

OPINION

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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

Being overweight and not exercising are increasing problems for Hoosiers.

OUR POINT

The governor's 10 in 10 Challenge offers a chance to reverse this trend.

Lose weight, gain health benefits with '10 in 10'

The Daily Journal

Gov. Mitch Daniels hopes Hoosiers will be big winners by emulating one of the nation's biggest losers.

Beginning Monday, all Indiana residents can take part in the 10 in 10 Challenge, a challenge to lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks.

One of the people promoting the effort is Pam Smith of Martinsville, who represented the Hoosier state on the latest season of the NBC TV show "The Biggest Loser."

The 25-year-old mother weighed 247 pounds when she was selected for the show. She lost 40 pounds over the course of the season and has lost 28 more since she returned home.

"Losing weight was hard," she said, "and I still struggle with it; but I decided to take charge of my life and set the example for my children."

Obesity is a problem among all Americans, not just Hoosiers. The World Health Organization estimates there are a billion overweight people across the globe, with 300 million of them obese.

The organization blames the problem on increased consumption of energy-dense foods high in saturated fats and reduced physical activity.

The answer clearly lies in eating better and exercising more.

Indiana Health Commissioner Judy Monroe said, "This is the time of the year that many people devote to making healthy changes in their lives. The 10 in 10 Challenge is a great way to help those who have resolved to change their eating habits and exercise more, plus stop smoking along the way."

Challenge participants can log on to the INShape Indiana Web site (www.in.gov/inshape) to sign up.

Registered participants will first receive an e-mail outlining how they can prepare themselves for the challenge, such as keeping a food diary, taking an inventory of their pantry and other tips. During the 10 weeks, participants will receive a weekly e-mail instructing them on how to lose one pound along with encouragement to stop smoking.

The weekly e-mails are being prepared with the assistance of a trainer and a nutritionist. They will incorporate one suggestion for a change in diet (250 fewer calories a day) and another for increased physical activity (burning 250 additional calories a day).

At the end of 10 weeks, participants will be asked to report back on their weight loss.

A network of county volunteers, many of whom are already involved in anti-smoking and obesity prevention efforts in their local communities, will coordinate the 10 in 10 Challenge in their local communities.

Daniels said a combined effort between existing resources, county volunteers and employers who want to promote the Challenge as part of their own employee wellness program brings the 10 in 10 Challenge home to your area of Indiana.

The local partner in the effort is Partnership for a Healthier Johnson County.

With a support group in place, the governor's program offers Hoosiers a solid chance in turning the corner on this health crisis.

Focus: Congress

Pay-as-you-go will keep spending in check

Scrrips Howard News Service

House Democrats made good on one of their promises, restoring a budget procedure that the Republicans allowed to lapse in 2002 designed to restrain deficit spending.

The procedure, known as "pay-go," shorthand for "pay as you go," basically requires that any new spending or tax cuts be offset by spending cuts or tax increases elsewhere in the budget. It played a small but critical role in the string of four balanced budgets that ended in 2001.

The Republicans, who over the past five years presided over the largest federal spending increases since the Great Society, are still not enthusiastic about it. The Democrats voted unanimously to revive the measure; only 48 Republicans did.

The rap against pay-go is that it makes tax cuts much more difficult while only marginally affecting spending because it does nothing to contain the automatic increases in massive existing entitlement programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

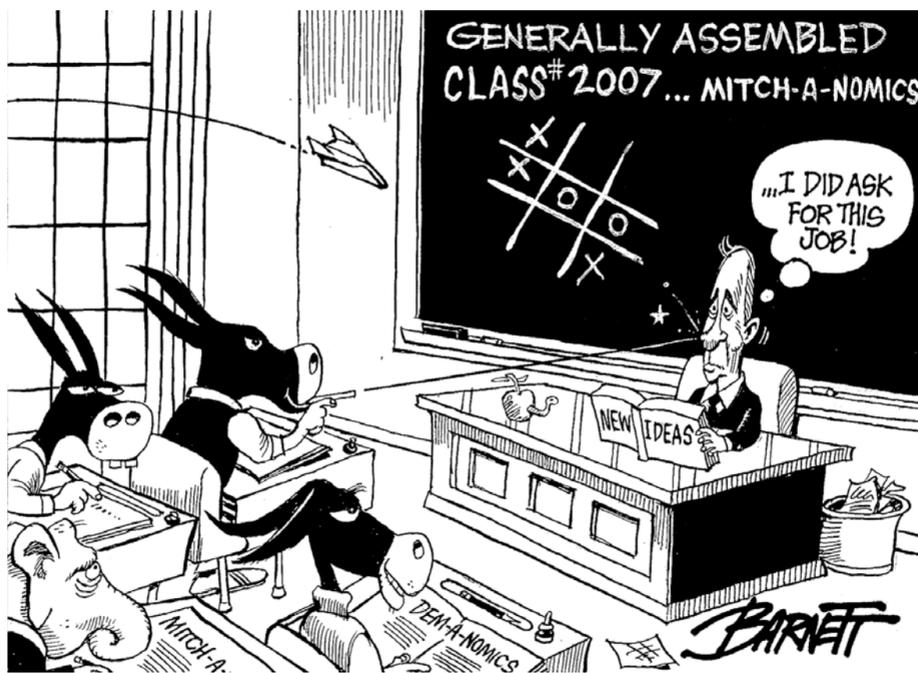
True to a degree, but it will act to restrain new deficit spending and tax increases achieved by borrowing against future revenues by making lawmakers answer a simple question: How are we going to pay for this?

It is a question worth asking as the national debt nears \$9 trillion and paying the interest on it is the fastest-growing item in the federal budget.

No question pay-go will make lawmakers' lives more difficult, but at least on a bipartisan basis. It greatly complicates President Bush's efforts to extend his tax cuts and Democratic plans to increase spending on health care, homeland security and education.

And pay-go will be a serious obstacle to eliminating the increasingly unpopular Alternative Minimum Tax, the abolition of which will require the tax committees to make up for \$1 trillion in revenue lost over 10 years.

However, pay-go is not a straitjacket. It can be easily waived, although the Senate is considering requiring a 60-vote supermajority to do so. But having pay-go in place will force Congress to focus on the fact that our revenues and borrowing power are not infinite.



YOUR VIEWS

Compensate landowners fairly for road initiatives

To the editor:

More plans have been proposed for Major Moves. Included in these plans are a new terrain extension of Interstate 69 between Indianapolis and Evansville, a bypass of I-69 around Indianapolis and a new bypass in northwest Indiana.

All three of these projects are being promoted as necessary to improve traffic flow, especially because of heavy truck traffic; create jobs from the road's construction; foster economic development that may occur in the areas where these roads will be built; and bring in money for the state when these roads are leased to private operators.

It is probable eminent domain will be used for the state to acquire the land needed to build these highways, and it can be expected that the price offered in most cases will not be enough for land owners to feel fairly compensated for the loss of their property.

To proceed with the plans will require approval by both houses of the state legislature.

Since these road-building proposals have a profit motive for the state and an economic development purpose and the use of its power of eminent domain can be expected to be used, it would seem another major move by the state should be considered.

As a condition for approval of these plans, the property owners should be compensated at 150 percent of the appraised value of their property.

It would seem only proper that the landowners who in most cases would be negatively affected should be compensated more than the usual fair market value because of the following:

- The state intends to profit from these projects.
- Economic development, private development and profits are expected to be the results of these projects.
- The state can be expected to take much of this land by its power or threat to use eminent domain.
- The roads cannot be built without the land being taken.

I urge our state legislators to consider these factors when this issue is brought before them during this legislative session.

Don Strietelmeier
Hope

Speak to Boys and Girls Club board about director

To the editor:

The board members of the Franklin Boys and Girls Club asked Chris Johnston to step down as the executive director of the club effective in February.

As concerned parents and members of the community, I wanted to make each of you aware of a decision made by a few that will directly affect so many, especially the youth of Johnson County.

If you in your dealings with Chris and the club have had a positive experience, please let the board members know.

I realize that this will not change their decision. My hope is to show Chris that he has support from the community and that people appreciate his dedication (he continues to keep the club running each and every day) and his love for the youth of Johnson County.

Thank you in advance for any e-mails that you send, conversations that you have with board members or just a kind word to Chris and his family.

Sara Johnston, mother of
Chris Johnston,
Morgantown

Small efforts by Hoosiers will eliminate litter

To the editor:

I am writing in response to the letter by fifth-grader Zane Henig regarding the problem of litter. I applaud this young man for publicly addressing this huge problem. Way to go, Zane.

Like Zane, I am also tired of seeing trash everywhere I go. And I am also puzzled over what makes people act in such a disgusting and irresponsible way. I live in the Cordry-Sweetwater area. Nineveh Road south of Ed's Trading Post looks like the city dump.

For exercise, I walk a couple of miles nearly every day. I never leave home without two plastic grocery bags. As I walk, I pick up litter and usually always manage to fill one sack. I would like to challenge others to do the same.

Thanks, Zane, for calling attention to this ugly problem. As a fifth-grade teacher, I plan to share your letter with my students. Perhaps your letter will move people to take action against the trashing of streets and roadsides of our beautiful state.

Jayne M. Yount
Nineveh

What we feed our minds just as important as what we eat

New Year's resolutions often involve dieting, paying attention to what we put into our bodies. I recently read an article by the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh that led me to consider what I put into my mind.

I confess that I enjoy TV detective shows, particularly those which use forensic science and psychological profiling to solve crimes. But after the fourth show in less than two weeks that focused on serial killers, and which offered graphic recreations of how the victims — always women — died, I began to ponder Thich Nhat Hanh's advice.

What does a diet of violence and fear do to one's inner life? How does such a diet affect how we view strangers we meet, our neighbors and our community?

While I'm not advocating censorship or suggesting we pretend that we live in a G-rated world, I do have a question. Why aren't we exploring goodness with as much curiosity as we do evil?

One answer often given is that goodness is boring. But that is completely false. Goodness is only boring when it is equated with niceness or bland wholesomeness. But goodness is far more complex and fascinating than simple politeness. In reality, goodness has as much depth to it as evil, and goodness is far more elusive.

If you don't believe me, let me suggest a 30-day change of diet, one that many of us, without knowing it, have already begun.

The funeral of President Gerald Ford was moving and powerful, and I believe this was because we were given an opportunity to explore how uncommon is common goodness. President Ford's short term of service in the White House was politically very difficult, having many clashes with Congress.

But the focus of the eulogies this past week was not on the man's political successes or battles but on his character.

In our current climate of political



David
Carlson

nastiness, how surprising it was to learn that Presidents Ford and Carter, opponents in the 1976 election, had become close friends, so close that each promised to give the eulogy of the other when death came.

We didn't need Chevy Chase's impersonation to remember that Ford wasn't a perfect man or the most brilliant of presidents. But in one of our nation's darkest moments, Ford risked his political future to try to heal our nation. And he paid for that decision in the next election.

But at the various services honoring Ford, we witnessed the sense of peace that exuded from the grief of the Ford family. And in that peace it was clear to all that we had lost a very good person.

For a second course of goodness, search the Internet for information on the Prajwala movement of Hyderabad, India, and its founder, Dr. Sinitha Krishnan.

Krishnan's life mission is to rescue children who have been sold into the sex trade of her country. In India alone, 2 million children enter prostitution each year. It is shameful to learn that one-fourth of the clients in this terrible exploitation of children in India are visiting Americans.

While this might seem a story of immense evil, the story becomes an exploration of goodness when we turn to Krishnan. A victim of gang rape herself when she was 15, Krishnan was shamed, blamed and treated as the criminal. But she refused to be a victim.

After earning graduate degrees in psychiatric social work, she has

Lawmakers have tax cuts on table, but fiscal reality checks are in order

By MIKE SMITH
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

With the state back in the black, lawmakers are starting the 2007 legislative session with plenty of proposed tax breaks on the table.

Some would offer help for veterans and active-duty soldiers. Others would help motorists or those who have stillbirths. Students and teachers also could benefit under proposals focusing on school supplies and textbooks.

The race to ease taxpayers' plight comes as no surprise. Indiana has a balanced budget after several years of deficit spending, and the state is projected to take in \$1.5 billion more over the next two fiscal years.

"That's the best time to do it, because people (lawmakers) can say, 'We're in really good shape,'" said retired Indiana University economist Morton Marcus, who has closely monitored the General Assembly for years.

But all tax credits, deductions and exemptions cost the state revenue, and efforts to cut taxes will compete with proposals to increase spending that already exceed new money Indiana is projected to take in during the next budget cycle.

Those two factors could help doom most of the tax- and fee-cut proposals, which so far add up to hundreds of millions of dollars.

But even if those factors weren't present, taxpayers might be wise to keep the proposals in perspective.

Marcus says 80 percent to 90 percent of proposed tax breaks

are filed just to pander to the public.

"It's almost entirely a political show," he said. "It's to be able to say, 'I introduced this tax cut' or 'We introduced it, and they (other party or chamber) killed it.'"

Those behind specific proposals contend they would benefit deserving groups of Hoosiers.

Sen. Ron Alting, R-Lafayette, has filed a bill that would provide a sales-tax exemption for back-to-school supplies during a four-day period in early August.

During that time, Indiana's 6-percent sales tax would not apply to things such as crayons, computers, compasses and globes.

Alting said he often hears from parents who are struggling to pay for school and college expenses along with meeting increasing medical and energy costs.

"When it comes to schools, we've got almost a million kids in K-12, and I think nobody questions that for a majority of families with children, it's tough," Alting said. "It's real tough."

According to the Legislative Services Agency, the proposal would cost the state about \$40 million in lost revenue over the next two fiscal years.

Democrats, who have a slim majority in the House, plan to propose removing the sales tax on gasoline. Fewer than 10 states apply their state sales tax to gasoline.

House Speaker Patrick Bauer, D-South Bend, says big oil companies are profiting from price-gouging and Indiana should not be making money from that.

House Democrats say the average motorist could save \$150

opened 22 schools and shelters in India and has thereby rescued more than 3,000 young women and children, many with HIV.

While watching a recent PBS interview with Krishnan, I realized that I was looking into the face of true goodness. She explained that as a devout Hindu she believes God had put her on Earth for this specific purpose. She looked away from the camera as she added that God would let her live until she accomplished what she is here to do.

As the program panned to a scene of her playing tag with children from one of her schools, the narrator shared that Krishnan has been beaten 14 times by sex slavers since she began her work. Unlike niceness, goodness is costly. Perhaps that is why it is as rare as diamonds.

Now, if you are ready for some dessert on this diet of goodness, I recommend the film "The Straight Story" by David Lynch. Yes, David Lynch is the same director we more commonly associate with films as dark and terrifying as our nightmares. But in this film, Lynch explores forgiveness as a long and complicated journey.

"The Straight Story" is no Disney flick, but a deliberately slow-paced story that presents humility as a decision and understands no step on the journey of forgiveness is easy. But it's also a film that knows that each step on such a journey has the power to transform.

Unfortunately, such films are rare. Given the state of the world, perhaps it isn't surprising that contemporary entertainment focuses increasingly on violence and fear.

But Thich Nhat Hanh is right. The world hardly needs more of us to fill our minds with the darkness of life. What our world needs is more devoted lovers of goodness.

David Carlson is a professor of philosophy and religion at Franklin College. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

a year under their proposal.

Republicans say the plan would be fiscally irresponsible because it could cost the state \$300 million or more per year in lost revenue.

Even if the proposal gets out of the House, it likely would be dead on arrival in the Republican-ruled Senate. Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels opposes the idea, and Senate Tax Chairman Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, also has frowned on it.

Another bill would provide a one-year, \$2,500 income tax deduction for those who have a stillbirth that year. Indiana law defines stillbirths as those occurring after 20 weeks of gestation that do not result in live births.

Indiana women have averaged 550 stillbirths annually since 2000, according to the state Department of Health. The Legislative Services Agency says the state's revenue loss could be about \$50,000.

Rep. Peggy Welch, D-Bloomington, who is a co-author of the bill with Rep. Jerry Torr, R-Carmel, said the bill is simply designed to help families who have suffered a lot.

Generally, Marcus is skeptical of tax-cut proposals. He notes that Indiana already is a low-tax state.

But since lawmakers aren't responsible for saying how their proposals would impact the budget or how the money would be replaced, the tax-cut plans likely will keep on coming.

Mike Smith has covered Indiana's Statehouse and political scene since 1993. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.