

# 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 administration of Gov. Mitch Daniels has negotiated two blockbuster contracts with little, if any, public input.

## OUR POINT

Government is not private business. State matters should always be discussed in the open with input from the people.

## Openness in government at heart of democracy

The Daily Journal

Dear Gov. Daniels:

We have heard you have just drawn up a contract for a private company to handle the application process for food stamps, Medicaid and other federal benefits received by about a million Hoosiers, half of them children.

The contract is estimated to be worth at least \$100 million a year over 10 years.

We don't remember hearing about public meetings where this issue was discussed.

When the solicitation for bids was posted last week, it was listed as a draft. However, Mitch Roob, secretary of the Family and Social Services Administration, said few, if any changes will be made before the final version is released in the next couple of weeks.

Vendors will have until March 15 to prepare and submit proposals.

According to representatives of your administration, a contract will be signed June 29, with a public hearing scheduled the following day. The vendor will take over by Dec. 31, pending federal approval.

Wait a minute!

The contract is signed one day, and the hearing will be the next?

Isn't that backward?

Government is not private business. It is to be conducted in the open. Negotiating the details of a contract, especially one this large, in private and then springing it on the public is not good government.

First, it robs the public of a chance to be heard. As talented as your advisers likely are, they don't represent all people affected by the decision. Creative solutions don't always come from inside.

More importantly, though, it undermines the public trust that is at the heart of democratic government.

The toll road lease is another example of decision first, public comment second. Questions of whether the lease is a good thing aside, for the moment, there should have been public discussion about its details.

Recently, governor, your office has been issuing a newsletter about your highway plan, including the lease. That's good. It's keeps people informed. But it should have been done before the contract was negotiated.

Government is not private business, and democracy can be messy.

But openness is at the heart of our system.

Gov. Daniels, put the public first, not last, in matters as important as these.



DANIELS

## Focus: Lobbyists

New House leader poor example of reformer

The Providence (R.I.) Journal

It is a measure of the power of Washington lobbyists that Rep. John Boehner is considered a reformer. The Ohio Republican was chosen to become House majority leader over Missouri Rep. Roy Blunt, the Republican whip, who suffered from his close relationship with Tom DeLay.

DeLay, of course, had to give up the majority-leader job because of his ties to disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

Nevertheless, Boehner's career in serving the interests of K Street lobbyists is extensive. In 1995, Boehner famously stood on the House floor and handed out checks from the tobacco industry. Since then, his relations with lobbyists have been subtle. He has been very effective at writing complicated bills on behalf of campaign contributors that even the people voting on them don't understand.

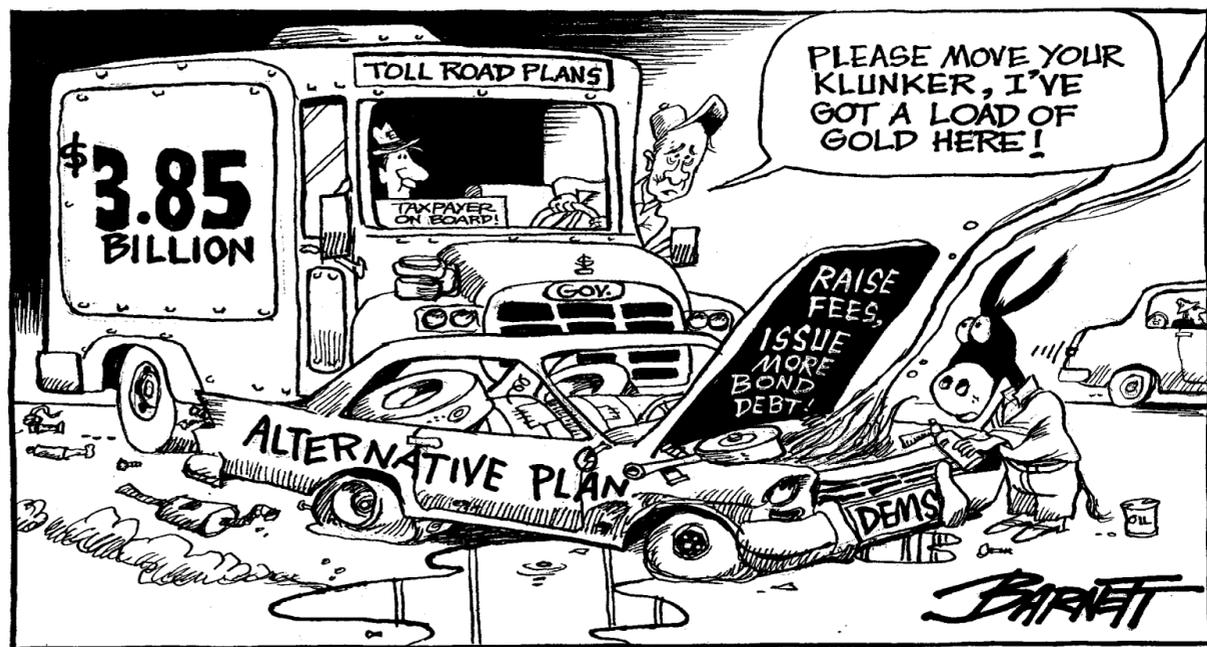
Boehner's most recent effort was his "reform" of the student-loan program, a change that cleverly appeared to be saving taxpayers money. Over the long run, it will undermine the government-run direct-student-loan program, which costs taxpayers less money than do the loans from the outrageously subsidized private student-loan companies.

These companies — notably, SLM Corp. — spend enormous sums lobbying Congress.

"SLM" stands for "Sallie Mae," which used to be a quasi-government agency that helped students borrow money for college. This is now an entirely private enterprise, which has made a fortune off a student-loan program that seems considerably more geared to the interests of the company's owners and officers than to the interests of students and taxpayers. SLM Corp. gave about \$1.4 million to federal candidates in the 2004 cycle, and it is Boehner's most generous campaign benefactor.

Republicans truly interested in reform had a far more attractive candidate for House majority leader in John Shadegg of Arizona. Shadegg, a principled disciple of Barry Goldwater, has been unafraid to buck the Republican leadership when it strayed from libertarian-conservative ideals. He has also kept a distance from the K Street lobbying scene — a virtue in our eyes, but this may have alarmed some of the wheeler-dealers in his party.

Boehner's rise must be a comfort to K Street. His foray into reform is limited to commendably opposing the use of earmarks — the special pork projects that get inserted in spending bills outside the normal legislative process.



YOUR

## VIEWS & COMMENTARY

### Franklin principal setting students up for failure

To the editor:

We agree with Jonathon Cole's opinion regarding Leighton Turner's leadership (Daily Journal, Feb. 1).

In the past few weeks, Mr. Turner has proved to us to be irresponsible and irrational in his decision making. He has also proved that he makes decisions based on hearsay from select students.

Franklin Community High School students were recently required to participate in an intensive program. Our daughters chose an intensive class that required taking a trip out of state. During this trip, our girls were accused of stealing a bottle of wine and drinking it.

The girls were never questioned during this trip by any of the teachers or chaperones who accompanied them but were later interrogated for about two hours by Mr. Turner, one week after returning to school. The girls deny these allegations but have still been suspended indefinitely from school based on one student's word.

Mr. Turner has requested a one-year expulsion since we refused to sign a waiver of due process admitting guilt. A one-year expulsion is completely unacceptable punishment to any student even if caught red-handed.

We, as parents, are having a hard time understanding why any school would jeopardize a student's education to this degree. Schools are supposed to educate kids, not set them up for failure.

Our question, along with many others who have heard this story, is "Why was alcohol made accessible to minors on a school-sponsored trip?" This is a question Mr. Turner and the school refuse to address.

Another question that has been raised is "Where were the teachers and chaperones on this trip while students were supposedly stealing and drinking alcohol?" Obviously, another question that has not been answered.

We would have never allowed our kids to go to a place where alcohol was so easily accessible with no adult supervision. I feel

every parent would agree with that as well. We put trust in Franklin Community School Corp. and the teachers and chaperones to keep our kids safe during this trip, and we have been failed by them all.

We certainly hope to see some immediate action being taken to make changes in our school system to better serve and educate our kids. We not only support the decision to demote Leighton Turner but would like to see him removed from our school system completely.

Most of the classroom teachers have been very supportive to us regarding this matter, and we appreciate that. We plan to pursue these allegations against our daughters in a higher setting to prove their innocence and let them be able to face their accusers.

We certainly hope this helps encourage others who have been in a similar situation with Mr. Turner and Franklin schools to come forward and voice their opinions at the next school board meeting on Monday.

Eric and Debbie Hight  
Steve and Kay Byerly  
Franklin

### Indy consolidation plan finishes vision of UniGov

To the editor:

Continuing a vision created in 1969 when UniGov was first announced, I proposed Indianapolis Works, a plan to provide smaller, smarter government and save Indianapolis and Marion County taxpayers \$35 million every year.

My plan will make Indianapolis even more competitive with other cities and more attractive to families, homeowners, businesses, employees and entrepreneurs.

It reduces the size of government by eliminating the positions of 63 elected officials, provides more accountability for the officials who spend residents' tax dollars, and most importantly, it saves the taxpayers of Indianapolis and Marion County \$35 million every year. Without it, everyone in Marion County will experience substantial tax increases.

Indianapolis Works is a plan born out of necessity. UniGov was

created more than 30 years ago to consolidate many aspects of local government in Marion County. It was a visionary but incomplete plan. Where it consolidated government, it was — and remains — remarkably successful.

Indianapolis Works picks up where UniGov left off by further consolidating local government and completing the vision of UniGov.

Indianapolis Works '06 does three main things. First, it merges nine separate fire departments in Marion County into the Indianapolis Fire Department, a move that firefighters here and around the state endorse.

Second, it eliminates the nine elected township trustee offices and elected township boards in Marion County in favor of two district trustees and boards for poor relief administration.

Third, it eliminates the nine elected township tax assessors and moves those tax assessment functions and resources to the Marion County Assessor's Office. To make these changes happen, we need support from Hoosiers across the state because the plan needs to be approved by your state representative and state senator in the Indiana General Assembly.

Be assured that it will cost the rest of the state nothing to let us complete UniGov. We are not asking for a dime of state money. We are just asking for the opportunity to make local government smaller and allow it to work more efficiently in our state's capital city.

Indianapolis Works has won the support of a broad base of business and community leaders, former and current elected officials of both political parties, and an ever-increasing coalition of organizations that support ending big government and higher taxes.

Indianapolis Works is the right answer for Indianapolis and Marion County. I hope that you will contact your legislator at (800) 382-9841 or (800) 382-9467 and ask them to support the plan. To learn more about Indianapolis Works, please log onto [www.indianapolisworks.com](http://www.indianapolisworks.com).

Bart Peterson  
Mayor of Indianapolis

### N-H-J bus driver has been positive influence on kids

To the editor:

When I read the articles about a Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson bus driver (Daily Journal, Feb. 3), I was absolutely amazed to find out that it was Mr. Stephen Pottorff.

My family has known Mr. Pottorff for 16 years. When we first began to attend the same church, I had stepchildren, 9 and 12, and a baby in arms.

When we left that church, the children were 12, 20 and 23.

Throughout all those years, everyone would smile as they watched Mr. Pottorff walk through the church building with his following of children of all ages behind him. He was a mentor to the youth of the church.

My youngest child was one of the followers as soon as he could walk. Even though he was not in Stephen's class, he would seek him out at the end of church for his kind words and bubble gum. All the children of either gender could not wait to be in Steve's class.

I cannot sing this man's praises loudly enough; he was a tremendously good influence on my children during their formative years, and he was a great help to me with advice on step-parenting.

Again I would like to utter my total amazement that it was Mr. Stephen Pottorff that was the interest in your article; it is so out of character for the person that I know and respect.

Mary Gregg  
Trafalgar

### Abortion allowed while euthanasia is illegal

To the editor:

Thanks for the help.

Now let me get this straight: Hopelessly ill adult patients who ask for (or plead for) assisted, painless life termination can't get it, while healthy pre-borns who no doubt wouldn't mind a chance at life are painfully terminated without being asked.

Wait, by George, I think I've got it. Thanks, everyone, for the help. Especially with the fine points.

Earl Ragsdale  
Greenwood

## Working on creative efforts can help people heal

"Look at this photo of my friends," my wife said, handing me a snapshot of fellow students in her summer painting class in Wisconsin.

Even before I looked at the photo, I knew whom she was talking about.

In fact, I'd met all of them at one art exhibit or another over the past seven years. I knew my wife's friends to be women in their 70s or early 80s who, in each case, were dealing with severe crises in their own lives or the lives of their families.

But the photo surprised me. In fact, it shocked me. Looking out at me were three women with fire in their eyes and radiant smiles on their faces. I half expected the three to say something to me, to tell me a joke.

"What kind of drug are they on?" I thought.

It turns out that I wasn't far off with that guess, as I was reminded by a featured story on Ira Glass's "This American Life" radio program. Glass was interviewing high school students who, through involvement in an after-school theater workshop, had left gang life entirely. Those kids had found the same life-saving drug.

The drug I'm talking about is creativity. Creativity can't be prescribed by a doctor, and you don't have to be in a good health plan to afford it. It is a treatment available to all of us in our own homes but yet is tragically nearing extinction due to lack of use.

Despite all this, the evidence is pretty strong that creativity as a cure is the real thing. It can turn kids away from gang violence and help prevent some forms of senility in older persons.



David Carlson

If you just heard a voice in your head saying, "but I'm not creative," ignore that protest. Many experts say that every human being has creative potential.

Of course, few of us will become world-famous painters, actors, dancers or musicians. As anyone who has ever watched "American Idol" knows, not everyone can sing at a professional level.

But if we separate creativity from the silly issue of fame, we see the real point. It is simply the process of working on creative efforts, allowing what is deep within us to be expressed, that can heal.

A writer who would not have been surprised by these findings is Dorothy Sayers, the acclaimed British mystery writer. In one of her essays, Sayers maintained that every human being has been created to find something of her or his dignity, meaning and joy in work.

Many of us, especially on a dreary Monday morning in February, would identify more with the view on work expressed by Maynard G. Krebs on the old "Dobie Gillis" TV series. He couldn't even say the dreaded "w" word without stuttering. Work often seems something that we're forced to do to pay the bills, to have a roof over our heads and food on the table.

But Sayers' insight is a valid one, even if it is not an obvious one. The Bible maintains that humans are made not just in the image of God, but in the image of a creative God.

If God cannot help but be creative, and we are designed in God's spitting image, it follows that when creative we're close to fulfilling part of our purpose. As Sayers expressed it, "The only Christian work is good work, well done."

But that only brings us to a dilemma. We may want our job to be a place where we have that amazing feeling of discovery that comes with creativity, but who of us has ever read a job description that promised that?

If we study carefully most job descriptions, we note that they lure us with factors that oddly aren't really part of the work experience itself — salary, 401Ks, health-care plans, and vacations.

It's a bit like the nurse distracting us with the juicy sucker as the doctor jabs us with the needle.

Are we stuck then, wanting from work what we can't have? Not necessarily. The healing power of creativity is still available, if not in our jobs, then in our time outside of work.

Remember grandpa who came home from a hard day at the factory, had supper, and then went down to the basement for some woodworking? Or grandma who sat with her fancy lacework or embroidery in front of the radio? How about that aunt who continually took art classes or that uncle who dabbled in poetry?

Of course, our ancestors led busy lives and were just as tired as we by the end of the day. But

they knew something we tend to forget: A creative outlet doesn't drain us but rather gives back energy and joy.

Students who are blessed to be in fully funded art, music and theater programs at school are also busier than most of their peers. But like our ancestors, they've learned that some activities make life richer. And participation in art, music and theater programs has another perk besides lowering the chances of criminal activity. It is also proven to raise academic test scores.

But as we've become increasingly a society of screen watchers, opportunities for expressing our God-given creativity have increasingly been wasted. And with that, our support for art programs in our schools and communities has flagged. My guess is that more satellite dishes were sold in the United States last year than all musical instruments combined, more personal game systems sold than painting supplies. Digital music players dangle from the necks of our youth, constantly pumping music into their ears, but how many of those young people have used their own voices to sing?

The next time we pull ourselves up from the couch after watching a TV program, let's ask ourselves, "Did that teach me anything, renew my energy, or simply fill up my time?" The creative potential within each of us will thank us for at least asking the question.

David Carlson is a professor of philosophy and religion at Franklin College. Send comments to [letters@thejournalnet.com](mailto:letters@thejournalnet.com).