

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

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

Decision on mining shows good judgment

The Journal Gazette, Fort Wayne

Rob Carter's first major decision as the new leader of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources was a good start. He wisely put an end to a scheme that could have led to mining coal in a southern Indiana wildlife area.

Carter decided to listen to the overwhelming majority of the people outraged that the state would sanction drilling by a private company in a publicly owned and state-protected wilderness preserve.

Kyle Hupfer, the former DNR director, had given Black Beauty Coal Co. permission to do exploratory drilling in the Glendale State Fish and Wildlife Area in Daviess County.

It wasn't until October, after outraged Hoosiers complained about the drilling rigs in the wildlife area, that the department conducted a meeting to inform the public about the ludicrous plan to allow the coal company to desecrate public land.

In a news release, Carter said, "There appears to be a viable coal reserve in the area of Glendale where the exploration was conducted.

"However ... for actual mining to take place, there needed to be both local support and support from hunters and fishermen around the state for us to go forward. That support never materialized."

The decision shows solid judgment on Carter's part. Hopefully, it is an indication of the way Carter plans to run the agency.

Ford presidency monument to rule of law

South Bend Tribune

Of the many contributions that President Gerald Ford made to his country, one especially stands out: He was the embodiment of this nation's constitutional provision for the peaceful transfer of power during troubled times.

Ford was the successor first to a disgraced vice president and then to a disgraced president. He assumed those responsibilities with the humility of a public servant who understood that duty matters more than the man chosen to perform it.

Ford was president for two difficult years in this country's history. Americans watched the fall of Saigon on their televisions in 1975.

The economy sputtered. Energy shortages were a national preoccupation. Although Ford had many friends in Congress, on the heels of a 1974 Democratic landslide he didn't have a lot of allies.

A pattern of presidential vetoes followed by votes to override was well established during the Ford presidency.

Prepared and able though he was, Ford had little control over many events that transpired in the final few years of his long public service. But to say that his presidency wasn't important in American history would be to miss the point.

In October 1973, Ford became the first person nominated for the office of vice president under the 25th Amendment.

When he took the oath of the presidency on Aug. 9, 1974, he showed again what it means to be a nation of laws, not of men.

New rules on flood insurance needed

The Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times

When Congress adjourned in December, one of the many unfinished pieces of legislation was a proposed reform of the National Flood Insurance Program, which picks up the tab for property damage in flood plains.

Established in 1968, it offers property owners coverage that private insurers decline to provide due to the high risks of building in regions that are flood prone and have been so designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The insurance is required by banks and mortgage companies, but the \$2 billion in annual premiums paid by the nearly 5 million policyholders nationwide cover only a fraction of the total paid out by FEMA in claims. Claims from victims of hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma last year alone are expected to exceed \$20 billion. Most of that will come from the Treasury, that is federal taxpayers.

FEMA spokesman Eugene Kinerny told the Philadelphia Inquirer that interest payments alone on the debt are expected to reach \$1.3 billion for the two fiscal years ending Sept. 30. But congressional attempts at reforming the program failed this year.

New rules are in order to control expansion or rebuilding to reduce potential losses.

Painkiller warnings need to be read to work

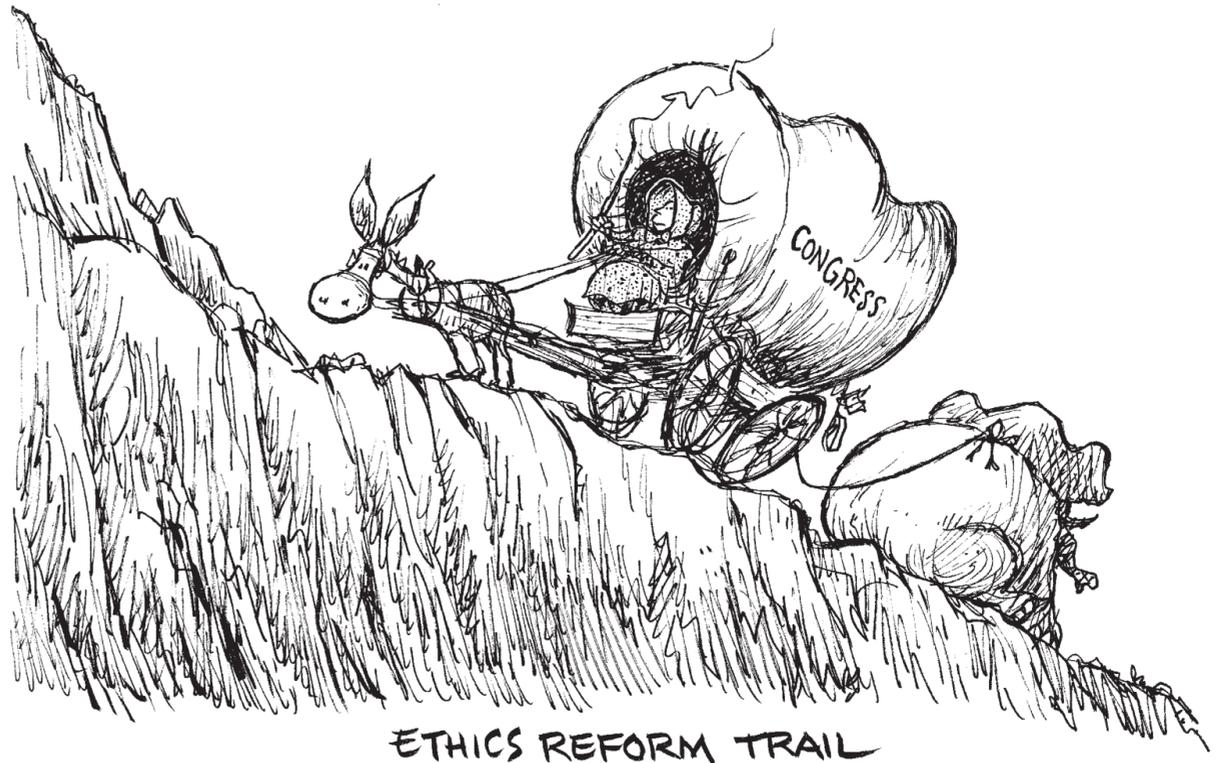
The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Too many people think no real harm can come from taking over-the-counter painkillers. But they can be wrong. Too much of any drug or any drug in combination with others can have dangerous results. Now federal authorities are stepping in to better warn the millions of Americans who take pills daily.

The drugs are easily accessible, cheap and sold to anybody. As a result, consumers seldom bother to read the labels to make sure they take the pills properly.

Consumers also ignore warnings about mixing painkillers with other drugs. They also tend to ignore the risks associated with taking painkillers and consuming alcoholic beverages. All this can, and does, lead to appalling side effects, including liver damage, gastrointestinal bleeding, kidney injury or even death.

To reduce those risks, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is mandating new labels, which include fluorescent or bold-faced type on labels prominently placed on containers. That's a welcome start, but it won't do any good unless consumers read and heed the directions.



YOUR

IEWS & COMMENTARY

Society values material objects more than life

To the editor:
Is human life being cheapened? It certainly is.

Material things are being prized above human life and have been since the Supreme Court authorized abortion.

This degrading is displayed on the front page of the Daily Journal from Dec. 14.

One man driving drunk and too fast to handle his car, crashed into a tree, killing a teenager. After almost a two-year trial, he was sentenced to five years in prison. With good behavior, he could be out in 2½ years. That's how much this life cost.

On the same page of the Journal, another lawbreaker, breaking into houses and stealing stuff, no one hurt, received a 10-year sentence and another 10 years on probation.

Can you see the difference in these two cases? Material objects over a human life?

A person could rob a bank and get 20 years in prison.

A person could take another life with a gun, say it was "accidental" and maybe get a 10-year sentence with half off for good behavior; five years. The difference between the money and the life: for money, 20 years; for life, five years.

The bottom line: This criminal system we have should be putting more emphasis on human life than money and things.

What is the priority?

Donald L. Sandlin
Franklin

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

GUIDELINES

- Letters published 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.

- 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.

WHERE TO SEND THE LETTER

Mail Letters to the editor The Daily Journal P. O. Box 699 Franklin, IN 46131	E-mail letters@thejournalnet.com Drop-off 2575 N. Morton St. (U.S. 31) Franklin	Fax 736-2766
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Using lottery profits for college a bad message

To the editor:
No, let's not use lotto proceeds for the higher education initiative.

Our state is sending an incredibly mixed message to teachers and students by discussing gambling and education in the same sentence.

We were not among those who voted to have a lottery in the first place. Gambling, at best, can be used to tax for the greater good, but, at worst, can be a progressively addictive behavior.

For the common good, governments need to promote better behaviors in young people.

Joni Metcalf-Kemp
Greenwood

Children yearning to experience peace, love, hope from adult society

The sign alongside the major thoroughfare pointed to the past as well as to the future. "Whatever Happened to ... Polio? See the Exhibit, 2nd floor."

Nearly 100 years ago, polio was the HIV/AIDS of its day. People lived in fear of contracting this debilitating disease, which seemingly held an intractable grip on the entire world.

Today, however, polio virtually has been eradicated.

The demise of polio occurred thanks to an extraordinary collaboration among researchers, public health officials, government leaders and nonprofit organizations. Their solutions were then delivered by everyday doctors making house calls in the neighborhoods of America and the villages of developing nations. As a result, polio is now confined to its own iron lung, gasping to stay alive.

The noteworthy sign was posted in front of the Smithsonian Museum of American History.

After terrorizing the world, polio now exists in just two places: nearly 100 medical cases in Africa and several exhibit cases in a history museum. Remarkable results are possible when people see the signs and work together to respond in amazing ways.

The same is true for healthy youth development.

A collaborative effort among parents, public officials and private organizations can make a huge difference in the lives of kids.

The children themselves are looking for signs that it might be so.

"Hey, coach. Are you going to call me 'Moose' again this year?" The anxious question came from an excited little leaguer who was playing for the same coach for a second season in a row.



Bill Stanczykiewicz

"Absolutely, Moose," the coach replied. "Head out to left field so that we can work on our cut-off throws."

The 10-year-old's strong, stocky build and hard-charging style of play led to the nickname. In turn, the nickname led to the player knowing that he was noticed, that he belonged and that he mattered. The nickname was a sign, and the player wanted to make sure the sign was still posted.

While none of the other players ever said a word about their nicknames, they still felt the same positive messages of healthy youth development.

The evidence was found on their thank you note to the coach at the end of the season. Instead of just signing their names — Sam, Will, Clark and Ryan — they also signed Shag, Unit, Superman and Tag. The little leaguers knew there was something special about those nicknames and something special about them.

We can never lose sight of the signs kids are looking for, signs of devoted adults who are passionately committed to their very existence.

Yes, adults who provide food, and health care, and education and fun youth programs. But also adults who take time with young people to go on a walk and discuss the changing seasons, who watch the game and ask about a favorite play-

er or who take time to create a nickname and display other signs that show they care.

That's one of the lessons evident at the makeshift memorial at Ground Zero.

Located at the edge of devastation, the memorial includes signs of hope created by kids during the aftermath of Sept. 11.

"Everyone here loves you," reads one of the handwritten notes, now laminated and hanging on a simple rope where two of the world's most impressive buildings formerly stood.

"If you need us, we will come to you and hold you. I have extra love that I can give to you. Come to Vermont, and we will show you the beauty of the world again. Love, Cassandra."

Or this word of advice: "If I were the President, I would go and shoot Osama bin Ladin in the butt. I feel sorry for you, and I'd come down and help, but I don't have a driver's license."

And, quite simply, "Dear friend, I'm sorry. I care about you. Chris."

Within the necessary clutter of foreign policy, military strategy and political calculation that defines our post Sept. 11 culture, the notes from these young people cut to the heart of the matter.

Love. Peace. Hope.

Which are exactly what children and youth are yearning to experience from the rest of us.

Let's keep that in mind as we embark on this New Year when much of the world, including Hoosier children, looks for signs of peace on earth and goodwill toward all.

Bill Stanczykiewicz is the president and chief executive officer of Indiana Youth Institute. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

Editor's blog: President Ford



Editor Scarlett Syse writes a blog for thejournalnet.com. Here is the latest offering.

Straight talk from Ford appreciated

Presidential funerals always move me. This week, though, I was especially struck that former President Gerald Ford picked a journalist (Tom Brokaw) to give one of his eulogies on Tuesday. I also appreciated it.

Ford may have been the last president to understand and embrace the role of the Fourth Estate. He knew that an open and free press and a fully informed citizenry are essential to democracy.

He actually liked journalists. Sheesh. Imagine that.

And from all the commentary I have seen during the past week, journalists liked him. That doesn't mean they weren't tough on him.

I suspect their fondness for Ford came because of his lack of political speak, his straightforward, no-spin answers, his honesty and his openness. In watching some of his old interviews over the weekend, I was stunned by his directness and candor.

Ask Ford a question, and he would answer it. No dodging. No word trickery. No leaving out a few facts. No parsing. No generalities. No pretty things up. Just plain talk.

Ask him where he stood on abortion, and he would tell you.

Ask him what he thought about gun control. He answered succinctly.

Ask him about his wife's mastectomy and her addiction to alcohol, and he would be specific and revealing in his answers.

He seemed to understand that getting information and the news out with little spin was the way to go. I am sure he did not like everything he read about himself in the papers, but he did not carry grudges.

Besides, he had just pardoned a president who was paranoid and secretive, the king of ill-will. That did not work.

Yes, Ford pardoned Nixon. But he also helped see to it that the nation knew all about Nixon's crimes and misdemeanors. The pardon came, but a cover-up didn't. The truth, not just the facts, came out.

Ford's forthrightness was much of why the public regained confidence in a government torn apart by Watergate.

If only more of today's public officials followed Ford's path of openness and honesty.

Scarlett Syse is editor of The Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com