

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

A House committee has endorsed a proposal to allow slot machines at Indiana horseracing tracks.

OUR POINT

If the tracks need the gambling machines to survive, then maybe they are in the wrong business.

Proposal for gambling should be stopped

The Daily Journal

Up to 5,000 slot machines would be installed at Indiana's horseracing tracks under a proposal approved by a House committee last week.

Proponents say the machines could draw crowds to Indiana's struggling horse racing tracks.

The bill would allow each of the state's two horse tracks, Indiana Downs in Shelbyville and Hoosier Horse Park in Anderson, to pay the state \$75 million for a license to have up to 2,500 slot machines. A 32 percent wagering tax on the first \$150 million the machines bring in and a 37.5 percent tax on any money over that would go to the state and the two counties where the tracks are located.

The tracks and horse racing industry, starting in 2009, would give up the \$27 million a year in subsidies they currently share from riverboat gambling revenue. That money would instead go to help provide health insurance to uninsured Indiana residents meeting certain poverty guidelines.

Estimates vary on how much the machines could garner, but one researcher predicted 2,500 slots at each track would bring in \$533 million a year. The state would take in about \$185 million a year in taxes under that estimate by Will E. Cummings of Massachusetts-based Cummings Associates.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Trent Van Haaften, D-Mount Vernon, said the money directed to the state would be put into Indiana's general fund so that lawmakers could decide the best way to use the millions.

The House Public Policy Committee approved the proposal on a 9-3 vote Wednesday.

Rick Moore, president of Hoosier Park in Anderson, said, "We are at a financial crossroads. We need help. We need slot machines at Indiana's two race tracks."

Belterra casino, near Vevay on the Ohio River, opposes the bill, fearing some of its customers would go to race tracks for slot machines instead of going there.

We oppose the bill for a much more fundamental reason.

The proposal appears to be a thinly veiled step toward land-based casinos and an expansion of Indiana's gambling industry. Indiana's state budget is already dangerously reliant on gambling revenue.

The bill's proponents talk about helping the state horse racing tracks to survive. We would ask: Why?

If there is not enough patronage to support two tracks, then one logically asks if two tracks are at least one too many.

Furthermore, if it takes an expansion of gambling to make the tracks successful, then perhaps horse racing was the wrong economic model in the first place.

Indiana would not authorize 2,500 slot machines in one of the Chrysler plants in Kokomo in order to keep the factory open. So why should it allow the gambling machines at a horse track to ensure the survival of that private business?

The marketplace has spoken. The legislature should listen.

The proposal to expand gambling should be defeated.

Focus: War

First president gave military power to civilians

Scrrips Howard News Service

The United States emerged as an idea and, going back to the Mayflower Compact, our heritage is uniquely enshrined in documents — the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, Lincoln's second inaugural, the writings of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

One of our founding documents, a vital page of our history, has been preserved for the public. It is the original, complete with words scratched out and interlineations, of George Washington's resignation as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army in 1783, the year the Treaty of Paris formally ended the Revolutionary War.

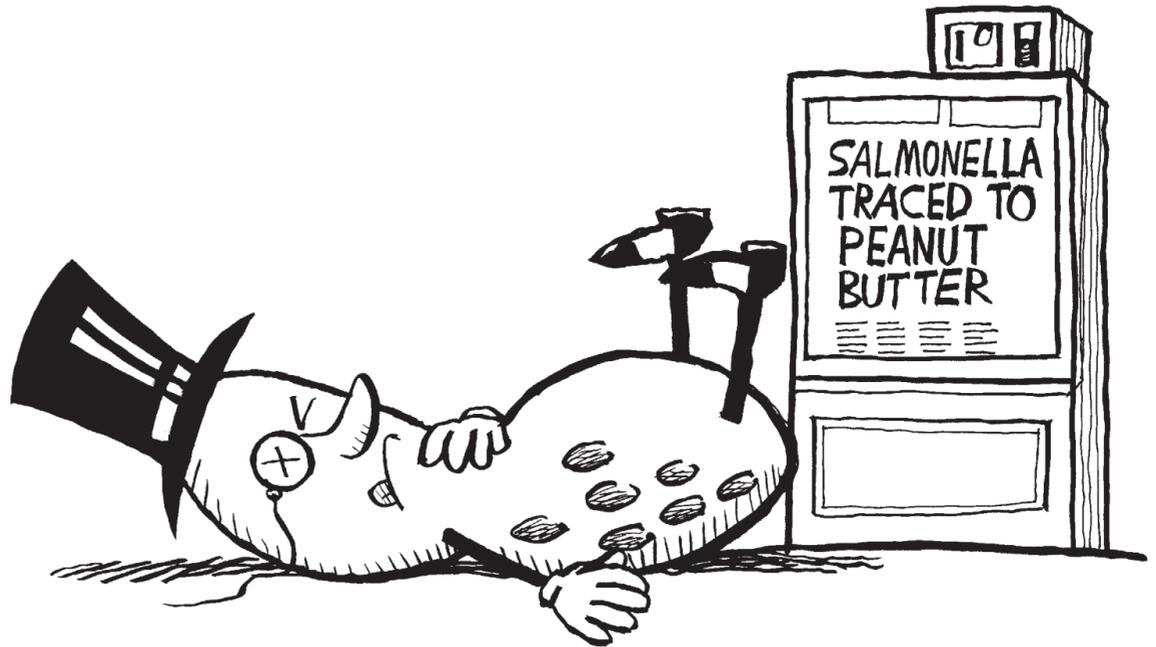
In accordance with what so often happened in the Old World, Washington as the victorious military commander could have claimed the role of dictator or even king. Instead, he simply resigned, and the significance of his doing so and, more importantly, how he did it is well explained by The Washington Post:

"By resigning his commission as commander in chief to the Continental Congress — then housed at the Annapolis capitol — Washington laid the cornerstone for an American principle that persists today: Civilians, not generals, are ultimately in charge of military power."

The legend is that he stuffed his terse speech into the hands of an aide, James McHenry, as he headed out the door for his home at Mount Vernon. Following two years of negotiations with the letter's owners, who agreed to take \$500,000 less than they could get a public sale, it was acquired by the state of Maryland with \$600,000 in public funds and \$400,000 in private money. The letter is to go on permanent display at the statehouse.

In a Presidents Day observance at Mount Vernon, President Bush cited the importance of the precedents Washington set that shaped the future of the nation — "first Cabinet, appointed the first judges, and issued the first veto." To which we would add civilian control of the military.

STAHLER.
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH. 2007.



YOUR

VIEWS & COMMENTARY

Community thanked for support after tragedy

To the editor:

We are grateful to the Daily Journal for the outstanding coverage you provided in the deaths of our grandsons, Jake and Travis Findley, as a result of the car/train accident Feb. 3.

We appreciate your warm concern for the family and friends of the boys and the depth of your accounts of the boys' lives and character.

These boys were indeed precious to us, and their loss leaves a big hole not only in their parents' lives and our lives, but the lives of our extended family, the church and the community.

Thank you again for your great coverage. We hope that your coverage will encourage the prompt installation of flashers and gates at this very dangerous, busy crossing.

We also want to express our gratitude to the many people who have expressed their sympathy and love by cards, phone calls and other greetings. We feel very blessed to be part of such a caring community.

Dewey and Kay Findley,
grandparents
Franklin

Teenage drivers follow examples of adults

To the editor:

Recently on a news broadcast they had a segment about teenage drivers. Some people are claiming there are too many teenage deaths from aggressive driving, and they should not be allowed to drive without adult supervision.

I do not believe those conclusions.

Look around and see all the aggressive drivers that are on the road. Don't you think that they have children?

Accidents don't happen. They are caused by people who drive their cars constantly outside the limits of our laws without regard to the safety and the lives of others.

We occasionally hear the news about a teenager who lost his life in an accident. Usually the young person is an "A" student; some are on honor roll. Usually the accident is blamed on the child's youth, and he should have had adult supervision.

Just because a person is an adult doesn't mean they are a good enough driver to instruct someone. They may be aggressive drivers themselves.

These young people are not dumb by any means. If a young person can make good grades in school, that shows they have been very observant and take advantage of examples. We all learn from examples.

Their parents and others have been chauffeuring them for about 16 years or so. Is it so inconceivable to assume that they have been watching those who have been chauffeuring them, then after their test put driving habits of others to use?

It's a proven fact that a child is a product of his or her own environment.

We are now living in an era where speeding, tailgating, rolling stops, cutting off, cutting in and flipping off are considered by some as acceptable driving practices. I believe these are the real teachers that young people observe.

These people have to be taken off the road like drunken drivers. Most of the time it is to save time. Time is valuable, but my life is valuable too, far more than

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

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

a few minutes of time. I do not appreciate anyone who puts my life in jeopardy at any time. I'm sure you feel the same.

Neil Richards
Greenwood

Officials not representing needs of the public

To the editor:

In response to the letter written by Sen. Tom Wyss in the Feb. 2 edition of the Journal, the only comment this reader agrees with is the fact that, yes, there is a need for transportation progress in this state, but not by looking at a map from 1960.

This reader is continually astounded by the way Senate Bill 1 has been pushed through this Indiana Senate. Maybe a bullet-point memo to the governor and his band of "yes" men would be more direct:

- The residents of the counties involved in the Commerce Connector have not voted for one of the legislators who have proposed this bill, nor do any of these legislators live in any of these counties.

- Several of our own state legislators from these districts have not attended any of the public meetings nor have they spoken directly to their constituents about this proposal. Yet they are willing to put these five counties on the auction block to be sacrificed to build an interstate to Evansville.

- I do not remember hearing about any of these privatization proposals while Gov. Mitch Daniels was running for governor. To lease a toll road with that kind of money involved certainly was in the works long before he was elected, and the governor expected Indiana citizens to accept this and move on to his next privatization project. How long has the Commerce Connector been in the pipeline before it was dropped in the laps of Hoosiers?

- Our own state representatives voted for leasing the Indiana Toll Road against the wishes of their own constituents. It would be interesting to know how many phone calls went to the Statehouse the day that vote was taken against the project in northern Indiana.

- It is irresponsible that our state legislature has given this governor this kind of carte blanche authority with no oversight mechanism in place whatsoever and avoiding the General Assembly.
- For an administration that

touts itself as being conservative, this reader views it as one of the most wasteful with Indiana's assets. Indiana is an agriculture state in the heartland of America. Indiana is losing hundreds of acres a year to development, and what has this administration done to preserve this asset? Why is Indiana one of only a few states that does not participate in the federal grant program to preserve our farmland?

- Daniels is totally ignoring an \$850,000 study by the Indiana Department of Transportation in 2005 that said this project would neither bring long-term growth nor relieve traffic congestion. The administration wants to do a new study costing the taxpayers millions more and will be totally biased toward the governor's proposal. Was this 2005 study ignored because it did not give the governor the results he was looking for?

- The Daily Journal, in the Jan. 18 edition, said Wyss "doesn't expect a large crowd or many arguments against the bill" when this bill was scheduled for a public hearing at the Statehouse on Jan. 20. That same evening there was standing room only in Franklin and Wyss did not attend. We welcome your attendance at another meeting and suggest that you get a bigger meeting place.

- It is incomprehensible that this transportation committee did not even discuss mass transportation and just pushed it aside. Apparently this administration is not heeding the call for less fuel consumption and totally ignoring the global warming issue.

- Our state legislators need to review their oath of office and remember whom they represent. I don't believe our Constitution says, "By the governor; for the governor." It really does not matter to your constituents what our legislators' opinions and personal goals are; it matters that you present the ideas to the voters and the voters will instruct you as to how to vote.

- Have any of the state legislators who voted for this bill even listened to the concerns of Indiana citizens? Very few have attended any of these meetings.

- Well, we may not have "fancy book learnin'" down here, but we didn't just "fall off the hay wagon" either. The next most important piece of legislation that should come before the members of the Indiana General Assembly is that of the right to

referendum and the right to a recall vote. It is long overdue in the state of Indiana. We should start with some of our state representatives from these districts.

Donna Badger
Trafalgar

Ethics in candidates key to finding strong leaders

To the editor:

How frustrating to hear congressional leaders say citizens don't want publicly financed elections when in fact bipartisan polls show three out of four voters do support clean elections.

Corruption is one of the biggest reasons Americans voted for change last fall.

Under the new ethics laws rightly passed by the Congress, lobbyists can no longer pick up the tab for lawmakers' meals, trips, stadium box seats or the discounted use of private jets. This is a great start but obviously doesn't go far enough.

On "Meet the Press" recently, Tim Russert confronted House majority leader Steny Hoyer and minority leader John Boehner with the New York Times article "Congress finds ways to avoid lobbyist limits." Now, instead of directly funding outings, lobbyists pay a political fundraising committee set up by the lawmaker then the committee pays the legislator's way.

When asked if they intended to close this loophole, Hoyer said the ultimate answer is public financing, but that "neither the public nor the Congress is going to support public financing." Boehner's response implied any campaign fund-raising laws except for disclosure are "nonsense" and insisted taxpayers don't want public funding.

But the public knows our democracy depends on finding the best possible leaders — regardless of their wealth or connections — who are accountable to the people. Seven states and two cities already have a voluntary clean elections system in place with more following suit.

Serious candidates must prove they have public support, must forego special interest money and agree to spending limits. Hundreds of candidates from both major parties have used the system, and each election cycle brings more "clean" candidates.

Public funding is an investment in democracy. Taxpayers win because elected officials serve the public's agenda, not just the narrow interests of lobbyists.

As Hoyer said, it's the ultimate answer. Now it's time for lawmakers to embrace it.

Stefanie Miller, Director
Common Cause/Indiana

Toll road through county won't bring businesses

To the editor:

The governor did not want the toll road the state had in northern Indiana. Why build another toll road for him to sell? The industrial parks in Johnson County are for the most part a failure. A toll road will not bring new business.

By now you would think the governor would have figured out that privatization of state activities is a failure. If you want to see how bad it is, just look at Florida.

Norbert Smith
Fort Myers, Fla, formerly of
Johnson County