

OPINION

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JEFFREY W. OWEN
PUBLISHER
E-mail address:
jowen@thejournalnet.com

SCARLETT SYSE
EDITOR
E-mail address:
syse@thejournalnet.com

"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

Opinion roundup

The Daily Journal

EDITOR'S NOTE — Today the Daily Journal presents a sampling of editorials from the state and nation:

Don't let politics shape Patriot Act debate

The Herald Bulletin, Anderson

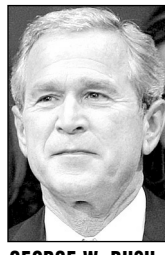
President Bush has made it abundantly clear why some provisions of the Patriot Act should be modified or eliminated before being extended for an indefinite period.

His admission that he authorized spying wiretaps on telephone and Internet communications between American citizens and those in foreign countries, without bothering to get easily attainable warrants, shows how power can be abused, whether that power is real, implied or imagined.

What is the president's excuse for violating a law and negating basic rights of U.S. citizens? The same as for everything else the administration does or seeks to do: fighting terrorism.

The U.S. Constitution very carefully outlines the powers, duties and responsibilities of the president. Bush has been operating the executive branch far outside the narrow corridors delineated in that precious document.

To say the Patriot Act is perfect and should remain as originally adopted is to say Congress does not possess the intelligence or ability to improve it. We do not believe that. We do fear partisan bullheadedness will stand in the way of using that intelligence for the good of the country.



GEORGE W. BUSH

Forced recitation of Pledge mocks freedom

The Gainesville (Fla.) Sun

Otherwise patriotic Americans — some of them, anyhow — seem to have a blind spot about the Pledge of Allegiance.

On one hand, they think the pledge is a terrific affirmation of the love and devotion they feel for their country. On the other hand, they think that dissenters should be compelled to agree, even if it deprives them of a tiny bit of their liberty and justice for all.

We shouldn't have to be arguing about this in 2006, but the issue still arises — usually egged on by opportunistic politicians — with a disturbing frequency.

The latest incident is in Palm Beach County, Fla., where a 17-year-old junior at Boynton Beach High School wants the American Civil Liberties Union to help him press a grievance against the school administration. The student, Cameron Frazier, says his math teacher berated him publicly for refusing to stand and recite the pledge with his classmates.

Although state law may support the school, long-settled case law is to the contrary.

Back in 1943, in the midst of World War II when patriotism was at a peak, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 6-3 decision declaring unconstitutional a West Virginia law requiring all public school students to salute the American flag and recite the pledge each day. The law was challenged on religious grounds by some Jehovah's Witnesses.

We see nothing wrong with incorporating the Pledge of Allegiance into school routine. It serves as a useful reminder of the unique nature of our country and the freedoms we enjoy. But making the recitation mandatory, or subjecting dissenters to punishment or official ostracism, is a blow to those freedoms.

Bush-Clinton friendship good model to follow

The Buffalo (N.Y.) News

It's an old but good story. Former adversaries make peace, and maybe even forge an unexpected friendship.

The tale has been told and retold for centuries, in fiction and in fact, and in uncounted variations.

Sometimes, though, the story holds a meaning that goes deeper than the mere discovery of an unlikely camaraderie, however uplifting that may be.

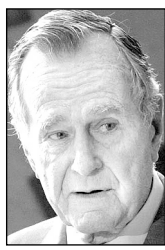
Sometimes, it has redemptive power that radiates beyond two individuals, to the factions they represent.

It's probably too much to expect that kind of benefit to flow from the friendship that has developed between former presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, but it would be a fine thing if it did. The nation's politics have become so vituperative and so unforgiving over the past quarter-century or so that it would do us all good to remember the fundamental truth behind one of the nation's favorite aphorisms: more unites us than divides us.

The election of 1992 may not have been as ugly as the unfortunate contest in 2004, but it was nasty enough, with then-President Bush dismissing his opponent as a "bozo," while then-Gov. Clinton insisted that the president who made a show of buying socks during a recession was out of touch. It featured the usual bruised feelings that elections produce, especially when the incumbent winds up evicted.

But called to service this year by the current President Bush, the two former leaders not only responded — raising money for tsunami victims in Asia, and hurricane victims on the Gulf Coast, among other duties — but formed a friendship that observers say is real and respectful. The far left and the far right object, of course, and no wonder. Such a rapprochement threatens their emotionally satisfying and financially rewarding ability to demonize the other.

But that model of political discourse has hurt the country, discouraging the very compromise that democracy requires while driving down voter participation. The new friendship between two former foes won't change that on its own, but it highlights the artificiality of much of the posturing that passes for governance. And it suggests that if they want it, Americans can have a more respectful and effective government than they have lately been given.



GEORGE H.W. BUSH



CLINTON

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Aggressive war on terror key to keeping insurgents at bay

As I write, 1,576 days have passed since the attacks of Sept. 11 and still there has been no subsequent terrorist assault on American soil.

Every day, 130 domestic and 118 foreign airlines serve the United States. Air traffic controllers handle 20 million flights a year, without a terrorist incident. In fact, the past three years have been the safest in aviation history.

The United States remains the most open nation in the world. Since Sept. 11, scores of millions of sealed trailer-size containers have entered U.S. ports, and 6 million legal international immigrants have joined the American population. But no terrorist attacks.

Is this just good luck, or is it the result of good policy?

In other words, has President Bush succeeded — at least, so far — at the No. 1 task that Americans have assigned him, which is to keep them safe? Or should we make him change his strategy and tactics?

These questions are especially relevant today. Congress has passed a bill that restricts the ways terrorists can be interrogated; there's outrage in the media at revelations that the National Security Agency has intercepted, without warrants, international phone calls and e-mails that originate or end in the United States; and, a popular new movie by America's most esteemed director takes a skeptical view of aggressive retaliation against terrorists.

In early 2002, nine Americans out of 10 approved of the way Bush was handling the war against terror; today, barely one in two. Recent polls show respondents believe that the parties can handle terrorism equally well.



James K. Glassman

Much of the recent criticism may be rooted in dissatisfaction, not with the protection we've been afforded against terrorists but with the apparent lack of progress in Iraq. Many Americans are war-weary and frustrated, and their unhappiness with the war in Iraq is reflected in Bush's poor approval ratings on the economy and terrorism, even though, by any objective standard, these have been areas of great success.

The danger is that the farther Sept. 11 recedes in memory, the less we appreciate that it hasn't happened again. When it comes to the war on terror, many Americans have become shortsighted, ungrateful and decadent.

Consider "Munich," the new Steven Spielberg film.

The movie, which last month was the subject of a cover story in Time magazine, follows the response to the brutal murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

According to Spielberg's version of events, Israel commissioned a small team to travel throughout Europe to assassinate the terrorists behind the killings.

Rather than an inspiring story of justice and deterrence, Spielberg's movie is a depressing tale of retaliation as counterproductive and morally corrupting.

In an interview, the director

said, "A response to a response doesn't solve anything."

There's little doubt that Spielberg is referring, not just to Munich 1972 but to America post-Sept. 11. The final shot in the film catches the twin towers of the World Trade Center in the background.

Several times in "Munich," characters point out that, if the Israelis kill a terrorist, many more will rise to replace him, and these successors will be even worse.

That may have been true with Nazis during World War II, but what's the alternative? To let the World Court handle the matter? To try to reason till you're blue in the gills with Black September and al-Qaida?

Spielberg calls his film a prayer for peace, but it's highly likely that calling a halt to the hunt for Osama bin Laden and his henchmen will lead to more bloodshed, not less.

Remember "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time" from the Sherlock Holmes story "Silver Blaze"?

But, says Colonel Ross, "The dog did nothing in the night-time."

"That," said Holmes, "was the curious incident."

Here in the United States since Sept. 11, the terrorists have done nothing, that is, no violence on our homeland. That is the incident worth paying attention to. But is it curious? No.

The terrorists' lack of success is the result of a response that has been aggressive and single-minded, at home, in Iraq and in places we know little about. The policy is working. It has kept us safe. We tamper with it at our own extreme peril.

James K. Glassman is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

Clinton, McCain both seek to widen political base, risk wrath of stalwarts

Let's start 2006 with a Washington version of everyone's favorite TV game show: Welcome to "Political Jeopardy."

You know the rules: I read the answer. You, as our contestants, provide the correct question.

Here's the answer: This U.S. senator is a 2008 presidential hopeful who became famous as the leader of the party's left-most fringe, but is now moving right and fashioning a new image as a more electable party mainstreamer.

We'll listen to our monotonous "Political Jeopardy" theme music while you write down your answer. OK, time's up. Let's see what you have written.

"Who is Hillary Clinton?" That's correct! "Who is John McCain?" That's also correct!

Clinton and McCain have been using the same playbook to position themselves as presidential nominees of two parties that think they are political polar opposites. For months already, the New York Democrat and the Arizona Republican have been working hard to reposition themselves well to the right of themselves.

Now readers may see this as a trick, but Washington's smart set thinks it is just a tactic. That's because Washington politics is best viewed through funhouse mirrors: They not only add wacky curves where none exist but when positioned artfully by political image-makers they can make even the most warped political bodies seem straight. At least for a while (see also: for an election cycle).

Of course, Clinton and McCain are still in their pre-positional phase, which everyone knows is something you should never end a sentence with. So their positions still are a work in progress. Consider Iraq: Clinton and McCain are at pains to explain that they do not favor a quick pullout of troops from Iraq; they seem to support



Martin Schram

President Bush's basic timetable (except for the minor detail that no one can really say what that timetable is). Both look rather pained each and every time they are asked publicly to detail a position on the war in Iraq.

Then there is flag-burning. One of them has taken a strong stand favoring legislation to outlaw it. This sounds like a right-wing mantra. Yet it not being chanted by the senator who is wooing the right but by the left-winger trying to declaw the right. Yes, Clinton.

Here's a preview of what will happen after Clinton and McCain forge their new centrist positions: Clinton will get herself close to where McCain was, only to find that McCain has gotten himself closer to where Bush's base is. They will have traded political security for political discomfort.

Meanwhile, their true believers will be signaling each other not to worry, it is all just a game. They will not tell each other this with words (which could be reported, and maybe distorted, by the media). They will do it with so much winking and blinking that the most important tech tool of political communication may turn out to be not the Internet after all, but an ocular Morse code.

Remember this: Clinton and McCain are repositioning themselves for very different reasons.

Clinton figured her long-standing liberal image was no barrier to winning the Democratic presidential nomination.

But it is a big barrier that could make her unelectable in a general election if she cannot convince independents and moderates to vote Democratic again.

McCain figured his longstanding moderate and progressive image was no barrier toward winning a general election. Indeed, it probably makes him the most electable Republican. But it is a big barrier that could make it difficult for him to win the Republican presidential nomination. For his tolerant views on social issues have made him loathsome to many in the Christian Right, the new base of the Grand Old Party.

Meanwhile, as the front-runners remake their images by stressing things they never used to say, the Democratic and Republican faithful must come to grips with some major decisions, as well. Starting this year.

Democratic stalwarts need to make the core decision they have been dodging and fudging for decades: Do they want to regain the presidency and at least the Senate, if not the House? Or do they want to further entrench the Democrats as America's perennial also-ran party?

Republican stalwarts need to make a core decision that is new to the Grand Old Party but which it will face for years to come: Do they want to condemn Republicans to a new minority status by moving so far toward the intolerant right that they give independent Americans no real political choice other than to vote for Democrats?

It appears that 2006 is shaping up as a mind-bender of a year, starting with two front-runners and two parties, both facing double jeopardy.

Martin Schram writes political analysis for Scripps Howard News Service. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Erasing child abuse requires end to myths

To the editor:

There are at least two myths that need to be dispelled related to child abuse and neglect, and the sooner we move from myth to reality the sooner more children will receive the love, support and protection they need.

At this time a year ago, state government launched a remarkable expansion of Indiana's child-protection system. The governor, who pledged to eliminate a structural budget deficit of more than \$1 billion in just one year, agreed with the General Assembly to increase child welfare spending by 31 percent.

The money is being used to add 400 new case workers, who are being hired according to new requirements for education and training. The increased state funding also supports a new state government agency, the Department of Child Services, with director Jim Payne reporting directly to the governor.

The department has divided the state into 18 regions in an attempt to ensure greater consistency from one county to the next in investigating and reporting allegations of child abuse and neglect.

Which leads to the first myth. The substantial amount of activity at the state level entices the rest of us to relax, to think that the problem has been solved and that we do not need to be further involved.

The reality, however, is that even with the best-designed state system, a large number of children still will be abused and neglected, and a heartbreaking number still will die.

Noting that 80 percent of child abuse and neglect cases involve the child's primary caregiver, Payne said, "We can't be in every home. We can't meet every family. We need the local community to be involved to help these families so that we prevent harm to the kids in the first place."

Judge Loretta Rush agrees. Rush is the juvenile court judge in Tippecanoe County, where four children died from child abuse in a recent one-year period. She supports the measures adopted by the state, but Rush says the state can only do so much.

"I'm a bench judge. I hear cases every day, and I've never seen cases as bad, with as much pain, as I do now. The severity of this problem can only be fully addressed at the community level."

Rush used her bully pulpit to partner with the local community foundation and convene a countywide summit on child abuse and neglect. More than 250 people from the fields of health, education, government, law enforcement, social service agencies and faith-based organizations heard the latest information about child welfare in Tippecanoe County and then developed action plans to be part of the local solution.

"We reached a point where we said, 'Enough,' enough of the broken bones and the broken families," Rush explained.

"Something needs to be done, and we need to get the entire community involved."

Payne was a keynote speaker at Rush's summit, and the department will encourage other counties to conduct similar events to inspire local action and local solutions. Which takes us to the second myth.

Eleven Indiana counties are responsible for about half of the substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect, and those counties also account for more than half of the deaths. These counties are home to Indiana's larger cities, such as Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Evansville and Gary, as well as medium-sized cities such as Muncie, Elkhart, Bloomington and Lafayette.

However, the highest rates of child abuse and neglect, as opposed to the actual number of cases, are found in small rural counties such as Fayette, Greene, Pike, Jennings, Crawford and Scott. In fact, the rates of child abuse and neglect in these counties are two to three times higher than the state average. By this analysis, it actually is safer for a child to live in Indianapolis or Gary than in Milltown or Switz City.

This is not meant to single out or blame one particular county or group of counties. Instead, these findings demonstrate that child abuse and neglect truly are statewide issues. While state government has stepped forward with funding and reforms, local communities now need to build on that momentum and develop solutions tailored to their local needs.

If that happens, more Hoosier children will come to know that safety and security are not a myth and indeed can be a reality.

Bill Stanczykiewicz
President and CEO, Indiana Youth Institute