

# 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

State senators scaled back a portion of their state-financed health insurance package.

## OUR POINT

The Senate action clearly did not go far enough. Politicians are still reaping substantial benefits not available to many state employees, let alone the general public.

## Senate insurance action failed to resolve issue

The Daily Journal

The state Senate came under criticism over its health insurance plan, especially after House Speaker Brian Bosma decided to abolish the lifetime coverage plan for members of that chamber.

Senators were pressured to followed suit.

Last week, they responded; but the change fell far short of what they should have done.

Senate leaders said they retooled the plan to save Hoosiers money, but they wouldn't say how much the plan costs now, how much the new one will cost or how much will be saved.

The revised plan utilizes a formula based on a senator's age and years of service. This will determine how much premiums will be.

The point is, though, they kept a plan in place. And it's not one open to other state workers, let alone thousands of Hoosiers who are without insurance.

Yes, they eliminated the lifetime coverage for senators' families, and they reduced the cost for retired senators by requiring them to join the federal Medicare program.

Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton, R-Columbus, defended the insurance plan. Even though insurance often isn't offered to part-time workers, part-time legislators should receive it because it's a full-time responsibility, he said.

Sen. Vi Simpson, D-Ellettsville, was quoted as saying the plan serves as a model to other employees.

That would be good, but the fact remains private businesses won't follow suit. Many can't afford to. And none of them finance their insurance benefits with taxpayer money.

It's not like legislators aren't being paid well. While the base pay, \$11,600, seems like a small amount of money, they get daily expenses during the session and any time they do state work during nonsession time.

Lawmakers averaged \$44,954 last year, according to the state auditor's office. The average state employee earned \$35,719.

Julia Vaughn of Common Cause/Indiana said she thinks the insurance benefit could cost some senators politically.

"It's encouraging the Senate is making some changes, but the House dealt with it in a better way, a way that's easier to explain to voters."

Exactly.

The Senate should revisit the issue again. This time, they need to make a decision that is best for the taxpayers of Indiana, not themselves.

## Focus: Detainees

### Time has come to close Guantanamo prison

Scripps Howard News Service

The Bush administration is proud of its professed immunity to international pressure and world opinion, but in the case of the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, perhaps it should start listening. And, increasingly, the opinion of our friends and allies is: Close it.

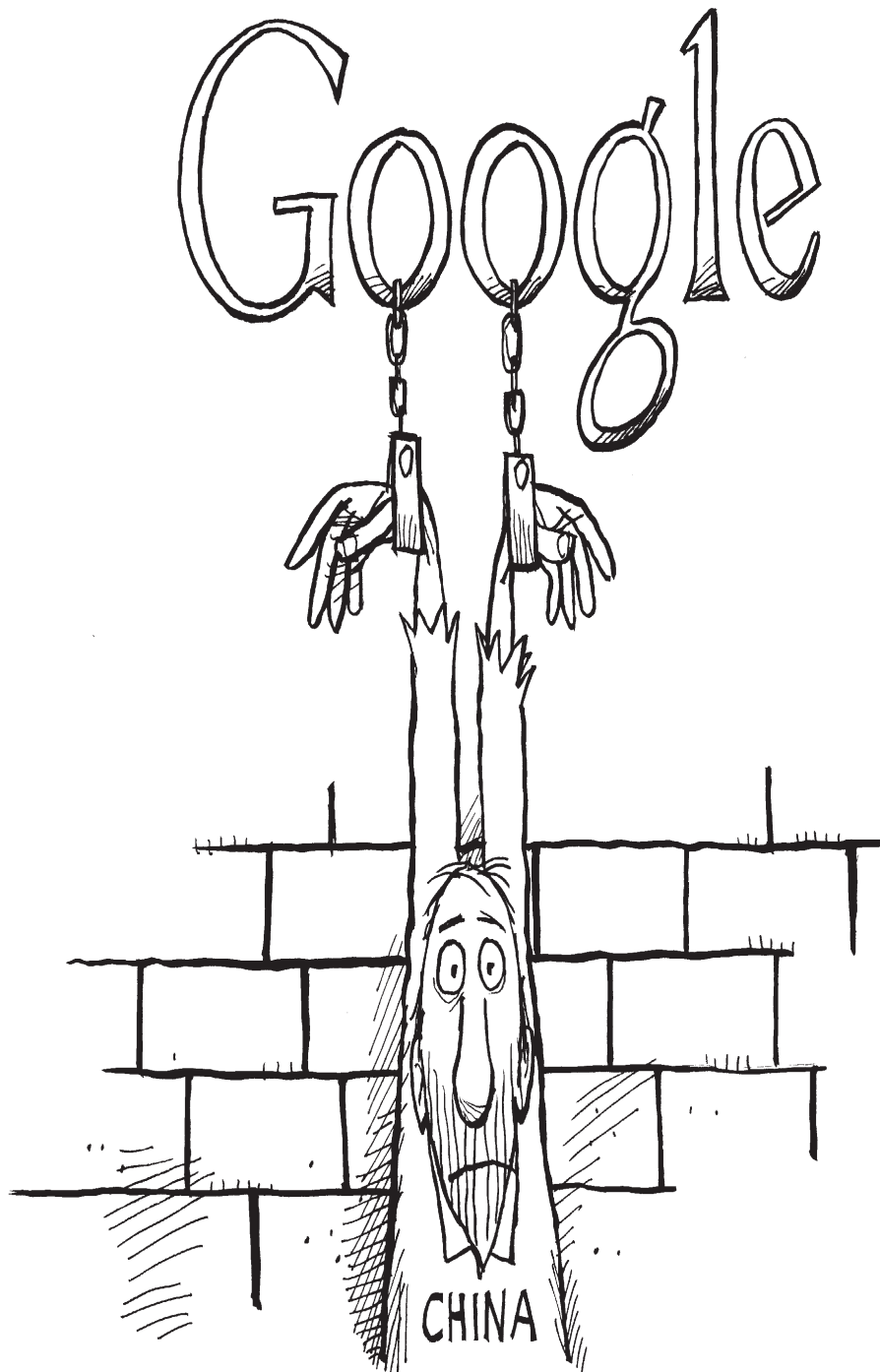
A British Cabinet minister said the prison should be closed and thought that British Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed. Blair, our closest ally in the war on terror, wouldn't go that far publicly but called Guantanamo "an anomaly and sooner or later it's got to be dealt with." It's clear that the thinking within his Cabinet is that the facility should be closed.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan denounced the policy of detaining individuals "in perpetuity" and said the 500 or so inmates, some of them incarcerated now for four years, should be charged, prosecuted or released. He too said Guantanamo would have to be closed sooner or later, and preferably "as soon as possible."

He spoke after the release of a report by investigators for the U.N. Human Rights Commission denouncing the treatment of the Guantanamo inmates and also calling for closing the prison and quickly trying or releasing the inmates. The commission may not be the most credible organization — Sudan and Zimbabwe are members — and the investigators did not visit the prison because they objected to the Pentagon's ground rules. Still, their findings were consistent with what has been alleged by other human-rights groups, freed inmates, the inmates' lawyers and U.S. military trial counsels.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan dismissed the report as "a rehash of allegations" — just because they're repeated doesn't make them wrong — and suggested it was all an al-Qaida plot: "We know that al-Qaida detainees are trained in trying to disseminate false allegations." If so, they're remarkably good at sticking to their story.

No one is suggesting that the inmates be simply dumped on the streets, even if many of them do not appear to be the hardened terrorists the Bush administration insists they are. But after four years, there should be an efficient mechanism in place to dispose of their cases, resulting in either repatriation or lawful imprisonment, and a plan in place to close Guantanamo. Its continued existence is not worth its cost to our moral authority, and this mess should not be left for the next president to clean up.



## Looking down in the mouth on beautiful, sunny morning

The good news is it's a beautiful, sunny day, and I'm off work. The bad news is I'm going to the dentist to get my tooth drilled and filled.

I'm not a big fan of dental visits. Never was. That's not to say both Dentist No. 1 and Dentist No. 2 (the younger partner) aren't great guys. They are friendly, confident and seem to be doing their part to take good care of my teeth. I haven't had need for a filling in several years.

As a matter of fact, the procedure today is to replace an old filling I got from my former dentist sometime before 1982. That's a pretty good run for a filling, I suppose. If I had bought a car back in 1982, I doubt that I would still be driving it. (As a matter of fact, I did buy a car back in 1982, and, in fact, I am no longer driving it.)

It's an early-morning appointment, so I am still drinking my wake-up venti of Starbucks when I enter the office. I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be coming in all hopped up on caffeine, but there's no way I'm throwing away a perfectly good (and expensive) cup of coffee. No one at the front desk seems to mind.

One thing I like about my dentists' office is they have a wide variety of up-to-date magazines. No cliched stacks of magazines from the Eisenhower era here. I grab one and settle in. "Norman?" the nice receptionist



Norman Knight

calls after a short time, and I am led to a room where Dentist No. 2 and an assistant wait. He greets me, puts a bib around my neck and sticks a swab in my mouth to start the numbing process. That means we're getting close to ... the needle.

I know that it's the anticipation of the event that causes so much anxiety, not only with needles being jabbed into one's gums, but with just about everything in life. And, as is usually the case, the reality of the event is much less traumatic than what you imagined. And so it was.

"We'll be back in a few minutes," the assistant says, "Finish your coffee."

My least favorite time when visiting a doctor is when I am in the room waiting by myself, probably because I get bored easily. Hmm. What to do?

I try to meditate, to focus only on my breathing, but my mind keeps wandering off. "Monkey mind" is how Buddhists sometimes refer to the tendency of our minds to jump from one thing to another. I've got a real active monkey

mind, that's for sure.

I start thinking about the nice receptionist, which makes me think of my health insurance, which makes me think of how lucky I am to have a job with health-care coverage, which makes me think of the friends I know without health care, which makes me think of how the Indiana state senators have arranged a pretty sweet health-care set-up of their own, which makes me wonder why I feel my health care is legitimate while theirs seems shady, which makes me wonder if other voters think that, too. See, monkey mind.

Soon, they return. Dentist No. 2 wears glasses with magnifying lenses in them. I tell him I'd like a pair of those so I could read small print, which I am having trouble doing these days.

At each step I ask him what he is doing and why he is doing it. It's hard to make myself understood with all the hardware in my mouth. He probably wishes I would stop mumbling and be quiet, but he answers each time I ask. When it's over, I say good-bye to the nice receptionist and leave. It is a beautiful, sunny day, and I'm off work. I shouldn't try to eat with a numb mouth, but I bet I could manage a cup of coffee without it dribbling too much.

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

## No matter what the facts say, America blamed for many of world's problems

It's all our fault, yours and mine. It doesn't matter who for, specifically; we're to blame for everything.

Our lax attitude toward greenhouse-gas emissions and global warming is why northern Europe is having a colder-than-normal winter — or is it warmer than normal? The Americans and their crazy government, you know. And it's our fault that the polar bears are, or maybe are not, in danger.

And don't even get them started on what U.S.-developed genetically modified foods are going to do to the planet. A little American carelessness, a few genes go haywire, and suddenly we're beset by a rampaging strain of carnivorous kumquats. Our bad.

In Turkey, according to The New York Times, Americans are the new villains in fiction and films. It seems the movie that is igniting Istanbul, "Valley of the Wolves — Iraq," features an evil U.S. Special Forces commander who unleashes his Marines — apparently we're better at combined ops than we knew — to inflict unspeakable indignities on Iraqi and Turkish national pride. Who knew?

In any case, the audiences stomp and cheer when the evil



Dale McFeatters

American gets his. You don't suppose they're still sore about "Midnight Express" and "Lawrence of Arabia," do you? Not "Topkapi." That was 1964, for heaven's sake. OK, I suppose we started it. Our fault.

Anti-American novels are said to be selling well in Turkey, but they can't be any good because, if they were, they'd be selling well here and be optioned by Hollywood. That, too, is our fault.

You didn't realize we were behind those Danish cartoons that started all the rioting in places where Danish newspapers don't circulate. That's because we're so diabolically clever we fool even ourselves.

If you and I were offended by the Danes, our first reaction would not be, as it was in Pakistan, to go out and burn down KFC, McDonald's and Pizza Hut, not unless we were lacing our herbs and spices

and extra toppings with controlled substances.

But the thinking goes, according to a Pakistani author, that the cartoons were "a deliberate provocation to get us to behave badly." Americans could sit in front of their TV sets and have a good laugh at dopey demonstrators hopping up and down and taking out their righteous anger on a bucket of extra crispy and a side of slaw. We're so diabolical we astonish ourselves.

A Pakistani news magazine was quoted as saying the whole business of the cartoons "demeaned the West's lofty ideals and exposed the designs of its new crusaders."

We could tell you what those designs are, but first we'd have to make you sit down and watch repeated showings of "Valley of the Wolves — Iraq" with no subtitles.

Trust us: The designs are almost as good as our melting the icecap and diverting the Gulf Stream so Europe had a warmer-than-normal winter — or is it colder than normal? And it's all our fault.

Dale McFeatters is a senior writer for Scripps Howard News Service. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Build adoption center for abandoned animals

To the editor:

I have several issues with the rhetoric going on the past 10 years pertaining to the new animal shelter supposedly needed in Johnson County. For the small percentage of animals that can be adopted, a new adoption center in a high-traffic area is needed.

The existing building could remain as a euthanasia center for the unwanted and/or unhealthy animals. No matter where you locate the new animal shelter, the property will have to be rezoned for this type of use with an incinerator.

Other counties have adoption centers and take their unwanted animals to Marion County euthanasia center to be disposed of properly; otherwise an adoption center could be located anywhere a pet store could be. I propose we remodel and add on to the existing structure to accommodate current and future needs. Open one to two adoption centers in highly visible locations in Johnson County.

The main issue with needing a new location for the animal shelter is the shooting range, which happens to be in the city limits of Franklin. For the safety of the citizens in the surrounding area of the gun range, that should change immediately.

It was reported that there were bullet holes in the animal shelter and discharged ammo in the parking lot of the shelter. Also, published in the Daily Journal in the meeting minutes, the Johnson County commissioners were asked to spend \$100 on a roof repair in Franklin Lakes, which is directly south of the gun range.

A homeowner removed a lead slug from his roof, which meant it missed any children playing in the park that is even closer to the gun range. The county commissioners instantly voted for an approval of payment.

No other "proper person" can put a gun range in their backyard with a safe dirt backdrop in the city limits of Franklin. When the county approved this small miscellaneous bill, red flags should have gone up. It is just a matter of time before someone gets hit by one of those stray bullets.

I understand that all police officers should be proficient in their duties, such as training and target practice, just not in an open range in the city limits of Franklin where the jail, hospital, dog pound, mobile home park, county maintenance building, churches, four to six subdivisions, banks, retirement center, fairgrounds, miscellaneous residences and businesses all within range that a stray bullet could hit.

The state is spending "big money" on the Camp Atterbury Shooting Range to make it a state-of-the-art facility for our use. I am sure all the police departments could use this facility at certain times per week where it could be off limits to the public.

Don's Guns donated a shooting range to the city of Greenwood, and the mayor of Greenwood invited all police departments in Johnson County to practice in an enclosed building. I have mentioned two solutions for the Johnson County gun range.

With that being said, the county owns the land already needed for the expansion of the animal shelter and also for the discussed needed expansion of the county jail, thus saving the taxpayer from spending more dollars to move sick animals to where people do not want them and from the citizens of Johnson County paying for a lawsuit for neglect for allowing this shooting range to be allowed in the city limits of Franklin.

The city of Franklin should look into this issue now and not later for the sake of its residents, and the county commissioners who control this piece of property should address this serious health issue now.

Please everybody pray that common sense can prevail in this issue and not politics as usual.

Chris O'Brien  
Franklin

## 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.

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