

OPINION

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EDITORIALS

The newspaper's view

REP. CHOPP'S LEGACY OF SERVICE WILL LIVE ON, TO WASHINGTON'S BENEFIT

Whether it was the tiny pieces of paper he used to scribble notes, or hours spent corralling diverse members of his caucus to pass legislation, state Rep. Frank Chopp used his influence to help form Washington's political landscape.

Chopp, a powerful figure in Washington politics, died suddenly Saturday at 71.

First elected to the House in 1994 to represent the 43rd Legislative District, Chopp served as Speaker of the House from 1999 to 2019, making him the state's longest serving speaker.

During his tenure, Chopp drew from his Bremerton roots as the son of a union electrician and a school cafeteria worker and later from his years as a Seattle community organizer. He championed legislation on education and anti-poverty issues, such as paid family leave, housing affordability and Apple Health and Homes.

As speaker he grew the state's Democratic Party in prominence and power. He mentored many Washingtonians who shared similar political views, some of whom sought political office.

"Because of Frank Chopp we have a statewide approach to justice," said Rep. Monica Stonier, D-Vancouver, who lost her first legislative bid yet credits Chopp for her eventual win and current role as Majority Floor Leader.

"With housing he made sure certain funding was designated outside of the Puget Sound. It's because he knew everything we did in social justice had to touch all corners of the state," Stonier said.

The Times editorial board endorsed Chopp for reelection many times over the years, despite many disagreements. His commitment to serving the whole state over ideologies was the reason why.

Although Chopp had a reputation of pulling political levers behind the scenes, he was a staunch supporter of open government. He was among seven



KAREN DUCKY / THE SEATTLE TIMES
Former Speaker of the House Frank Chopp was committed to serving the whole state over ideologies, writes the editorial board. Chopp is pictured at the Washington Coalition for Open Government annual Sunshine Breakfast in Bellevue on March 14.

current and former lawmakers who signed a pledge last year not to invoke legislative privilege. In recent years, many lawmakers have cited that to shield their emails from public disclosure. That practice is in litigation and will likely be decided eventually by the state Supreme Court. On March 14, he was honored for that commitment.

"You have to fight back and win on this issue because the people are with you," Chopp said as he received the Ballard-Thompson Award from the Washington Coalition for Open Government at its Sunshine Breakfast in Bellevue.

Chopp remained a major force in the House until he opted not to run for reelection last year.

In reaction to his decision, then-Gov. Jay Inslee summed up Chopp's decades of service.

"There are few people who work harder and with more heart," Inslee said. "He has dedicated his career to lifting people out of poverty and strengthening economic security and opportunity for all Washingtonians."

Those with political aspirations in other capacities can learn from Chopp's style, heart and dedication to all the people of



GETTY IMAGES

Technology is making our IRL village vanish

By WADE SMITH
Special to The Seattle Times

Since the mid-2010s, alarming trends have emerged regarding the mental health and well-being of our nation's youth. In the most recent nationwide Healthy Youth Survey, nearly half of high school students reported feeling that their life was not useful and that they couldn't seem to do anything right. Locally, two-thirds of area high school students on the same survey reported feeling consistently anxious, nervous or on edge, with an alarming number reporting suicidal tendencies.

It's important to recognize that these troubling trends began long before COVID-19, and the crisis is not tied to any single demographic; it spans wealth, race and geography. In fact, these statistics are mirrored across the globe, from Europe to Asia to Australia.

In 2017, Dr. Jean Twenge published "iGen," a groundbreaking book examining the recent decline in youth mental health. Her research revealed a disturbing correlation:

The sharp rise in mental health struggles coincided with the moment smartphones became commonplace in the hands of young people.

But it's not just the presence of phones. Many of us grew up with telephones — though ours were corded and attached to the kitchen wall, requiring us to stretch the cord down the hall for privacy. The difference today? Smartphones provide untethered access to social media, infinite YouTube and TikTok videos, and manipulated selfies showcasing a world where everyone appears happier, prettier and more successful. Unlike the corded phone that required negotiation with parents and siblings, these devices are always within reach, unchecked and unrestricted.

In a 2023 Gallup study, 95% of all teens reported owning a smartphone, with nearly half saying they are online "constantly." The average teenage boy spends five hours a day on his phone. The average girl? Even more.

While some benefits are realized with this technology, they have come at the cost of something far more important — our village. Our "village" — the deep, real-world connections with our local community — has eroded. Just a generation ago, it meant cul-de-sac barbecues, adult softball leagues and weekend game nights with friends. Just like the rotary phone we all once used, these experiences, once woven into daily life, have all but disappeared for many of us.

And for today's youth, picnicking with neighbors at the park, hanging out at the mall or spending time at Skate World with friends are as foreign to them as a "please be kind and rewind" sticker on a Betamax tape.

Instead of face-to-face interactions, many of our kids now spend their free time scrolling through curated social media feeds, comparing themselves to people they will never meet. The village is vanishing — and with it, the sense of community, belonging and real human connection.

Jonathan Haidt, in his recent book "The Anxious Generation," presents overwhelming data demonstrating that smartphones are not just correlated with rising youth mental health issues — they are a primary cause. Many social scientists now conclude that the replacement of real-world relationships with shallow, screen-based connections is directly impacting the well-being of our children.

While limiting phone use and supporting face-to-face engagement during schools may help, if our children simply return home, close their door and endlessly scroll media feeds by themselves in their bedroom, little progress will be made.

So, where do we go from here? We can't undo technology, but we can take steps to restore balance in our children's lives.

Wade Smith is superintendent for Walla Walla Public Schools.

Pete Hegseth's mistake

Patricia Murphy
Syndicated columnist

I feel like I spend all of my time lately beating up on the Trump administration. But as they say in the military, it's a target-rich environment.

The Trump team's latest offense is also its most dangerous — a group chat on the encrypted, but unclassified, text messaging app Signal, finalizing the details of an attack on Houthi rebels in Yemen. Included on the text chain were the highest ranking members of the president's national security team, from Vice President JD Vance to Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, National Security Adviser Mike Waltz and others.

Unnoticed by the rest of the group, Waltz also accidentally added Jeffrey Goldberg, the top editor at The Atlantic, who read the messages planning the attack in real time and then published some of what he learned Monday under the headline, "The Trump administration accidentally texted me its war plans." He thought it was a joke, he wrote, until the bombs started dropping.

The most sensitive information



Pete Hegseth

planning. Instead, they texted over Signal, which is best known among its users for permanently deleting messages. Was the plan also documented offline, as the law requires? The leaders involved aren't saying.

Worst of all, according to multiple former military officers I've spoken with, is the danger the leaked information could still pose to American men and women in uniform, as well as the United States itself.

Bobby Jones, a Naval Academy graduate and retired Navy commander from Fayetteville, runs Veterans for Responsible Leadership. He said veterans have their own group texts about the breach and they aren't pretty.

"Appalled," "shocked" and "disbelief" are just a few of the reactions that come up.

"I'm on texts with veterans saying, 'Are you (expletive) kidding me?'" he said. "This kind of information could literally sink a U.S. warship. That's how serious this is. You're putting sailors' lives at risk."

Jones described using Signal to share sensitive operational details "a blatant and callous disregard for national security."

tions in Ukraine, Gaza and other hot spots. "We have no idea what was picked up," he said. "Because if I were going to be collecting electronics intelligence, I'd certainly be up targeting every phone number related to anybody in the administration."

Other veterans I spoke with were worried about reprisals from the Trump administration against them or their families, so did not speak on the record. They said that Americans are less safe after Hegseth shared his opinions of European allies. Why would any NATO country share their own troop plans with this team? Without our allies sharing data, too, it puts all Americans at greater risk, they said.

So far, Hegseth has spent most of his short time in office demanding a return to "high standards" in the military. At the same time he was texting on Signal, he also issued a Pentagon-wide memo on standards for fitness and personal grooming "which includes but is not limited to beards."

He has also returned military bases to their Confederate-inspired names, including Georgia's Fort Benning, and directed a purge of "woke" policies at the Pentagon. But he has not taken care with the information he is