

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

President Bush has pulled back on his insistence on warrantless surveillance.

OUR POINT

It took potential pressure from a Democratic Congress, but the decision reinforces the concept that the United States is a nation of laws.

Rule of law prevails in warrantless surveillance

The Daily Journal

The Bush administration has changed course and agreed to let a secret but independent panel of federal judges oversee the government's domestic spying program.

The shift likely will end a court fight over whether the warrantless surveillance program was legal.

The program, secretly authorized by President Bush shortly after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, was disclosed a little over a year ago, resulting in widespread criticism from lawmakers and civil libertarians who questioned its legality.

It allowed the National Security Agency, without approval from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, to monitor phone calls and e-mails between the United States and other countries when a link to terrorism is suspected.

Opposition to warrantless wiretapping was never about opposition to the president's efforts to root out terrorism. Rather, it clearly was a matter of law.

The United States is a nation of laws, and its actions should be in accord with law. The courts have consistently ruled that searches require warrants.

In the case of terrorism, the secretive surveillance court authorizes the warrants without revealing sensitive information.

In a letter to senators, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said that "any electronic surveillance that was occurring as part of the Terrorist Surveillance Program will now be conducted subject to the approval of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court."

Gonzales said Bush would not reauthorize the program once it expires.

After it was revealed in 2005, the administration vigorously defended the program as essential to national security. Although the secret court was established precisely to review requests for domestic surveillance warrants, the White House insisted that such oversight was not required by law and, in fact, would slow efforts to stop terrorists.

From the start, Bush maintained the warrantless program's existence was "fully consistent with my constitutional responsibilities and authorities," and said he would continue to reauthorize it "for as long as our nation faces a continuing threat from al-Qaida and related groups." Circumventing the court, he said, "enables us to move faster and quicker."

But in August, a federal judge in Detroit declared the spying program unconstitutional, saying it violated the rights to free speech and privacy and the separation of powers.

In October, a three-judge panel of the Cincinnati-based appeals court ruled that the administration could keep the program in place while it appeals the Detroit decision.

A change in the makeup of Congress, with Democrats taking control of the House, raised the specter of investigations into warrantless surveillance.

The change in policy may well be in response to this political shift.

Whatever the reason, following proper judicial procedures reinforces the message that America is above all a nation of laws.

Focus: Campaign

Clinton's candidacy unsettles Republicans

Scrrips Howard News Service

The moment every American with even a casual interest in politics knew was coming has come: Hillary Rodham Clinton is running for president.

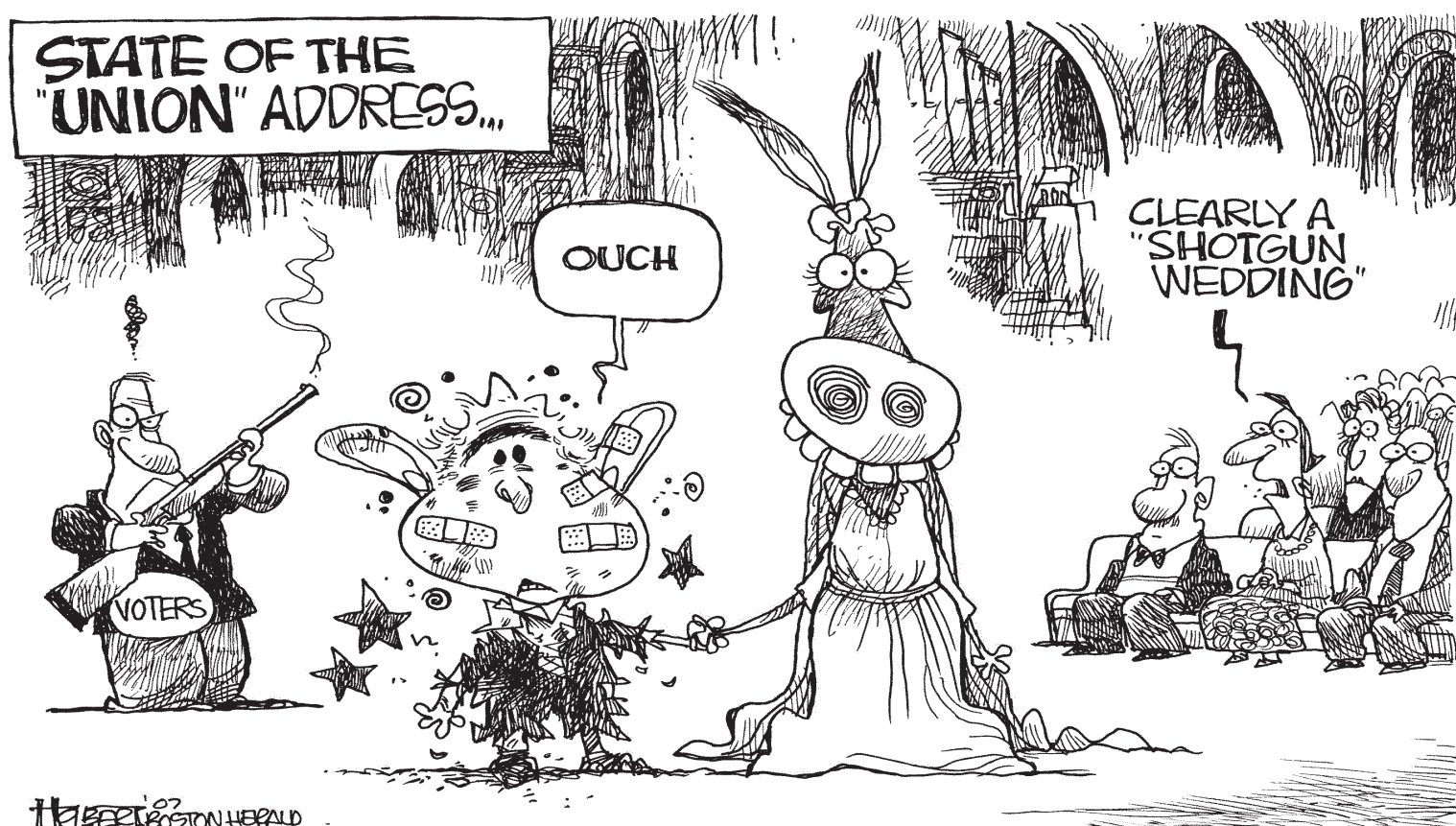
Technically, she announced formation of an exploratory committee, but the video on her Web site, "Hillary for President," was titled "I'm In." and, she says, "I'm in to win." In the video she was warm, low-key and conversational, and it was well received by the political pros.

What was interesting was the muted reaction from the Republican right. When she left the White House and moved to New York, the right jeered and taunted her and urged her to run for president because they would ... they would ... well, they never said what they would do except it was going to be bad. She was a polarizing harridan against whom the Republicans would rally, that's what.

Now one hears the sounds of bets being hedged. Clinton proved to be a methodical, disciplined politician, fearsome fund-raiser and an effective senator. She raised more than \$30 million to win Senate re-election despite having no serious opposition. Her presidential run shows evidence of being similarly meticulous and well thought out. And Bill Clinton's administration, fairly or unfairly, is looking better in retrospect.

Instead of the easy target they expected, Republicans are beginning to get the queasy notion that Hillary Clinton could indeed be the nation's first female president. True, there seems no middle ground on Clinton. She has exceptionally high negatives — 44 percent in a recent poll — but she also has twice the support among Democrats as the next leading candidate.

She is that magnitude of celebrity that she can get by with just her first name. Maybe former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani among the Republicans has it, and soon maybe Barack Obama among the Democrats will too. The Illinois senator is shaping up at this early, early date as perhaps Clinton's most serious opponent, a great speaker, handsome, compelling resume, said to draw crowds like a rock star — and woefully short on experience.



YOUR

VIEWS & COMMENTARY

Longer kindergarten day doesn't double learning

To the editor:

I, for one, loved kindergarten. We churned homemade butter, gathered for story time and curled up for cat-naps. What wasn't to love?

This year, Gov. Mitch Daniels wants to make "an absolutely irrevocable commitment" to full-day kindergarten.

The kindergarten in me shouts, "Hooray!"

Kids today, however, may find less to celebrate. The National Center for Education Statistics followed 22,000 kindergartners nationwide, some attending half-day programs and some full-day. At the end of the year, children's reading and math skills were all but indistinguishable.

In other words, longer school days meant twice the amount of time in school but not more learning. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that more schooling has not paid off.

Over the past 20 years, preschool and kindergarten, or "early education" in today's terms, have gone from being a la carte to the new must-have.

Most states offer full-day kindergarten, and many have also entered the preschool business.

More working moms and increases in single-parent families have driven some of these changes. Also stirring the pot were a handful of educators who thought more early learning would help turn the tide of poor school achievement. It was a respectable theory, but it hasn't worked in practice.

Preschool attendance has risen from 15 percent in the 1960s to 65 percent today.

Yet the "Nation's Report Card," the annual federal assessment, shows little to no improvement in overall school achievement during this time. This general observation has been documented in countless small and model programs, some well-known like Head Start, which find academic benefits to children fleeing.

Studies monitoring children's behavior also give little hope for optimism. More and more evidence is surfacing that preschool incubates negative social behavior.

A research team from Stanford and Berkeley recently reached this disturbing conclusion: "Attending a center also appears to suppress social development, including the child's motivated engagement in kindergarten classrooms, self-regulation, and a variety of interpersonal skills."

To parents, these findings translate into real-world consequences like depression,

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.
- 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.

WHERE TO SEND THE LETTER

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bullying and tantrums. That's not exactly the results most parents are after.

Don't get me wrong. Some preschools and kindergartens are downright terrific. Wonderful teachers, programs and creative curricula operate across the country.

But for early schooling to benefit children, the new environment must be better than the child's home environment. It turns out that there are few schools or programs that do a better job than the average American mom or dad.

But educators are on to one thing: Education is not what it used to be. Time magazine recently ran an unforgettable cover story called "Dropout Nation," reporting that one out of three students won't graduate from high school.

One working solution is competition. For instance, Arizona currently has more than 400 charter schools giving traditional schools a run for their money, and at a lower cost to taxpayers. A Goldwater Institute analysis of test scores of 60,000 Arizona public school students found that charter students learn more than their peers in regular public schools.

Indiana has a handful of innovative charter schools, but limits on funding and the number of schools put the brakes on this effective reform. Lifting the caps on funding and the number of allowable charter schools would send a message to educators across the country that Indiana is open for business.

Milwaukee is home to the nation's best-known school choice

program, which has cut the high school dropout rate almost in half for participating students. Indiana's Friedman Foundation recently issued a report which found that even a modest choice system could reduce the dropout count by almost 4,000 students.

These proven reforms can make a lasting difference for students. Universal school choice would help the Daniels administration reach its goal of putting kids first and make good on America's promise of a quality education for all students. No extra kindergarten required.

Darcy Olsen,
President of the
Goldwater Institute
Phoenix

Johnson County appears eager to avoid progress

To the editor:

The front page of the Jan. 13 edition featured, among other subjects, an article called "Toll-road rage." Those interviewed or who had comments printed are 100 percent not for progress. These comments were directed at the proposed Indiana Commerce Connector (a bypass or outer loop).

Before this negative display, the same types of feelings were displayed regarding a natural gas pipeline that might run through Johnson County. Before the pipeline reaction, there was the granddaddy of them all, the southern extension of Interstate 69. Apparently when it comes to progress or maybe a better way of life, Johnson County is to be left out.

Just for the fun of it, let's

suppose there'll be a rapid transit system (rail type) developed, that would run from Columbus or Bloomington (your choice) to Indianapolis. What would be your reaction?

Not much has been offered to Johnson County over the years regarding progress (let's leave out running water, natural gas, electricity, telephone and cable TV). We wonder what the reaction was when Interstate 65 was proposed or maybe when State Road 37 was made dual lane. We bet those plans got grandma or grandpa flying.

Keep the negative thoughts like sprawl and low-paying jobs. (The right kind of sprawl is good). The county has a tax base that's woefully in need of help; and the local governments have no idea where the bucks are coming from to meet future budgets. Stay negative and get ready to accept service levels that you have not witnessed before.

The mayor of Franklin wants to revitalize downtown Franklin. What for? Give progress a chance. Johnson County needs what Greensburg got — one big payroll.

What's here now is not working. When I mentioned local government, our public schools are part of that package. They don't have a clue as to where the dollars will come from.

For the schools to go to the property tax well is almost a thing of the past. If the local governments and schools can't stay ahead of the curve ball, then your wish will come true: decay.

I have a retired farmer friend in Shelby County. It's possible that the toll road would take some of his land. He hopes it doesn't. On the other hand, he also accepts progress.

Why can't we?

Ed Woods
Greenwood

Club director was given no chance to improve

To the editor:

The Boys and Girls Club director was treated shabbily. Is this how you repay a long service employee, by destroying him?

Accepted practice suggests if your employer is unhappy with your performance, you are interviewed and given the chance to correct. If the employer is unable to do so, discipline to the extent of termination is unwarranted.

It seems to me that the board of directors is derelict in their duty and they are blaming the director.

This wrong should be corrected.

Robert D. Stultz
Franklin

Don't wig out, but could you spare your hair?

He didn't want me to write this because he didn't want me to mention his name.

I insisted that what he did was very cool and would make an interesting column, but he didn't want to make a big deal out of it. That's just the way he is.

He told me, "I don't want people thinking I'm trying to show off or get some attention for it."

What he did was cut his hair. He had really long hair that he usually kept in a ponytail. It was dark, thick, straight and long, about 12 inches. We always wondered if he had American Indian blood running through his veins.

As someone with an ever-diminishing head of hair, I was and am envious.

His spousal equivalent died a few years ago of cancer. They were together a long time. When she was going through chemotherapy, she lost her hair, so they bought a wig for her to wear. It was a good one made of human hair.

That's when he learned about



Norman Knight

organizations that provide wigs for people who have lost their hair due to illness. He learned that the organizations usually accept donated hair with which to make the wigs.

I don't think he grew his hair with the plan of cutting it off and donating it. That is not the way he does things. I think it just sort of happened that he let it grow. It grew longer and longer.

Her teenage son also had grown his hair very long. The son cut his off a few months ago and donated it to Locks of Love. The son told him about it. Maybe that's when he got the idea to cut his. He didn't say.

Sometimes people who have been through traumatic events

use the negative experience as a chance to do something positive.

Elie Weisel survived the Holocaust and spent the rest of his life educating and reminding the world about that horrible event.

Others do things on a perhaps smaller but no less important scale.

Many, many years ago I lost a dear friend to a drunken driver. His brother, also a friend, joined Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and worked tirelessly in that organization.

I think it was a way for him to do something, to be active rather than just dwell on it. It was a physical way to cope with the reality of the situation.

My formerly long-haired friend didn't want me to write about him, so I'll write about Locks of Love instead.

It's a charitable organization that collects human hair to make wigs for sick children who can't afford them. It's not the only organization out there that provides such help; it's just the one he chose.

The requirements to donate are:

- Hair must be 10 inches long or longer.
- It must be clean and braided or held together with a rubber band.

- It may be artificially colored but cannot be damaged.
- Gray hair is not accepted.

His niece, who is a beautician, cut his hair for him and made sure Locks of Love received it. But you can do it yourself. If someone is interested in donating, he or she can put the hair in a plastic bag and mail it to: Locks of Love at 2925 10th Ave. North, Suite 102, Lake Worth FL 33461.

I don't think he will mind that I wrote this column since I didn't mention his name.

I hope not, anyway.

And he might not want me to say this, but that was a very cool thing he did, that's for sure.

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