

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

Opinion roundup

The Daily Journal

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

Risk assessment key part of security funds

The Blade, Toledo, Ohio

Sometimes the most obvious of strategies can be sidetracked in the struggle to please. A government grant program begun more than two years ago by the Department of Homeland Security to finance anti-terrorism efforts in urban areas got way off track by trying to accommodate everyone with their hands out.

Only Washington belt-tightening forced Homeland Security to re-evaluate how it distributes its domestic security funding. With limited resources, the federal agency finally did what it should have done when the Urban Area Security Initiative was first announced in 2003.

Instead of doling out millions to cities based on boundaries and political considerations, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff recently announced a new system of funding American cities based more on risk assessment, or where terrorists are most likely to strike and cause the most damage.

What a concept.

Hasty push to renew Patriot Act unwise

South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale

The brouhaha over extending the Patriot Act raises a significant question for the Bush administration. If the anti-terrorism measures are as critical to the nation's safety as President Bush insists, then why did the White House leave its reauthorization to the last minute?

Throughout 2005, the administration's domestic agenda was chock-full of all kinds of initiatives, from Social Security reform to overhauling the tax code to even intruding on the Terri Schiavo case.

Approved in haste after the Sept. 11 attacks, the Patriot Act was known to have flaws. But there wasn't time during that scary fall of 2001 for Congress to carefully iron out the wrinkles. That's why lawmakers put a 2005 expiration date on the law, to ensure that a much-needed reappraisal would ultimately take place.

The administration and Congress had four years to review the law. Why didn't they establish a task force or blue ribbon panel to thoroughly vet the Patriot Act?

Alito showing no signs of having agenda

The Dallas Morning News

If you fear Samuel Alito is more of a revolutionary ideologue than a cautious judge, chances are that you slept pretty well last night.

The Supreme Court nominee didn't wow the Senate Judiciary Committee Tuesday like John Roberts did, but the respectful jurist gave no hint he would use the bench to remake America in his image. Here are prime examples:

On abortion...

The conservative wasted no time declaring he has an open mind about abortion rights. Judge Alito also affirmed his belief in stare decisis, which means judicial precedents largely should prevail. That matters because Judge Alito would need a compelling reason to vote to overturn Roe.

On presidential powers...

Judge Alito didn't give precise answers on matters like domestic spying, but he didn't come across as a lapdog for presidential authority either.

On the role of judges...

Here's the Alito creed: Judges shouldn't inject their own views into interpreting the Constitution and statutes. The judiciary isn't the lawmaking body, he declared.

His answer should reassure those who worry about an Alito agenda. Like Chief Justice Roberts, he emphasized that a judge must apply constitutional principles to the facts of a case. His political views don't matter.

Bottom line: So far, so good.

U.S. needs to invest in science education

The Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville, Tenn.

Throughout his adult life, as University of Tennessee president, state governor and U.S. Secretary of Education, Sen. Lamar Alexander has been a crusader on behalf of improving education. Now, he's sounding the alarm that the United States must concentrate more on math, science and engineering in education.

Alexander spoke to a gathering of higher education officials at "A National Dialogue: The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education" in Nashville. It was one in a series of meetings across the country as part of a Bush administration initiative.

During his talk with the commission, Alexander cited a 20-point recommendation from the National Academy of Science's "Augustine Report." Among its major suggestions are the recruitment of 10,000 new science and math teachers, increased federal funding for research in the physical sciences by 10 percent a year for seven years and research and development tax credits for U.S. companies so that they keep their jobs here rather than move them overseas.

The senator would like ... President Bush to focus on math, science and technology in his State of the Union address and for his remaining three years in office and urged the commission to recommend that to him.

The world is in the midst of a science and technology age. The nations that succeed are those that will prepare their young people to find ways to improve on existing systems and to innovate so that new ones are created.

If the United States does not invest enough in education and training, this country could one day fall economically behind other nations such as China that are making the investment.



State lawmakers won't solve problems with stale approach

What should the Indiana General Assembly do during this session?" The question came from Ralph Write, a newly minted reporter.

"I'm glad you asked," I replied. "Simple solutions from simple people would be simply spectacular. But the issues are complex, and I don't know if the legislators have the information they need to decide intelligently any of the major questions before them."

"For example," I expounded as Ralph took more notes than were warranted by my remarks, "there is the issue of local government autonomy. Can the General Assembly stop playing the role of parent to local governments?"

"Why does the city of Indianapolis have to crawl to the legislature to consolidate its numerous fire departments? Why must efforts to rationalize local government activities be managed by the legislature rather than the localities themselves?"

"Why?" Ralph asked.

"Power, and the misplaced belief that localities are not to be trusted, that the legislature is more wise and more responsible than local governments," I answered. "The megalomaniacs at the statehouse believe they have a monopoly on virtue and good judgment."

"Hence, they impose taxes on localities for state responsibilities and prevent local governments from reorganizing their activities."

"What are you talking about?" Ralph asked.

"For one, city-county consolidations. Why do we have cities and



Morton Marcus

towns as separate governments in the 21st century? It may have made sense in the 18th century when the nation was founded, but today we might do well to merge all governments in a single county into one government.

"The idea that urban areas are sufficiently different from rural areas is an obsolete fiction. Ninety-two local governments would be plenty for Indiana. And then, we could even consider reducing the number of counties we have."

"One benefit of this is we might get better county governments when the people who live in cities and towns feel they have a real stake in county affairs."

"Another case is changing the funding of child welfare services. These services need to be removed from local property tax funding and paid for from our state's funding sources. Then local governments must be given more money to do their jobs. The best way to do this is to raise the sales and motor fuel taxes and return the increased revenues to the counties in which they were collected."

"Isn't this a radical agenda?"

Ralph asked.

"No," I insisted. "We need to

change how we think about government and its activities. It is no more radical than the governor's Houdini plan for funding highways."

"Houdini plan?" Ralph said.

"Yes," I responded. "It seems to me that the governor sees the state as bound by the chains of narrow and inflexible thinking. So he tries to do some 'magic' to get out of those shackles by proposing to lease the Indiana Toll Road to a private party and use those funds for improving highways statewide."

"I'm not convinced it is the best solution, but it does get us to think in a new way about the problem of funding our miserable roads and bridges."

"We require fresh thinking to escape our self-imposed limitations. Indiana needs to protect its local airports from the incursions of housing and other non-compatible developments. Instead of closing Metropolitan Airport in Hamilton County, we need to recognize it as a vital economic development asset."

"We should think about careers that are not high-tech but pay well, such as driving trucks, where there is a major national shortage of drivers. I'll bet, Ralph, that most truck drivers make more money than you do as a journalist."

"I'll give that some serious thought," he said. "I might get to meet a more interesting set of people than I do now."

Morton Marcus is an economist, formerly of the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

Thorough House-cleaning necessary to remedy a culture of corruption

It is not enough that The Hammer was nailed, evicted without being convicted.

It is not enough that a tangle of overlapping scandals now clearly links ex-Republican leader Tom DeLay, his close lobbyist pal, Jack Abramoff, former DeLay aides and associates, and as-yet-uncounted members of Congress. It is not enough that, along with many Republicans, a few Democrats also got Abramoff-tainted money.

None of this is enough because the real corruption of Congress isn't centered upon the stylish lobbyist who costumed himself for his perp walk as Central Casting's idea of a Hasidic Soprano. The real corruption scandal is not even the relative handful of members who may someday be convicted for taking Abramoff's money and turning political tricks in return.

The real congressional corruption scandal is the lack of outrage from all who are members of what was once a Grand Old Party. It is a corruption of standards and decency — yes, even a corruption of conservative values (including balanced budgets and safeguarding liberties).

And at the center of it is the moral, ethical and even political bankruptcy of the House Republican leadership. House Speaker Dennis Hastert and the old guard of the Grand Old Party countenanced a culture of corruption, claiming not to see it, in the hopes that maybe the rest of us never would.

Now the speaker is performing a Capitol kabuki that would be comic, except for the fact that all who care deeply about our democracy know that it is quite tragic. Hastert recently gave back \$69,000 in Abramoff-tainted political money that he thought was fine when he accepted it, and still thought was fine all the time he kept it, despite the revela-



Martin Schram

tions about Abramoff and DeLay.

The most recent: Hastert this week announced that the House will draft new rules to tighten the rules for lobbyists' contacts with representatives. "Now is the time for action," Hastert said in a written statement, as though he were the vanguard of ethical urgency.

Don't expect any action, though, in the way these contacts really happen: Republican and Democratic members alike initiate these contacts when they dial for dollars each day. They call lobbyists who represent special interests that are regulated by the committees on which the members sit. Senators and representatives ask the lobbyists for money for their campaigns (\$5,000 for a primary election, another \$5,000 for the general election). The lobbyists say they know they must ante up if they want to guarantee that they will have access to the lawmaker when an issue affecting this special interest comes up. This is perfectly legal — even though it can be seen as a legal solicitation of a bribe.

DeLay made Hastert what he is today. Hastert, ever grateful, permitted and even facilitated the undoing of the House ethics committee, beginning with the time it admonished DeLay for an earlier transgression. Hastert oversaw the Republican chairman's removal and replacement with a chairman who has longstanding ties to a law firm at the center of the DeLay-

Abramoff controversy. You will be shocked to learn that the committee has been paralyzed ever since.

House Republicans will soon meet to elect a new leader to fill DeLay's vacancy. The two leading candidates so far, acting leader Roy Blunt of Missouri and John Boehner of Ohio, have much in common: They are the old guard; both accepted money from Abramoff clients.

But there are a number of well-respected Republican House members who have demonstrated leadership abilities and were never Abramoffed. This should be their time.

What is needed most of all is a thorough House cleaning. New leaders, some new chairmen. Especially for a new, revitalized ethics committee. But even that won't be enough.

A thorough House cleaning demands a new House speaker. The good news here is that this has occurred to at least one of the new guard of the Grand Old Party.

The Washington Post reported Monday: "In the first sign that even Hastert could be in trouble, Rep. John E. Sweeney, R-N.Y., said Republicans should consider whether to replace the speaker. 'The time is right for us to do some soul-searching and have an open dialogue about the direction of the House.'"

It is not likely to happen. But it should. House Republicans need to jettison all of the old leaders who have become the poster-people for the culture of corruption — a corruption not just of money and politics, but of standards and decency. They need to not just reform, but re-form.

They need to become the Grand New Party.

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

YOUR VIEWS

School principal urged to keep working for kids

To the editor:

Mr. Leighton Turner, it's them, not you.

Quoting from the paper, "Leadership at the high school must address issues such as a high dropout rate, large numbers of students being expelled or suspended and the need for more alternative ways to educate students." Every teacher knows this means you were enforcing discipline.

You obviously have the support of the staff. That speaks volumes.

I'm a former teacher in Perry Township. The same thing happened to a principal there about 10 years ago. The school has never been the same.

I hope you can keep working for the students and teachers, as you obviously do. Don't let it get to you.

Anne Bryant
Greenwood

Young missionary seeks to show love of Christ

To the editor:

I am responding to Marv Wood's letter (Daily Journal, Jan. 4) regarding the article on Brooke Schier.

If Mr. Wood spent five minutes talking to this young lady he would know that her heart is in showing others the love of Jesus Christ.

She has no concern for denominations and would be heartbroken that someone would think she is trying to destroy Catholicism. She is teaching children and living her faith in Poland, showing young people what it means to be a Christian. Brooke desires unity among Christians, not division.

She would never dishonor Christ by seeking to cause division among believers. Catholics are Christian, and she respects that. We respect and are proud of this godly young woman and what she is doing with her life.

Jeff and Debbie Kidwell
Greenwood

WRITE A LETTER

The Daily Journal invites readers to submit letters, opinion columns and e-mail comments for the opinion page.

GUIDELINES

- Letters published in the Daily Journal must contain the writer's name and city or town.
- Letters sent to the Daily Journal must be signed and must include a daytime telephone number for verification to be considered for publication.
- Letters should be kept as brief as possible.
- Make sure the e-mail letter includes the writer's name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address for verification.
- Opinion columns for the community forum section of the editorial page also will be considered for publication. The article should be kept to a reasonable length and should include the writer's name, address and telephone number for verification.
- Because of space and legal considerations, the Daily Journal reserves the right to edit any letters or articles and to limit comments.

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