

# 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

The filing period for the May primary ends at noon Feb. 17.

## OUR POINT

A successful democracy requires participation not only of voters but of people willing to run for elective office.

## Government isn't limited to political professionals

The Daily Journal

Political commentator Dorothy Thompson once wrote: "It is not the fact of liberty but the way in which liberty is exercised that ultimately determines whether liberty itself survives."

Democracy means government by people themselves. We're reminded of this in looking at the calendar leading up to the primary May 2.

The filing period for candidates began last month and will end at noon Feb. 17. Dozens of offices, from U.S. and state senator and representative to township positions, will be up for election.

But many of them will not be contested, either in the primary or in the general election Nov. 7.

That's too bad. It not only robs voters of the opportunity to make a meaningful choice but it also deprives government itself of the new perspectives that people can bring to the discussion of issues.

Many people don't run because they feel they aren't qualified. But that's short-sighted.

One doesn't have to be a successful lawyer to be a successful leader. Teachers, farmers, mechanics and merchants are every bit as capable. In many respects, they are more qualified because they have seen life from a different perspective from many people traditionally considered political animals.

Others don't run because they don't think they have the time. However, most local offices do not require a full-time commitment.

Nor does one need to make politics a second career. In fact, serving two or three terms and then retiring from the scene allows other newcomers to step forward.

Columbus accountant Greg Walker recently announced he was running for the Republican nomination for the District 41 state senate seat. The incumbent is Robert Garton, senate president pro tem.

Garton will be a formidable opponent, but some of Walker's reasons for running are quite simple.

"I respect the commitment of Sen. Garton has made to serving in the Capitol building for these past 36 years," Walker wrote in announcing his candidacy. "However, the senator has not been opposed in a primary election bid in 12 years.

"I offer myself as an alternate in the Republican primary."

This is an excellent example of a willingness to step forward. Walker's candidacy adds life to the campaign.

Candidates for other spots on the ballot could have an equally galvanizing effect.

The 20th-century novelist and playwright Jane Auer offers a final thought:

"Voting is one of the few things where boycotting in protest clearly makes the problem worse rather than better."

## Focus: CEO pay

Change in disclosure rules to help investors

The Providence (R.I.) Journal

New Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Christopher Cox commendably wants to increase disclosure of executive-compensation plans for senior public-company executives. Such rules have not been revised in 14 years. Most people are aware of the scandals that have rocked corporate America since then. It's past time for an update.

As Cox, a former Republican congressman from California, put it, "Too often ... shareholders have been surprised to learn after the fact what their executives are being paid."

He argues, "The market is capable of disciplining excessive compensation, provided that the market has adequate information."

Most important in the proposed SEC changes is that shareholders would be provided with clearer details about the total value of executives' salaries, bonuses, stock options and perks.

(Some of those investors are aware that from 2001 to 2003, top executive compensation amounted to 9.8 percent of the companies' profits — almost double the 5 percent of 1993-95, according to a Harvard-Cornell study.)

One of the biggest problems is that executive compensation elements in some company proxy reports are strewn around in different sections so as to make it difficult for even the most sophisticated investor to figure out how much executives are being paid. The proposed SEC rules would mandate that all this information be available in one, easy-to-digest section for fuller transparency.

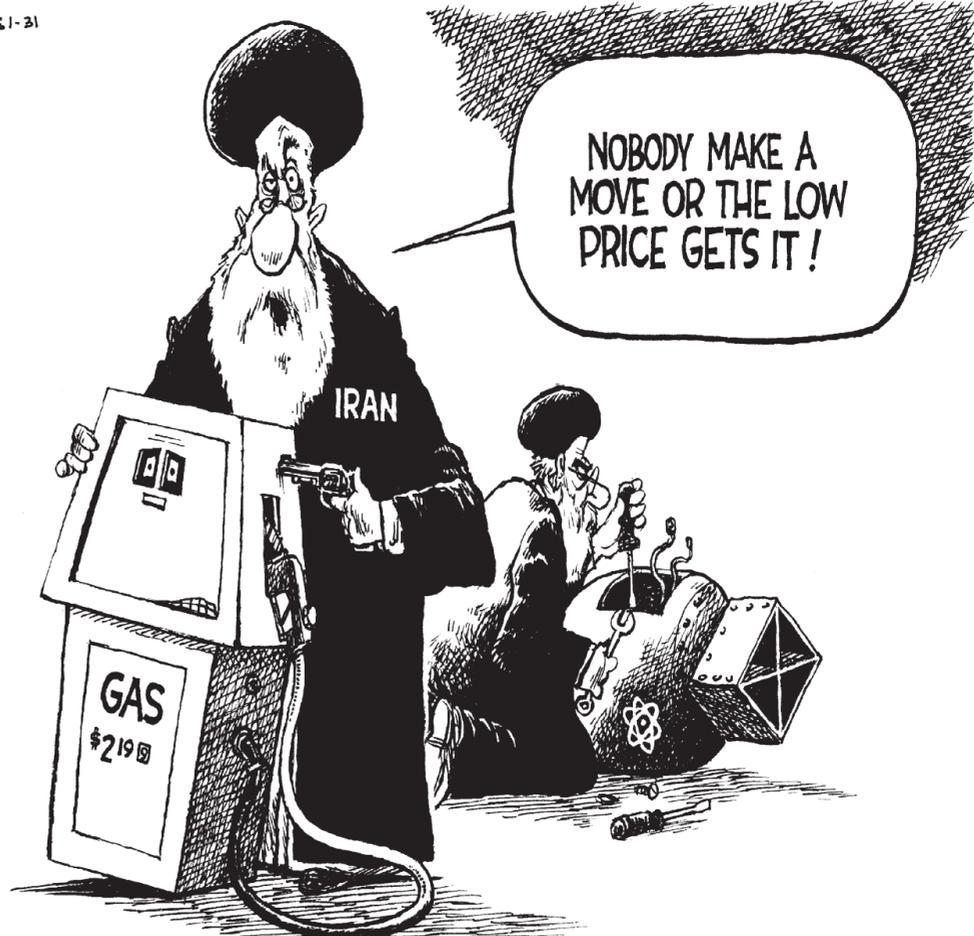
There are some other disclosure issues that still need to be addressed, especially regarding the need for fuller, more accurate projections of the value of the hefty pension packages that senior executives are promised.

But Cox's program for better disclosure is well considered and long overdue. We wish these reforms efforts well, as do the vast majority of investors.



COX

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## Every Tom, Dick and Aidan develops a unique signature

Every year about this time someone compiles and publishes a list of the most popular names of babies born in the United States in the previous 12 months. Every year I take the list into my classroom and share it with my seventh-grade students. The 2005 list has just come out.

My students enjoy discussing these names. They often are a bit surprised that popular names change from generation to generation. They giggle when they hear names that once were popular but are now rare. "Francis" as a boy's name, for example.

The number one name in 2005 for girls was "Emma," while the top name for boys was "Aidan." Even though "Johnny" hasn't made the top 10 list for several years, I've noticed we teachers still use "Johnny" when we refer to a generic male student.

We will be sitting in a staff development meeting, and someone will say, "We need to remember that little Johnny may be coming to school without the necessary reading-readiness skills."

I suppose we should start referring to a generic "little Aidan," although it might be a bit difficult for some of us older teachers. We can be such creatures of habit.

(We educators also refer to any student's mother as "Mom" as in, "I just got a call from Mom, and she wants to come in for a meeting with you about Aidan's homework.")



Norman Knight

Speaking of little Johnny, Jan. 23 was the birthday of little Johnny Hancock, the Founding Father who signed his name really big on the Declaration of Independence. (I wonder if his teachers called him "little Johnny?")

His birthday has been designated as National Handwriting Day by whoever it is that designates those special days. In honor of that day, we took a few minutes to practice writing our signatures in different ways.

I asked my classes how many of them had ever experimented with the look of their signatures, and almost everyone held up a hand (all except for the little Aidans and Emmas who never raise a hand and participate).

I told them I remember struggling over how I was going to make the capital N in "Norman" when I was about the same age. Should I go with the standard cursive N we learned in second grade, or should I get artsy and try something different? I had the same dilemma with the K in my last name. For a brief period, I used a little filigree

under my name something like the one little Johnny Hancock used.

Experimenting with one's signature is a very personal and important thing for a kid to work out. It's a rite of passage into the mysterious world of adulthood.

As young children, we watch in awe as our parents swoop their signatures across the page, and we want to write as fast and furious as they do. Leaving printed letters behind for the grown-up world of cursive writing is an exhilarating step forward in our young lives.

There comes a time, after some experimenting, when we finally settle on a signature that works for us.

If you are a male, your signature pretty much stays with you for the rest of your adult life. If you are a female and change your name when you marry, you once again must work out an acceptable signature. I suppose you could look at it as a hassle, but it could be seen as a chance to be a kid again. Then again, I'm a guy, so what do I know?

Anyway, with this list of popular baby names, I know what I'll be doing in class this week. I'm sure the kids will enjoy looking it over and discussing it.

Now, if I can just get little Aidan and Emma to participate.

Norman Knight, a teacher at Clark-Pleasant Middle School, writes this weekly column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

## Success of supermarket chain shaped by industry's top banana, Wal-Mart

By JOHN KOSTRZEWA  
THE PROVIDENCE (R.I.) JOURNAL

Jeff Noddle knows the supermarket business. He started out bagging groceries as a teenager in Nebraska. He joined the Supervalu chain after college and has spent more than half his life climbing the ranks, becoming chief executive officer in 2001.

Noddle, 59, pulled off the biggest deal of his career last week when he negotiated Supervalu's \$6.3 billion purchase of 1,124 of Albertson's grocery stores. That puts him at the top of the second-biggest supermarket chain in the United States, after Kroger Co.

Now, he must deal with the reason he has the opportunity, Wal-Mart.

Noddle's competitor, Larry Johnston, took over as CEO of Idaho-based Albertson's four years ago with big plans to fight Wal-Mart and revive what had become a tired group of supermarkets.

Johnston found out he couldn't compete head to head with Wal-Mart, and his board directed him to sell the company.

It's a common story. Of the 31 grocery store chains that have gone bankrupt in the past 15 years, 27 of them blame

Wal-Mart for their failures, according to Charles Fishman's new book, "The Wal-Mart Effect."

He writes that Wal-Mart's laser-focused mission to sell groceries and other merchandise at the lowest prices in the market is the main reason its competitors are forced out of business.

A family of four could cut its \$50-a-month food bill by \$75 by shopping at Wal-Mart, Fishman says. On an annual basis, that's seven weeks of free groceries a year. For any household struggling with higher health insurance, gasoline, electricity and home-heating costs, it's an easy decision on where to shop, Wal-Mart.

Customers have noticed. Wal-Mart Stores passed Kroger in 2001 to become the biggest food seller in the United States.

Noddle's answer to the Wal-Mart effect is to run his supermarket chain, based in Minneapolis, with a decentralized strategy to give local managers the power to make product selections.

"We compete against Wal-Mart and others by being very local," he told reporters.

"Food is a very personal thing. It's a very regional thing. We don't think you can sit in one location in this country and understand and feel what customers want to buy in Philadelphia and Providence."

He also says he knows a little

bit about deep discount retailing from his experience running another chain, Save-A-Lot, which has a store in Greenwood and two on the south side of Indianapolis.

That runs him into another competitor, Whole Foods, that has rung up impressive sales from shoppers who don't mind paying premium prices for specialty items and a perception of higher quality.

And then there's the discount clubs, such as BJ's Wholesale, which have attracted shoppers who pay less by buying in bulk, and the small mom-and-pop stores.

All those competitors squeeze Noddle in the middle of the market.

He has the same huge challenge of others who have tried to sell groceries there and argued that shoppers want the convenience of the local supermarket, especially when they make two or three trips a week. Or that shoppers will stay loyal to the people behind the counter who have served them for years.

Those are the people who ran mid-tier, traditional grocery stores such as Almacs, Edwards and Ro-Jacks.

And we all know what happened to them.

John Kostrowa is business editor of The Providence (R.I.) Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Franklin schools need forward-thinking leaders

To the editor:

I find it saddening that there are people who still support soon-to-be former principal Leighton Turner. As a community we need to move forward with progress and not backward.

Being a more recent graduate in 2003 from Franklin Community High School, I never once saw myself that Turner was a leader. Turner was a follower and did not have the leadership ability to bring our school a positive image. As a whole, our district has been going backward, but William Patterson has taken the actions necessary to move forward and improve the education quality at the high school.

I did not attend Franklin Community High School all four of my years. My first two years were at Francis Howell High School in St. Charles, Mo. So coming from my viewpoint, I can judge how different schools operate. When I came to Franklin from Missouri and discovered Turner was principal, I was shocked, because I had lived in Franklin before I went to St. Charles and never had the impression that he was a leader.

I do not want anyone to think I support underage drinking, but I believe Turner's handling of the high school football team situation was dangerous and not well thought through. First off, he violated the school's own athletic code by issuing suspensions because law enforcement was not involved in the matter at all.

Second, by using the word of mouth from other students, Turner has proven to me and the community that he would rather listen to the opinions of 14- to 18-year-olds to make his "rational" decisions. A true leader listens to everyone and does not act by word of mouth. Also I think the parents who gave Turner praise in this matter need to look more into the situation, rather than just a punishment being dished out to athletes.

His actions could have possibly gotten the school corporation into legal trouble, so his actions were careless and dangerous.

I support the decision to lower Turner's rank from principal, but I feel it would be in the district's best interest to get rid of him altogether and not keep him around. Dropout and pregnancy rates have been very high with Turner in command. Also our ISTEP (state standardized test) scores have been very low. We should try to encourage our kids to learn and make sure they are ready for college, rather than be ready to sit for a few years and quit.

The high school has not done a great job at preparing all students for achievement, and I feel Turner is one of those reasons. In fact I think there a few select faculty members who need to be removed, due to their inability to teach.

I know there are some great teachers at the high school, and they know I support them, but at the same time there are others I was shocked to see that they even have jobs. I support our Superintendent and our school board for taking the steps necessary in improving our schools.

Jonathon Cole  
Franklin