

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963

AT ISSUE

Signs supporting Franklin Community High School principal Leighton Turner popped up around town last week.

OUR POINT

The people behind the signs need to come forward so any issues they wish to discuss can be handled appropriately.

Time to reveal answer to Turner signs mystery

The Daily Journal

Everybody loves a mystery. Before dawn Thursday, at least five signs supporting Franklin Community High School principal Leighton Turner were planted along U.S. 31 near the school.

Different messages were on the signs, declaring: "It's no lie at Franklin high we love Turner"; "Our kids are better learners with Leighton Turner"; "Franklin High IS Leighton Turner" and "Wake up!!! We want Leighton."

Nobody seemed to know anything about them. Not the school board. Not the president of the teachers union. Not the student council president.

Not even Turner himself, although he said, "I'm honored and pleased and have absolutely no idea who did it."

The signs were a hot topic throughout the community on Friday.

Earlier this month, at the recommendation of Superintendent William Patterson, the school board voted 5-0 to reassign Turner to an assistant principal position. On July 1, he will return to the job he held for several years before being named principal five years ago.

It's clear Turner is well-liked by many in the community. That's why the school board's decision was not greeted with widespread enthusiasm.

For that reason, it's important that whoever is behind the signs comes forward.

What's the motivation? What's the agenda? If the sole reason for putting up the signs was to show Turner that his service is appreciated, that's fine.

But if they were erected as part of a broader effort to influence the school board, then the public deserves to know who is responsible and what that person or group represents.

If the signs are a precursor to a political action committee, then it is even more important that those involved speak up.

A letter delivered to the Daily Journal signed "Who Done It Staff" said, "We want to tell our side to the school board. ... At this time, our group wishes to remain anonymous. There are reasons. ... As we become vocal, the teachers and staff will then have nothing to fear, and they will then be able to voice their opinions without fear of reprisal."

The public's curiosity has been piqued, now it's time to come forward and discuss the issues in an appropriate way and in a proper forum.

We don't want to read too much into the signs beyond being a thank-you note to Turner. And we certainly enjoy a puzzle as much as anyone.

But now it's time for answers and for the discussion to continue in a more appropriate forum.

Focus: Ethics

Changing culture in Congress key to success

Scrrips Howard News Service

Congressional Republicans and Democrats have offered dueling ethics-reform proposals — in the Republicans' case, to try to stem the Abramoff lobbying scandal; and in the Democrats' case, to exploit it.

First, the Republicans had to clear up a bit of awkwardness, replacing Rep. Bob Ney, R-Ohio, who could be the next shoe to drop in the Abramoff probe, as chairman of the House committee that will handle the reforms.

Many of the proposals are worthwhile and, temporarily, could improve the ethical climate in Congress. Some of those include a ban on "dead of night" insertions in bills; a waiting period between the time a bill emerges from committee and the final vote, to give members a chance to read what they're voting on; banning former members who have become lobbyists from the House floor; and timely, accessible disclosure of trips aboard private aircraft.

Others are more problematic, such as tightening the limits on free travel, meals and gifts. These might clean up the appearance of unseemly coziness with special interests, but they do not address the much more critical issue of political fund-raising events.

And other proposals, like extending from one year to two the time a lawmaker has to wait to register as a lobbyist after leaving, just kick the can down the road.

We would add a ban on earmarks, special-interest spending provisions added to bills outside the normal appropriations process, often in "dead of night" fashion. These earmarks added up to more than \$27 billion in spending — on items like the infamous "bridge to nowhere" — in the last fiscal year, according to a watchdog group.

We would also urge a return to "paygo" rules, where new spending and tax cuts must be offset with spending cuts and tax increases elsewhere in the budget.

And, too, we would like the House ethics committee, emasculated by the Republican leadership, restored to a position of clout and prestige, with the power to initiate investigations and to accept complaints from any source.

None of these will work for very long without a change in the culture of Congress so that the members will not tolerate shady practices. The members are too protective of each other and too loath to speak out, as epitomized by the axiom "to get along, go along."

The "K Street Project" — to get legislation passed, hire Republicans and raise money for GOP candidates — had sleaze written all over it, but there was no institutional, and little individual, denunciation of what was clearly a "pay to play" scheme.



Lawmakers need to realize sun's set on time-zone debate

The federal government has made its ruling, the governor just wants to move on to newer issues, and most Hoosiers are ready to get used to the time change.

But a few lawmakers aren't ready yet to throw in the towel.

Even though the General Assembly, after a great deal of debate, decided last year to catch up Indiana with the rest of the nation by voting to approve daylight-saving time, House Minority Leader Pat Bauer, D-South Bend, wants the issue to remain alive, at least until the November elections.

"I think for St. Joe County, it disconnects them year-round from the Chicago economy and the transportation hub," Bauer said at a news conference he called shortly after the Department of Transportation announced that eight Indiana counties would move to the central time zone.

Of course, had the department decided to allow St. Joseph County to switch to central time, as it had petitioned, Bauer would have bemoaned the fact that it then would have been separated from Elkhart County, which is clearly in the same metropolitan area.

Elkhart County did not petition to switch to central time, and the department had said previously that no counties would be switched unless they asked to be.

Until last week when the department announced its decision, 10 Hoosier counties were in the central time zone and all observed daylight-saving time. Five counties near Chicago in northwest Indiana along with five more near Evans-



Jerry Wilson

ville in the southwest have been on central time for decades.

In all, 17 counties petitioned the department. The transportation group finally ruled last week that eight counties could make the switch.

Two of those counties, Starke and Pulaski, are in northwest Indiana. The other six, in the southwest, are Knox, Daviess, Martin, Dubois, Pike and Perry.

It probably would have been better to move St. Joseph County and Elkhart County into the central time zone, keeping South Bend and Elkhart in step with Chicago all year. But since Elkhart did not petition for a switch, the department did not force the issue.

Some Democrat lawmakers want Hoosiers to vote on whether all of Indiana should be placed in the central time zone. Others want to roll back the move to daylight-saving time.

But House Speaker Brian Bosma doesn't have the time for those kinds of legislative shenanigans. He said the General Assembly was the place to make those decisions and the decision had already been made.

And with the ruling by the feds last week, the matter should be

settled once and for all.

But in an election year, that seldom happens with contentious issues like what time it is in Indiana. Lawmakers, like Bauer, will continue beating the dead horse until they finally realize the life has left it. And that won't be until after the election.

A lot of people in northern Indiana are not happy with the new time zone boundary. As confusing as things used to be, they say it is even more confusing now. And one survey indicated that a majority of Hoosiers are not clear about what the time zone ruling really means.

So, naturally, the minority party will milk the confusion for all its worth.

But once everyone has had a chance to spring forward and fall back at least once, they'll realize it isn't all that bad. And if they have relatives out of state, they'll also realize how much easier it is to make plans now that they don't have to worry about whether their clocks are synchronized with each other.

No matter where the time zone boundary was drawn, somebody would be inconvenienced. The newly drawn boundary is probably the best compromise for a situation in which there was no way to please everybody.

And as for the lawmakers in the state capital, they should move on to more pressing matters and let time expire on the time zone debate.

Jerry Wilson writes this weekly opinion column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

Clinton use of 'plantation' reflects more on her than on GOP, her target

Sen. Hillary Clinton — she of the Rodham charm — has thrown it down.

She's unofficially, but inferentially, in the presidential race for 2008.

Not that anyone believed otherwise. But the beyond-all-doubt moment occurred last week when she evoked slavery and plantation life in a speech before a mostly black audience celebrating the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

How else to interpret that bit of race-baiting?

After playing center field the past couple of years, trying to sound mainstream on issues such as abortion and the war, she apparently felt the need to remind her base they're still on the same page.

Clinton was speaking at a Harlem church Monday when she the U.S. House "has been run like a plantation, and you know what I'm talking about. It has been run in a way so that nobody with a contrary view has had a chance to present legislation, to make an argument, to be heard."

The latter part of her comment is substantively true, but she revealed more about herself than she did about Republicans with her plantation reference. She's a panderer, all right, but she won't be the first female black president.

Unlike her husband, who was tagged "America's first black president," Hillary Clinton ain't got "all that" — that soul thing that her husband has in, um, diamonds.

When Clinton said, "and you know what I'm talking about," what she was thinking, of course, was, "and you know wuddumsayin?" She wisely censored herself, but her slightly stuttered body English suggested juuuuust a hint of ebionics. A little roll here, a little hand there. Oy vey, I've still got muscle cramps from cringing.



Kathleen Parker

Watching Clinton's soul-sister moment was like watching a whiffed high-five, embarrassing as watching middle-aged white guys playing air guitar. Stop it.

No one's asked yet why Sen. Clinton felt compelled to critique the House, which is not really her bailiwick. That said, it is largely true that House Republicans have marginalized House Democrats.

That's a legitimate criticism, but political maneuvering among elected, paid officials doesn't quite equate with slavery. Feeling left out of the power loop doesn't quite rise to the level of splitting up families and selling human beings.

But playing the plantation card is guaranteed to stir emotions, and emotionalism is the Clinton ace. Not to overplay the playing card metaphor. And sorry, but there's no separating the Bill from the Hill, no matter how much Democrats protest.

The Clintons went to the White House in '92 as a two-fer, and they'll return to the White House as a two-fer. (If Hillary Clinton wins in '08, improbable as it is, stand by for the Vanity Fair cover of Bill in apron, baking Toll House cookies.)

Ever since Clinton's remark, there's been a whole lot of Googlin' going on as Democrats search for Republicans using the P-word. Aha! The Newt did it.

Indeed, former Rep. Newt Gingrich said in 1994 of Democrats, "I clearly fascinate them."

I'm much more intense, much more persistent, much more willing to take risks to get it done. Since they think it is their job to run the plantation, it shocks them that I'm actually willing to lead the slave rebellion."

Noted. But Gingrich's poor choice of words doesn't mean that Clinton's are any less offensive (and Gingrich wasn't talking to a black audience). What's clear is that no one profits by invoking slavery and plantations. Like the Holocaust, the institution of slavery was too horrible ever to serve as metaphor or simile for anything else.

In an effort to deflect criticism of Clinton as panderer, an anonymous Democratic Senate aide reported in The Washington Post's political blog, "The Fix," that this wasn't the first time Clinton used the P-word. In a November 2004 appearance on CNN, she reportedly said: "I mean they're running the House of Representatives like a fiefdom with Tom DeLay as, you know, in charge of the plantation."

The aide insisted that this was "proof positive this wasn't a remark to pander to anyone."

No, it isn't. It's just proof that Clinton has latched onto an unfortunate image.

If Clinton calculated her comment in advance, then she's got supremely bad instincts. If she spoke off the cuff, then her free-associative mind raises another kind of question: How does a white person gaze upon a church filled with black faces and come up with the plantation simile?

Up North, they might call that a Freudian slip; down South, they call it racist.

Know wuddumsayin'?

Kathleen Parker is a syndicated columnist for the Orlando Sentinel. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Consolidation plan helps neighboring counties

To the editor: My job takes me all over central Indiana.

It's my job to advocate for public policies that help the working men and women in our metro area.

When I talk with the folks I represent, we all agree that Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson's "Indianapolis Works 2006" plan will be a big plus for central Indiana.

These benefits will have obvious impacts on you and other residents who live in central Indiana. In short, Indy Works has something for you.

I am confident that community leaders and state legislators in the counties bordering Marion County will see it the same way.

Before I say why I support Indy Works as a boon for the neighboring counties, I want to review the plan Mayor Peterson sent to the General Assembly.

Under Indy Works, the Indianapolis and township fire departments in Marion County would be consolidated. Better and more efficient services will result.

Indy Works would reform Marion County government by streamlining and reducing the township governments. This will end confusion and inconsistent delivery of public services.

Indy Works 2006 would save Marion County taxpayers a total of \$35 million annually.

Those are great benefits for people in Indianapolis. They also benefit people who work in Indianapolis. For example, fires in the workplace do not discriminate between city and suburban residents.

But there are more reasons for residents in counties surrounding Indianapolis to support Indy Works.

First, Indy Works means a continuing flow of jobs for everyone in central Indiana. For our future, it is important to have a healthy and growing Indianapolis.

Indy Works means Indianapolis can confidently move forward with huge projects like building and staffing the midfield passenger terminal at Indianapolis International Airport, the new Indiana Stadium and the new expansion of the Indiana Convention Center.

All these temporary construction jobs — "temporary" on projects like these means several years — and permanent staff jobs mean more job opportunities for central Indiana.

These projects can proceed with confidence because Indy Works will save Marion County taxpayers \$35 million every year.

My second reason to support Indy Works is that that money has to go someplace. It will be spent or saved.

If Indianapolis residents spend the money, some of it will be spent in surrounding counties. If they save the money, our banks and credit unions will be stronger, making loans at reasonable rates available to all of us.

Don't forget that taxpayers in Marion County include employers, too. If they have more money available then another option becomes possible: hiring more staff.

My third reason for supporting Indy Works is that it will streamline government. It will make Indianapolis a better neighbor to surrounding towns, cities and counties.

For example, in case of a large suburban fire, there will be no doubt about whom to call for help. The Indianapolis Fire Department will be better able to assist neighboring fire departments because it will be better able to cover its own district while units help neighbors.

A final reason to support Indy Works is that it's the right thing to do. Streamlining local government is all the talk at the Statehouse, but some legislators think that good government ideas stop at Marion County's borders.

Mayor Peterson's plan puts progress before politics.

Read more on Indy Works at www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/IndyWorks/home.htm.

I hope you will agree there are many benefits for suburban counties in Indy Works. If you agree, please tell your state representative and state senator. You can call your representative toll-free at (800) 382-9842 or call your state senator toll-free at (800) 382-9467.

Robert Voorhies
President, Central Indiana Labor Council, AFL-CIO

WRITE A LETTER

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