

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:

Cell-phone ban won't make drivers safer

Journal & Courier, Lafayette

Indiana lawmakers believe the roads will be a lot safer if people stop talking on their hand-held cell phones while they are driving.

They're probably right. But that's no reason to legislate the matter. Even if the legislature goes ahead, it will not have addressed other activities that are also potentially dangerous.

While driving, you will still be able to talk on a cell phone should it have a headset. You'll also be able to eat while driving, put on makeup, dig for CDs, discipline children, argue, cry, laugh at jokes, fiddle with the radio, peer at maps — you get the picture.

Four states and the District of Columbia have banned the use of hand-held phones while driving. Other locations, including Chicago and Detroit, have enacted local restrictions on cell phone usage while driving.

We don't need such laws. We need drivers who pay attention to the task at hand: getting from point A to point B. We need to recognize that distracted drivers create road hazards that can kill.

Forbidding Hoosiers to talk on hand-held cell phones while driving may make us feel as if we are addressing a serious issue, but such legislation will do little to solve the larger problem.

State closer to end of serial meetings

Kokomo Tribune

On Sept. 10, 2000, Indiana University fired Bob Knight, its men's basketball coach of 29 years. Later, it was revealed, the publicly funded school's board of trustees met in small groups to discuss dumping the popular and iconic Knight out of sight of the public.

The trustees avoided the Indiana Open Door Law's public notification requirement by simply avoiding a quorum.

That tactic is commonly known as a "serial meeting," and is solely used to avoid public scrutiny.

It, however, might not be used much longer. Last week, the state House of Representatives voted 89-7 to close the serial-meeting loophole, and folks who value openness in government owe a bit of thanks to Kokomo Republican Jim Buck for that vote.

This much-needed reform passed the Indiana Senate, 48-2, in the last session, and 49-0 in 2005. Yet it died in the House Government and Regulatory Reform Committee, a committee Buck chaired.

Not only did Buck vote to move the legislation out of committee this session, the former chairman of the committee co-sponsored it.

Government works best when it is open and accountable to constituents, and Buck acted in the best interest of that government.

Don't ignore missing child information

The Herald Bulletin, Anderson

MySpace.com and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children have joined forces to further alert the public of missing children. Starting this week, anyone with a MySpace account will be notified of Amber Alerts.

All MySpace users will now be alerted by a small text box at the top of their home pages.

The user can then click on the box for a description and photo of the child and more information about the suspect.

Only alerts issued within a person's ZIP code are posted.

The more people who know about Amber Alerts, the more likely the missing will be found. More sites need to link up and spread the word. The more ways to protect our children, the better.

Amber Alerts are now available in your e-mail box, as well. They can be distributed via text messages where you can designate up to five ZIP codes from which you'd like to be alerted in case of an Amber Alert activation. Go to www.wirelessamberalerts.org for more information.

So when you see that notification at the top of your profile or you get that text message across your cell phone screen, take a few seconds and read it. What you see in that moment may change the life of a child. If it were your child, you'd pray someone else would do the same thing.

Earlier primaries unfair to some candidates

Repository, Canton, Ohio

Four large states are thinking about holding presidential primary elections in February 2008, several weeks earlier than they did in 2004.

The states are California, Florida, Illinois and New Jersey.

Their primaries will mean many more convention delegates will be chosen a month before Ohioans vote for their presidential nominees and the delegates those nominees will take to the summer political conventions.

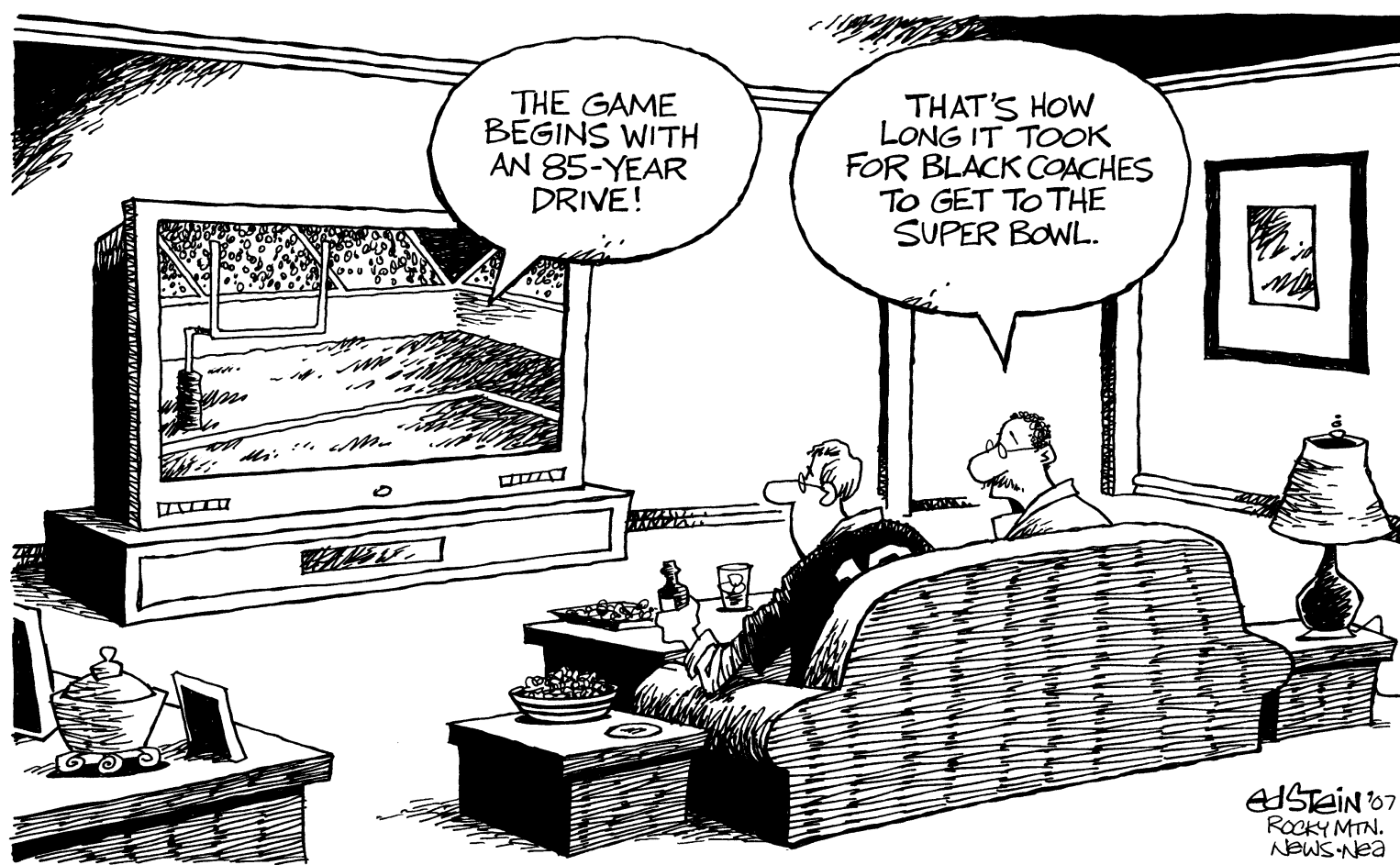
What is at stake with earlier voting? For each individual state involved in the move, what is at stake is greater clout.

Speaking early and forcefully is an advantage to any state contemplating the move.

What is at stake for the rest of the country is a decision about the major party nominees that is made too early.

It is an environment where candidates who cannot raise enormous sums of money to run early in four big-population states will not be competitive.

It is an environment where a candidacy cannot evolve and emerge over time.



Alstein '07
Rocky Mtn.
News-Net

YOUR

VIEWS & COMMENTARY

Change in road map of Indiana leads to progress

To the editor:

I found a 1960s road map of Indiana recently. It was like finding an alarm clock, in a way — a real wake-up call to the need for transportation progress in our state.

You see, this map, when placed side-by-side with a 2007 map, looked almost identical. Nearly four decades have gone by without much major change in how we get around.

Meanwhile, the world around us has changed — and continues to change — at a rapid pace. That's why Senate Bill 1 is so important to the future of this state.

Senate Bill 1 has already been met with resistance at public meetings, and I understand why. Every major interstate that's ever been built has gone through similar growing pains. If you'd look back at newspaper articles when some of our current interstates were built, you'd probably see the same sort of opposition, the same kind of concerns, the same tone of comments.

But ask yourself this question: Where would we be without Interstate 70 or Interstate 69 or Interstate 465? How often do we use those interstates? How much more difficult would it be to go to work, to go on vacation, to go see a relative, if those highways didn't exist?

Aren't you glad that there were people back then who cared about the kind of transportation system you would inherit?

Often, the reason cited against new highway construction is disruption and destruction of the natural landscape. But I beg to differ. The current interstate systems we have today have actually enabled more people to see just how beautiful our state truly is. The way they have been carved through Indiana's landscape provides motorists with a scenic view they might not have been able to experience before. Anyone who's driven Interstate 74 toward Cincinnati in the fall knows exactly what I mean.

While the 1960s road map of Indiana looks virtually the same



WRITE A

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

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as today's, change has been drastic in the way those roads are built, particularly where funding is concerned.

The reality is no interstate-caliber highway can be built in today's world without public-private partnerships. The federal government contribution to highways may drop by as much as 30 percent after 2008, based on Federal Highway Administration figures.

They've simply overspent. The cost of new construction has risen beyond the government's capacity to keep pace.

So we've got to be creative to have the same kind of impact road projects of years gone by had.

That's what the Indiana Commerce Connector does. It uses a creative approach through a public-private partnership.

More importantly, the road does more than just connect central Indiana communities in a bypass around Indianapolis.

It also enables the ongoing expansion of I-69 to be a freeway. The tolls collected by the Commerce Connector will eliminate the need for tolls on I-69 altogether.

I can't think of a road project in the last half-century that will have as much positive impact in such a large area of the state as this project will have.

And that's just from the transportation angle. Look at where Honda and Toyota located in this state. The transportation system played a huge role in those decisions. With improved highways, even more big business is bound to come our way.

Transportation is the key that unlocks so much of our state's future.

Let's change that map for the first time in more than four decades. The new version might just be a "treasure" map for future generations.

Sen. Tom Wyss
Republican
Fort Wayne

'Solution' to Social Security crisis unfeasible

To the editor:

As we get closer to the time that Social Security trust funds will run dry, we hear repeated calls that something must be done.

So far, the political wisdom has been to do nothing, avoiding any backlash from voters. This can't continue forever.

If you look at a couple of examples of how the federal government has operated in the past, I think we can get an idea of how they will "resolve" the Social Security crisis.

When the government compensated victims of Sept. 11, they decided that if any family had invested in life insurance or had other death benefits, the federal benefit would be reduced by the amount of the death benefit. At first I thought this sounded reasonable.

Why should a family receive a large life insurance benefit plus receive additional benefits from the taxpayers?

But then it occurred to me: This is the same as if the government paid all families the full benefit then confiscated the life insurance payment.

Another example applies to retired federal employees. Retirees can accept a reduced annuity in order to leave a survivor benefit for his/her spouse.

Then the government decided

that if a surviving spouse paid into Social Security and qualified for benefits on retirement, the Social Security benefit would be reduced \$2 for every \$3 received from the survivor annuity. This is the same as if the government paid the surviving spouse his/her full Social Security benefit, then confiscated two-thirds of the survivor benefit.

The government defined what the Social Security benefit would be and also defined the cost of providing a survivor benefit for the spouse of a federal worker. Then they take a portion of the benefit back.

So what will be the solution to the Social Security crisis? The federal government will decide to reduce Social Security benefits for all people receiving any other kind of benefit.

This will include retirement benefits from state or local government, retirement benefits from private sources and income from IRAs and other investments. It will be the same as if they simply confiscate some or all of the secondary benefit.

Politically, this is very easy. The number of voters who save nothing for retirement far outnumber the number of voters who save and invest income. Additionally, all people with any sort of investment income are categorized as greedy, already having more money than they need. They will receive no sympathy from the majority of voters who save nothing.

Our financial system already tracks exactly how much money is involved. Businesses and financial institutions annually issue 1099 forms detailing all interest and dividends. Recipients of state or private retirement benefits receive W-2 forms, earnings statements, listing their benefits.

Politically, it may begin as a reduction of \$1 for every \$4 received in supplemental benefits. Once the practice is established, it will be easy to eventually confiscate most or all of supplemental benefits.

Start letting your congressional representatives know that Social Security offsets is not a reasonable solution to the Social Security crisis.

Dennis Sherfy
Greenwood

Two cultures collide when aging parents need care

During this Winter Term at Franklin College, I taught a class on various aspects of China, a subject my students were very interested in.

The Chinese culture is predominantly based on Confucianism, which stresses human relations, especially between parents and children. There is an expectation that the parents will take care of the children when they are young and the children will take care of the parents when they are old. This arrangement is most aptly referred to as "the circle of life."

Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China are all Confucian societies; thus, around 65 percent of elderly parents in these countries live with their children. However, things sometimes change for those who immigrate to the United States from Confucian societies.

A few weeks ago, an article was published in San Francisco about a retired wealthy Chinese man from Taiwan. He and his wife were invited by their son, a medical doctor married to an attorney, to move to the United States.

However, the son and his wife changed their minds and decided to find his parents a nice, respectable retirement home.

Apparently, juggling careers and children of their own was enough of a burden without adding the responsibility of aging parents.



Yu-long
Ling

The doctor and his wife took his parents shopping for the best possible facility available. All of them were top notch, with excellent medical services, food and recreational facilities. There were also beautiful gardens to walk through and enjoy.

Finally, a selection was made, and the father told his son to sign them up for their new home. But first, the father said that he needed some time alone with his wife.

While their son and daughter-in-law were making last-minute arrangements, the parents tightly joined hands, calmly walked out to the balcony and jumped 22 stories to their deaths.

Why would these parents do this to themselves and their children?

The son and daughter-in-law were trying to provide the best material security for their parents, and I am sure that the parents not only understood but also appreciated what had been done for them.

But what the son and his wife did not understand was that what

the parents needed most was a sense of belonging, the psychological security that only family can provide.

The parents felt abandoned when their son wished to send them to an unfamiliar place, with strangers who were most likely unable to understand Chinese.

In Confucian culture, family is the most valued thing in life.

However in America, we honor individualism; and as parents, we don't want to burden our children.

The problem in this story was that the parents were still engaged in Chinese traditions, while their son and his family had adopted Western practices.

In essence, no one was at fault. Cultural differences came between parents and their son.

This story reminds me of an article published by the Daily Journal titled "Sibling rivalries affect care of aging parents."

The article was about siblings who were fighting over how to handle the personal belongings of their aged mother, who was preparing to move to a nursing home.

There may have been disagreement, but there was absolutely no doubt about the decision to move her to the home. That much was a given.

For Asian-Americans, however, the decisions on how to best care for aging parents are far more complex.

Though pulled by Western

influence, they cannot disregard that they have learned from birth that aging is not a disease but a natural part of life that we will all experience.

When I think about these two cases, I believe that the first story is far more severe than the second.

Yes, in the second story, the children sat around and bickered over their mother's personal belongings, but in the first story, the children had to make funeral arrangements.

As I said before, aging is a natural occurrence, and we all have to deal with it in one way or the other. The question our children will face is how to take care of us.

In America, assisted living is a nice way to enjoy the last stages of life.

In fact, I have many friends who are quite happy in that environment and have many positive comments about their situation.

But when that point in my life comes, I am sure my son, Tony, will know what to do with me and his mother.

Based on our background and culture, he'd better.

Professor Yu-long Ling holds the Williams Chair in Law and Public Service at Franklin College and is an internationally respected expert in foreign policy. He writes this weekly opinion column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.