

# 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

Trash left at recycling centers could endanger the programs.

## OUR POINT

People who want to get rid of large trash items have several disposal options.

## Thoughtless dumping hurts recycling efforts

The Daily Journal

If the holidays brought a new mattress or an outdoor grill, families might be left with the problem of disposing of the old one.

In each case, there are relatively easy disposal options; but some people think the answer is to dump items at recycling centers operated by the Johnson County Solid Waste Management District.

These centers recycle paper, cardboard, Nos. 1 and 2 plastics and metal, but not mattresses or other large trash items.

This thoughtless dumping isn't just an inconvenience. It costs the waste management district time and money to get rid of the material properly. In addition, continued abuse could endanger the recycling effort.

For some rural Johnson County residents, the centers are the only way to recycle materials. An end to the recycling centers would result in more material being sent to landfills.

Franklin residents can place large trash items out with their regular trash during the second full week of each month. This is when "heavy trash" is picked up.

In Greenwood, heavy items are picked up the last full week of the month. Again, all residents need to do is place the item at curbside.

Customers of Republic Services of Indiana can call the waste hauler to schedule pickup of heavier items. In some cases, there is a charge.

Still another option involves taking large items to the Franklin trash transfer station at 730 Industrial Drive. Again, there might be a charge to drop off some items.

Finally, every spring, the waste management district stages its annual Spring Cleanup Day at the Johnson County Fairgrounds in Franklin. People can bring trash, old furniture, large trash items, tires and other items to be recycled or disposed of properly. A sliding scale is used for disposal fees.

This year's cleanup day is April 21.

People with old paint, leftover pesticides and herbicides and other household chemicals they wish to dispose of can call the waste management district to get a disposal voucher. Then they can take the potential toxic wastes to a recycling station at 4925 Shelby St. in Indianapolis on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month to dispose of the material for free. The center also takes old computers.

Trash and unwanted items are a nuisance for families, but there are easy ways to dispose of them.

Improper disposal could come at a substantial cost to everyone in the county.

## Focus: Congress

### Democrats' start may say a lot about next term

Scripps Howard News Service

The new Congress, which convenes today, seemed off to a promising start when last month a bipartisan group of Senate and House lawmakers representing a broad political spectrum began quietly working on what seems like a workable compromise on an immigration bill.

Now, hold that thought.

Incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has promised 100 hours of action on a range of measures: ethics and lobbying reform, tightening the budget process and federal funding of stem cell research.

And before President Bush makes his State of the Union address Jan. 23, Democrats hope to cut interest rates of student loans, allow the government to negotiate drug prices and implement the recommendations of the 9/11 commission.

All very ambitious, but it poses a dilemma for the Democrats. They are torn between getting off to a fast and flashy start, as they promised, and cooperating in bipartisan fashion with the Republicans, as they also promised.

To enact the 100 hours agenda, they may well have to resort to the same heavy-handed, dictatorial tactics of the now discredited Republican House leadership — shutting minority members out of bill drafting sessions and prohibiting them from offering amendments and alternative measures — tactics that the Democrats disavowed last fall.

With a 16-vote majority, Pelosi has the votes to do it. The question is: What kind of good start does she want to get off to? Humiliating the Republicans at the outset, rather like the GOP did to the Democrats, could make for a long two years.

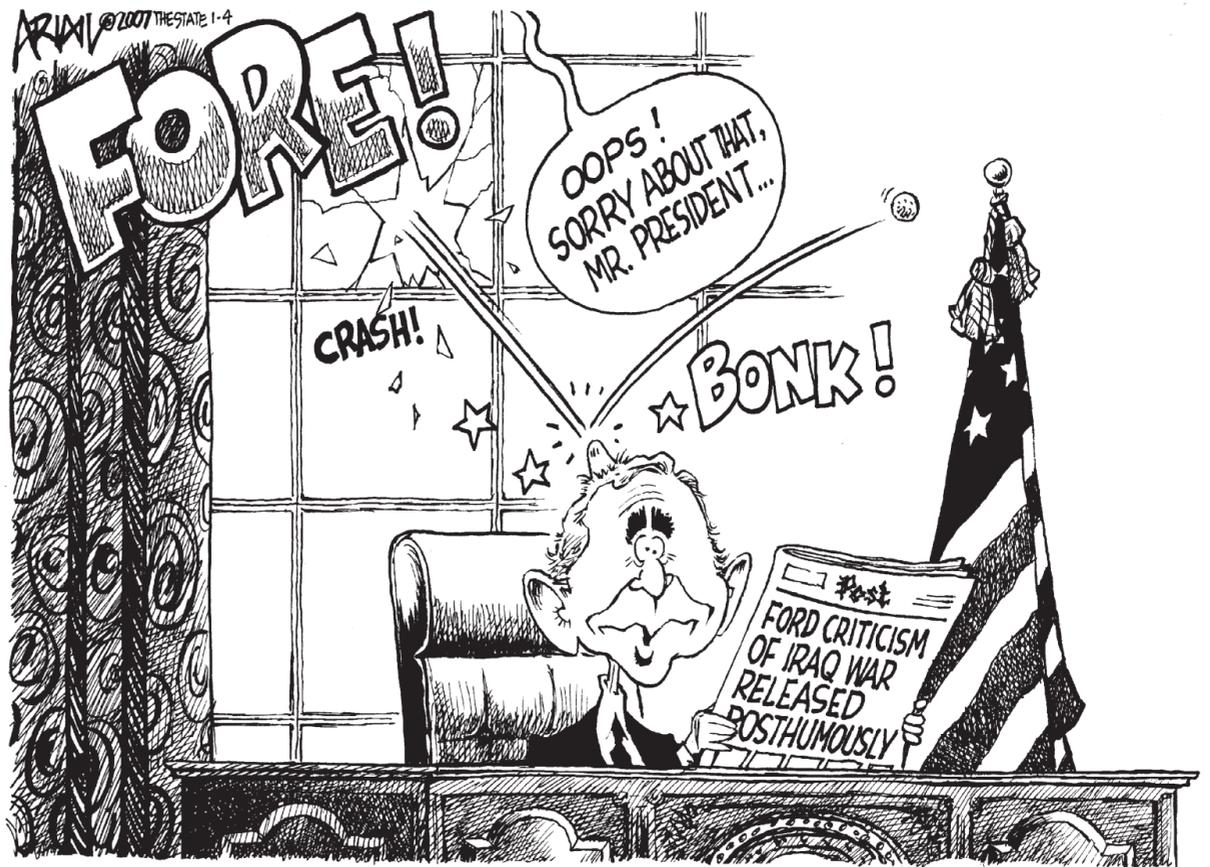
The situation is different in the Senate. There, the rules make compromise essential and, with only a 51-49 majority, Democratic leader Harry Reid has little choice.

Some of the 100 hours measures are non-controversial and some of them, minimum wage and stem cell research, passed in the Republican-run House only to die with the expiration of the old Congress.

But others, like reforming lawmakers' personal pork projects and requiring budget offsets for new spending and tax cuts, will be more difficult and will be a test of the new leadership.

Pelosi has shown herself to be combative even within her own party and another legislative variable is that almost two-thirds of House Democrats have never served when their party was a majority.

The next month should be very instructive. Whether it will be productive is another matter entirely.



## Ford's Midwestern sensibility similar to Hoosier Harrison's

### WRITE A LETTER

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

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- Letters published in the Daily Journal 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.
- Because of space and legal considerations, the Daily Journal reserves the right to edit any letters or articles and to limit comments.

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### @ VOTE WEB POLL

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#### THE QUESTION

Do you think Indiana should continue to observe Daylight Saving Time?

#### HOW TO VOTE

Vote and offer comments on the Daily Journal's Internet edition, www.thejournalnet.com. This is an unscientific poll. Readers who don't have access to the Internet are welcome to mail or fax comments.

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He was a Midwesterner, a Republican whose term in the White House was distinguished by honesty, plain talk and hard work.

His patriotism and devotion to duty were unquestioned. He had served his country in war.

As chief executive, he would not be remembered as a charismatic figure, yet his steady hand on the tiller of state would be noted and roundly appreciated.

His death from pneumonia brought condolences from around the world. Flags were flown half-staff at government buildings and at half-mast on all U.S. ships at sea.

Telegrams of condolence arrived from world capitals. President William McKinley quickly made preparation to come to Indianapolis for the funeral.

It was March 1901. Former President Benjamin Harrison had died in his home on Delaware Street in Indianapolis.

As the nation mourns the passing of Gerald Ford, our 38th president, Hoosiers can see parallels with Harrison, the 23rd president and the only man from Indiana to occupy the nation's highest office.

Ford, from Michigan, shared Harrison's Midwest origins. Both served in uniform.

Harrison earned a battlefield promotion to brigadier general with the 70th Indiana Regiment in the Civil War, and Ford rose to lieutenant commander in the Navy in World War II.

Both were honest, hard-working men who quietly carried the burdens of the office without much fanfare or theatrics.

In retrospect, both would be seen as interim figures.

Ford filled the gap between the resignation of Richard Nixon and



James H. Johnson

the inauguration of Jimmy Carter. Harrison was elected and served a full term, but his four years were sandwiched by the two terms of Grover Cleveland.

In a time before cable TV, radio or even widespread telephone service, the news of Harrison's death was quickly spread by Morse code on the nation's telegraph network. It was headlined on the front page of The New York Times.

Harrison's funeral was conducted in Indianapolis at First Presbyterian Church. Leading the procession was McKinley, a friend and fellow Republican.

Nearly every member of Harrison's Cabinet was in attendance, including Postmaster General John Wanamaker, who called Harrison's life a "glorification of simplicity, straightforwardness and truthfulness."

Indiana Gov. Winfield Taylor Durbin said the state had lost its most distinguished citizen, one "whose name will forever be associated with the foremost statesmen and patriots of the eventful age in which he lived."

Cleveland, the man whose two terms had been interrupted for four years by Harrison, said of his old rival: "In public office he was guided by patriotism and devotion to duty, often at the sacrifice of temporary popularity; and in private station his influence and example were always in the direction of

decency and good citizenship."

Hoosier Poet James Whitcomb Riley, friend and neighbor of Harrison's, delivered the eulogy, in which he praised the former president for "his fearless independence and stand for what he believed to be right and just."

Generations later, in a world much different, Ford is receiving tributes that seem to echo those bestowed upon the Hoosier leader.

President Bush remembered Ford as a "man of complete integrity who led our country with common sense and kind instincts."

Former President Clinton called him a hard-working, down-to-earth person.

Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said he was a man "of great decency and towering strength."

In a three-volume biography, Harry J. Sievers concluded that Harrison seemed to emerge from history greater as a man than as a president. The same legacy may well belong to Ford.

Though 81 years elapsed between the time Harrison left the White House and Ford hurriedly moved in, the two men have a good deal in common. Qualities like integrity, decency and truthfulness are timeless.

Harrison is buried at Crown Hill Cemetery.

Even the epitaph on his monument could well apply to Ford. The words are those of British poet Alexander Pope:

"Statesman, but friend to truth,  
Of soul sincere,  
In action faithful,  
And in honour clear."

Board of contributors columnist James H. Johnson is retired educator who lives in Greenwood. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

## Bush now listening to war advice he first shunned

Suddenly we have come full circle in the Iraq strategy.

As the war began, a distinguished retired general friend argued strenuously at a discussion club to which I belong (and that also included two former officials who would later be members of the Iraq Study Group) that the Pentagon's assigned manpower was woefully shortsighted.

He was echoing the criticism of other longtime military strategists, including the Army's chief of staff, Gen. Eric Shinseki, who had just been shoved rudely into retirement for telling Congress that it would take as many as 300,000 troops to pacify Iraq.

The message to the other generals was clear: If you want to keep your job, keep your mouth shut and follow what your civilian bosses within the Bush administration tell you, even if those geniuses are meeting criticism of the troop level by saying they are depending on the commanders on the ground to tell them what they need.

Now another top general, John Abizaid, who tried to do the job with what he was given, is retiring at 55 in an atmosphere of disagreement over the so-called "surge plan" for accomplishing what no one outside the Oval Office believes is possible: winning the war.

Few of us can understand that victory even means in this case,



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seeing that U.S. troops are caught in the middle of a civil war.

At best, winning probably means we finally can escape a hideous encumbrance.

The surge plan that President Bush seems to be favoring would put 20,000 to 30,000 additional troops in Iraq at least temporarily to stabilize the deteriorating situation in Baghdad and to allow the Iraqi government to finally take control of the situation.

More U.S. troops would be freed up to train the Iraqi military and police for our eventual withdrawal. Well, as my brother told our cousin when he finally decided to take up golf: "It's too late, Jack."

That is clearly what Abizaid believes. He is backed up not only by other military experts and a whole lot of popular opinion that regards the plan as merely augmenting the U.S. casualty lists.

That is reflected by the fact that Republican presidential hopeful Sen. John McCain, who

backs the quick-fix plan, has seen a decline of his support in the polls.

Suddenly the president is not talking about what the generals' want but about what he decides is needed. And if he says we now need more troops, he reasons, we need them.

Almost 40 years ago I stood in the Oval Office with a handful of my colleagues listening to Lyndon Johnson harangue us for writing that he had decided to increase the troop commitment in Vietnam to more than a half-million men.

He made it clear before ordering us out that he would make that announcement, and not the generals nor those on Capitol Hill who had given us the information. Commanders-in-chief are sensitive about these things.

Abizaid would seem to have been the perfect commander for this conflict.

He is of Lebanese descent and speaks Arabic and probably understands the culture of the Middle East better than anyone of his rank in the Army.

But even that has not helped in the political battles that have begun to rage between the military and civilian sides of the Bush Administration over the increasingly destabilized situation in Iraq.

If Abizaid and his peers, current and retired, believe that the surge plan is wrong, the

president should listen to them. The last time anyone looked, Bush's total military experience was a few months in the Air National Guard, and even that is questionable.

And if these internal disputes weren't enough, there now are serious questions being raised about the ability of the Army to carry out its general mission under current troop levels that have been depleted by Iraq.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have indicated that serious new recruiting is needed to add to the overall strength if the United States is to meet any new global challenges.

Bush seems to agree. But he also appears determined to stay the course in Iraq as long as it takes or at least until his term is up in two years.

The old adage about hindsight always being 20-20 doesn't apply here.

The experts warned at the very beginning of this war what was needed if this mission was to have any success. Not only were they ignored, but they were also maligned in the process as out-of-date traditionalists.

That's too bad. We might have been out of this mess by now had the president really paid attention.

Dan K. Thomasson, a Hoosier native and Franklin College trustee, is former editor of the Scripps Howard News Service. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.