

# 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

Gov. Mitch Daniels is considering making the Interstate 69 extension a toll road.

## OUR POINT

A toll road going through the northwest part of Johnson County could have serious consequences.

## Area streets to pay price if I-69 built as toll road

The Daily Journal

In his recent State of the State speech, Gov. Mitch Daniels outlined his road-building plan, which he dubbed Major Moves.

He wants to improve highways across the state. Many of the projects, such as widening State Road 135 from south of Smith Valley Road to Bargersville, have been on the drawing board for years. But a lack of cash has stopped the projects cold.

To pay for projects like this, Daniels has proposed leasing the Indiana Toll Road to a private company. The figure of \$2 billion has been bandied about, but there has been no public discussion about an exact price tag.

It's obvious that if a private company runs the toll road and is willing to pay the state a hefty amount up-front to do it, the company expects to make a profit.

How do you make a profit? By raising tolls and operating fees for toll-road vendors like rest-stop restaurants and fuel sellers, of course.

The state could raise rates, too, and eventually earn a similar return, but the governor needs the money now, not over 10 or 20 years.

The proposal the governor's office forwarded to the Indiana General Assembly was not restricted to the toll road, though. It says the state can consider leasing other state-owned transportation facilities.

"We want to keep ourselves open to other ideas, whatever those ideas might be," said Thomas Sharp, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Transportation.

The proposal also indicates that the extension of Interstate 69 from Indianapolis to Evansville could be built as a toll road and also leased to a private operator.

This is where we have serious concerns.

It's not that we are philosophically opposed to leasing a toll road, nor do we oppose making part of the I-69 extension a toll road.

But the portion of the interstate closest to Indianapolis will replace State Road 37 from Interstate 465 to south of Bloomington.

This highway is a major commuter route. On a normal day, thousands of cars head north in the morning and south in the evening.

Making the segment a toll road would bring in lots of money. That's certain.

But equally certain is that it would force drivers seeking to avoid paying tolls onto area streets.

For the portion of State Road 37 that crosses White River Township, the only effective commuter alternative is State Road 135. This route already is overburdened. Adding even more traffic will only exacerbate an already bad situation.

So, to the governor and legislature, we say: Think twice about creating a toll road along the State Road 37 segment of I-69. No matter how much in tolls the segment takes in, it won't be worth the price.

## Focus: Suicide

### White House meddling shows its inconsistency

Scripps Howard News Service

An early indication that the Bush administration would be flexible on conservative principles it found inconvenient came when then-Attorney General John Ashcroft sought to kill Oregon's Death With Dignity Act.

That law, twice approved by Oregon voters, clearly fell within the rights the Constitution left to the states, but there was the GOP's "base" to be appeased. So Ashcroft threatened to use federal anti-drug laws to take away the prescription-writing authority of any physician who prescribed a lethal dose of drugs.

What Oregon had done in 1994 was to allow doctors to prescribe, but not administer, a life-ending "cocktail" to a patient who requested it, had been determined to be terminally ill and found by a psychiatrist to be mentally competent.

Through 2004, prescriptions were issued to 325 people, but only 208 had taken them, pointing up a curious phenomenon: that many did not take the cocktail but took comfort in knowing they could if their terminal illness became unbearable.

In a 6-3 decision affirming rulings by two lower courts, the Supreme Court properly found that the attorney general had overreached and that Ashcroft's loose reading of the Controlled Substance Act would effectively put final say over general standards of medical practice in the hands of the Justice Department.

Justice Anthony Kennedy hinted at the political motivation behind the attempt to override the Oregon law by noting that Ashcroft's action was beyond his expertise and taken without consulting Oregon or apparently anyone outside his department. Moreover, nowhere had Congress said physician-assisted suicide was a crime.

In a dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas said that the ruling was inconsistent with the court decision last year upholding a federal override of California's medical-marijuana law. Perhaps so, but the Bush administration should have stayed out of that one, too.

YOU KNOW IT'S A WINTER DAY IN INDIANA...  
WHEN YOU CAN SUFFER FROM HYPOTHERMIA  
AND HEATSTROKE ALL IN THE SAME DAY.



YOUR

## VIEWS AND COMMENTARY

### Not recognizing alcohol as drug dangerous

To the editor:

We have a big drug issue, not only with the use of drugs but also with our attitude about drugs, the reporting of drug levels and action taken against drug users.

An 18-year-old with a blood alcohol level of 0.15 was arrested Jan. 9 for driving the wrong way on U.S. 31, causing a crash. Thankfully, no one was killed this time.

This same drunk driver was involved in a Sept. 10 crash that killed a Franklin woman. It was reported that the prosecutor's office is still waiting on results from the September crash to see if this same driver had alcohol or drugs in his system when that crash occurred.

Something is wrong when officials don't know if drugs where involved in a crash that occurred four months ago.

Swifter reporting and action may have resulted in this driver being removed from our highway before a second crash occurred. Someone owes the citizens an explanation for such a delay of reporting, and possible action taken.

On Dec. 17, a Bargersville man with a blood alcohol level of 0.233 died in a crash. He was not wearing a safety belt, and marijuana was found. It was reported that the autopsy did not find any drugs in his system. It probably should have been reported that the autopsy did not find any drugs other than alcohol.

Society seems to feel that alcohol is not really a drug. Parents often say they are thankful that their teenager just had some alcohol but not some drug.

Alcohol is a drug. If your blood alcohol level is 0.233, you do indeed have a drug in your system. The media, coroners and other officials are doing a disservice to the citizens by reporting that a dead drunk driver did not have drugs in his system when his blood alcohol level was 0.233.

We can all make our communities safer by talking to our young people about the hazards of using drugs.

Our officials also must insist on obtaining drug results sooner than four months later in order to take proper action to make our highways and communities safer. An explanation is also due why such delays occur.

Let's get rid of the attitude that "It's not too bad that kids use tobacco and alcohol, but at least they're not on some bad drugs."

We must realize that our youth are using all kinds of drugs. Alcohol is a drug. Marijuana is a

drug. Nicotine is a drug. Fumes from Sharpies and some glues are drugs. Prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines taken from the medicine cabinet or mom's purse and misused are drugs.

Let's talk about these issues. Let's insist on quicker drug reporting and action. I'm tired of hearing police officers say that if you have the money and the right attorney, you can beat any charge.

Let's insist on prompt and proper action being taken against those who are drug impaired and impacting our lives.

Dr. Dick Huber  
Greenwood

### Former principal did little to keep kids from leaving

To the editor:

I am writing in support of Superintendent William Patterson and the school board's decision to ask Leighton Turner to step down. However, why would you place him in a position of disciplining the students in any capacity?

I believe he has done that before under Walt Vanderbush. If you check school records, I believe you will find evidence of increased dropouts and expulsions and students transferring out to other schools.

How, then, does this resolve any of the issues to decrease dropout and expulsion rates?

I see no gain to the student body because it is the easy way out to expel. It doesn't take an educated person to expel a student and give that student free time to get into criminal mischief. The effort needs to be placed on ways to keep the students in school, in class, active and most of all accountable for his or her actions.

How many students fall through the cracks because of poor judgment of school officials?

For myself and my family, this has been a long time coming. The combination of Walt Vanderbush and Leighton Turner was a negative, not a positive, influence at Franklin Community High School and did not promote school spirit.

If it were not for the support and positive reinforcement from family members, friends and a few teachers who understood and agreed that the disciplinary actions taken by the duo of Vanderbush and Turner added insult to insult instead of building character, some members of my family and other families in Franklin could have been in the dropout expulsion statistics.

Amazingly enough, the students caught up in the tactics and put-downs of the duo have turned out to be productive, taxpaying citizens of Franklin in spite of the

way they were treated in high school.

I say out with the old and in with the new.

We need new leadership and support in this community. Obviously the current plan is not working. It is time for the changes being presented so we can secure the future of our children and grandchildren.

In the words of Hillary Clinton, it does take a village to raise a child.

Sharon Shepard  
Franklin

### Higher taxes on cigarettes will deter teen smoking

To the editor:

As the grandmother of five grandsons about to enter their teenage years, a member of the Johnson County Tobacco Task Force and the widow of an emphysema sufferer, I applaud Gov. Mitch Daniels move to increase cigarette taxes by 25 cents.

Research has shown that the price and the lack of places to smoke go a long way in decreasing the number of new smokers, especially young people.

A recent column in an Indianapolis newspaper mentioned an idea that I have had for the past several years: using taxes to fund education and cessation programs.

When the tobacco companies settled their lawsuits and the money came to the states, then-Gov. Frank O'Bannon was applauded nationwide for utilizing the tobacco settlements for what they were intended for: cessation and education. However in the past three years these funds have been continually decreased and restricted.

The new tobacco tax is one I firmly support, but I think that utilizing at least some of the funds for education and cessation would go a long way in supporting the efforts by Daniels to make Indiana healthier and more attractive to new businesses.

Maybe if we funnel more money into education about the dangers of smoking and help our citizens quit, the legislature will have to find another way to raise revenue for our state.

That's a scary thought, but not as scary for me as watching my grandchildren and others die from the effects of tobacco.

As less and less of our citizens take up this deadly habit, not only will we be a healthier place to live, but the loss of revenue from the cigarette tax should be offset by the health-care savings.

K. Jane Adcock  
Greenwood

### Too many lives lost on dangerous county roads

To the editor:

A serial killer has claimed

another life in Johnson County: State Road 135. Again, drivers were being routed through the country on untreated roads because State Road 135 had to be shut down.

As we watched from our home the evening of Jan. 17 and the morning of Jan. 18, traffic crept north and south on State Road 135.

Around 9 p.m. on Jan. 17, a vehicle slid off the road and down an embankment at exactly the same location that two people were killed a few years earlier. This is frequently the scene of slide-offs each time State Road 135 has snow or ice on it.

The time is long overdue for the county and the state to work together in addressing this killer stretch of road.

The same is true for State Road 44 between Franklin and State Road 135 and County Road 144 between Bargersville and State Road 37. My guess is that these roads carry more traffic than many in the county and yet have no margin of safety if you go off the road.

Yes, as in the past, when a mother and her two children were killed, I could be told by the Indiana Department of Transportation that people are driving too fast for the road conditions.

Surely, that does not apply to those, like the two children, who have no control over how another is driving.

How frequently it seems to be that when driving conditions turn hazardous in the area somebody is killed on a road in Johnson County.

Why is that?

Ed Fischer  
Franklin

### Taking land for churches steals from taxpayers

To the editor:

This is in response to the article "County, churches could utilize eminent domain" (Jan. 11, Daily Journal).

To make two taxpaying landowners sell part of their property, no matter what size, so that two non-taxpaying churches can have a turning lane into property they haven't yet built on is just wrong.

Who is playing God and making the decisions about whose needs are more important than their neighbors?

These two churches need to see that the property they want to build on doesn't suit their needs and purchase land that does and that doesn't involve stealing land from any taxpayer.

Shame on the two churches, and shame on the commissioners. Eminent domain is just another way to say stealing.

Raelene Kral  
Trafalgar

## Should auld New Years be forgot? Probably

I probably tend to simmer about things a little longer than I should. For example, I'm still a little irritated they took "Alf" off the air after only three seasons. You don't get over something like that in just a couple of years.

Last week, I wrote a column about my New Year's Eve experience.

I felt ripped off and decided I'd never go out on that particular night again. I was annoyed that despite what would be a \$300 dinner bill, my waiter would not let me substitute the lobster bisque for an endive salad.

I got several letters from friends (mostly mine) telling me what a brilliant idea that was. I also received several letters from other friends (mostly my wife's) to remind me that I am a cheap, party-pooper, stick-in-the-mud. I appreciated every one of those letters (except the ones from my wife's friends).

To prove to me how much fun



Dick  
Wolfsie

we would miss by avoiding this annual event, my wife suggested we reminisce about what we had done in previous years.

Mary Ellen wanted to relive our past New Year's Eves with the hope of further rekindling that spark of passion. I yearned to do the same thing, but I wanted to know if we could do all that for about two hundred bucks less.

We began with New Year's Eve 1978. We both had been invited to the same party. It's where we first laid eyes on each other. She thought this seemed like a good way to make her point.

"Think of it, Dick. That was one of the most glorious evenings of our lives. Good food, wonderful people, great conversation. And I met the most wonderful guy in the world. Do you know what I am trying to tell you?"

"I sure do. For the price of a cheap bottle of Merlot, I had the time of my life."

But, there were other New Year's Eves. A few back in New York.

"Do you remember New Year's Eve 1979, Dick?"

"I remember it well, Mary Ellen. We took your sister to dinner."

"I don't have a sister. Wasn't that your sister?"

"My memory's fuzzy. Do you remember '88?"

"Of course, Dick. That was the year we walked hand-in-hand in Central Park while the snow fell gently on our faces."

"Wow, that doesn't even sound remotely familiar."

"Oops, sorry. That was Rick in

'78, not Dick in '88."

"I do remember 1987, Mary Ellen. That was my favorite of all. It was just a beautiful evening. The stars were out. I guess I just curled up and dozed off. You weren't angry, were you?"

"No, but the Times Square policeman was a little ticked off."

"Why can't they do that dropping-the-ball thing about 9:45? Where are the baby boomer lobbyists when we need them?"

The bottom line here is that I don't want to go out New Year's Eve but my wife does. Because of the kind of guy I am, I did agree to compromise.

Next New Year's Eve my wife gets to go anywhere she wants and spend whatever she wants, but she's going to give me her endive salad.

Television personality Dick Wolfsie writes this weekly humor column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.