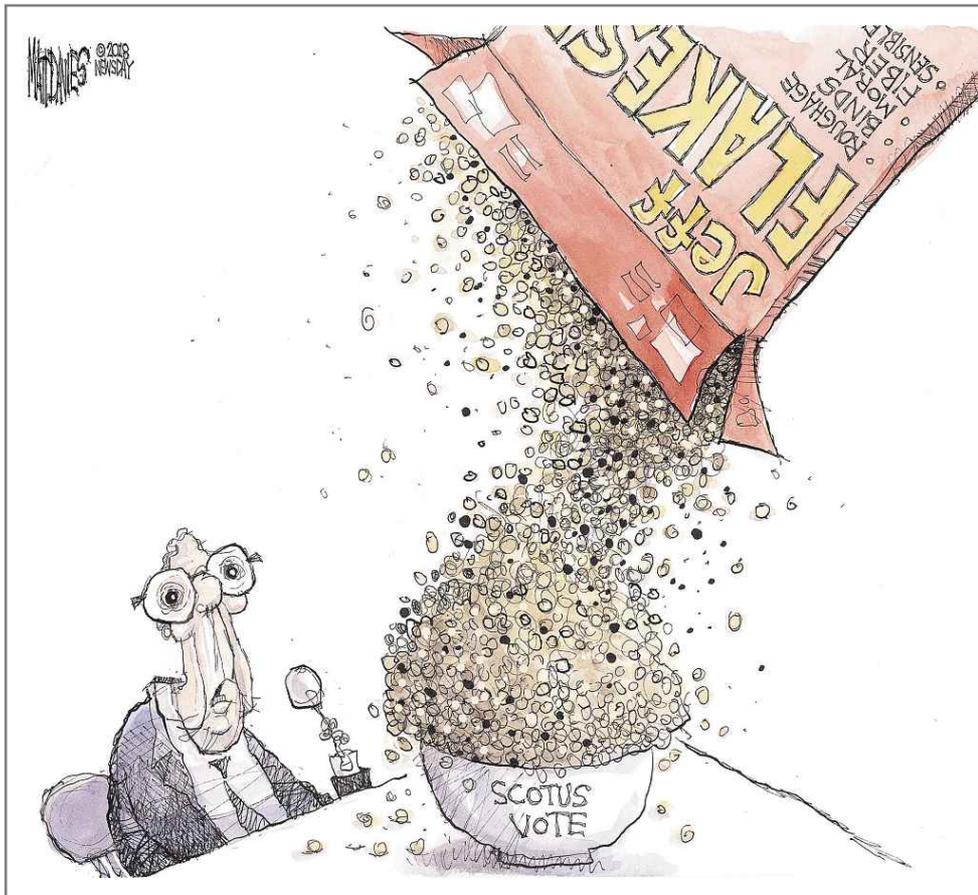


MATT DAVIES



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**BOTTOM LINES**

**Elon Musk recently announced** that billionaire Yusaku Maezawa as the first space tourist slated to take a trip on SpaceX's Blue Falcon rocket to the moon in 2023. It's impossible to predict exactly how SpaceX's rocket to the moon might affect our culture, but it's safe to say that if it gets off the ground, it certainly will.

— JOELLE RENSTROM, THE WASHINGTON POST

**As a political tactic**, exploiting family splits is tempting. If candidates' own flesh and blood won't support them, why should voters? But it's hard not to feel a pang of sympathy for candidates whose families turn against them.

— JEFF GREENFIELD, THE WASHINGTON POST

**The potential costs of climate change**, already the subject of heated debate, might actually be understated. It's not just the potential disruptions to weather systems, agriculture and coastal cities; it's that we might respond to those problems in stupid and destructive ways.

— TYLER COWEN, BLOOMBERG OPINION

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**Vicious attacks on the planet**

OPINION

Eased rules on drilling, endangered species add to a bad week for the environment



Michael Dobie

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This was a lousy week for the environment, even beyond the pollution emanating from hearing rooms in the nation's capital.

Republicans revved up efforts to weaken the Endangered Species Act to make it easier to take species off the protected list when their numbers have allegedly recovered. The apparent spark was a court decision last week to restore protections for some 700 grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park. The law, while successful and popular, might need some updating after 45 years. But a GOP defanging is not that.

Then came word of the completion of the Trump administration's plan to roll back major safety regulations on offshore drilling adopted after the horrific Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010 — including junking a requirement that oil company equipment be designed to handle extreme weather conditions, like the frequent hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and eliminating independent checks on safety measures on drilling platforms. If you think this makes no sense, you're right.

From northern Alaska came word that a lake there is hissing and bubbling — from the powerful greenhouse gas methane being released from the underlying lake bed. Methane, it turns out, is being released from lakes across the arctic. These lakes are forming in the soft permafrost soil as it thaws. As it thaws, the permafrost, which contains huge amounts of carbon, releases carbon dioxide. And the methane and carbon dioxide further warm the planet, and that further warms the permafrost, and then we're facing what could be a particularly nasty feedback loop.

Spiking that anxiety was reporting that found that the Trump administration is forecasting a 7-de-

gree rise in global temperatures by 2100. That's about 4 degrees Celsius, which scientists say would be catastrophic. The projection was in an environmental-impact statement from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration intended to justify President Donald Trump's decision to freeze car and light truck fuel efficiency standards in 2020. And here's the best part: The statement basically said that since the world already is going to hell in a global warming handbag, raising temperatures a little more by increasing emissions via a freeze on fuel efficiency standards isn't going to do much more damage. Either way, we're fried!

But the coup de grace was delivered by a report that found that climate change is taking a greater toll on our national parks than anywhere else in the country. Yes, our national parks. Our natural cathedrals and refuges. Hosts of breathtaking beauty and biological diversity.

Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin found that temperatures in the 417 parks rose twice as much as elsewhere in the country from 1895 to 2010, and the parks saw greater decreases in rainfall. Iconic features are at risk.

The glaciers in Glacier National Park are melting. The gnarled namesake yucca palms of Joshua Tree National Park are under stress. Drought and wildfires are thinning the forests of Yellowstone National Park, with implications for its entire ecosystem. Rising sea levels and saltwater intrusion threaten the Everglades.

It all makes sense. National parks are often in areas more sensitive to changes in climate — like higher elevations where thinner air warms more quickly, or coastlines, or the already-arid Southwest.

As our nation continues to develop, plants and animals increasingly depend on the protection offered by national parks. Their trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere. Their watersheds store vast amounts of water.

It's one thing to say the national parks are America's best idea. It's quite another to make sure that idea stays alive.

Michael Dobie is a member of Newsday's editorial board.

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