

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

Debate about time zones and daylight-saving time appears likely to continue in the General Assembly this session.

OUR POINT

Legislators and the general public should give the issue a rest.

Daylight-saving debate ready to be put to rest

The Daily Journal

It appears the sun hasn't set on the Hoosier debate about time. The long-running debate — some would call it an embarrassing soap opera — apparently will continue in the Indiana General Assembly this session.

One legislator wants a referendum so Hoosiers can voice their opinions about whether Indiana should be in the Eastern time zone or the Central.

A second lawmaker proposes that Gov. Mitch Daniels ask that the entire state be placed in the Central time zone, in temporal accord with Chicago.

And the debate over each of these is likely to rekindle discussion of whether Indiana should continue to observe daylight-saving time or revert to "Indiana time," under which we spend winters in line with New York and summers in line with Chicago.

To all of these, we say: Give it a rest.

In 2005, when Daniels pushed daylight-saving time through the legislature, promises of economic benefit were banded about.

Aside from golf courses and summer recreational sports leagues, there hasn't been any noticeable economic gain.

On the other hand, no one had to ask more than once during the year what time Indiana was on. Whether it was a part of the state on Eastern or Central, the time zone stayed the same through standard time and daylight time.

Things are finally getting sorted out. Hoosiers need to give themselves time to adjust before making significant changes. The referendum proposed by Rep. David Crooks, D-Washington, would be nonbinding. He said he is seeking public input, with a goal of time unity throughout the state.

But with economic spheres in two time zones, there is no way the residents of suburban Cincinnati are ever going to agree to be in the same time zone as those in suburban Chicago. Sen. Victor Heinhold, R-Kouts, said making the state all one time zone would make doing business simpler. He prefers the central time zone. Of course, Kouts is 50 miles from Chicago and 130 miles from Ohio.

It's time to let the issue rest.

The hour for that debate is over.

There are more important issues for the legislature to consider. So let's move on.

Focus: Congress

More access would be boon for C-SPAN, viewers

Scripps Howard News Service

One of new House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's first orders of business when Congress returns will be to determine what her colleagues think of a request made shortly before they left for the holidays by Brian Lamb, the CEO of C-SPAN, America's most complete and earnest public affairs channel.

C-SPAN broadcasts, and has since 1979, the floor proceedings of the House but with a catch: As the price of allowing TV cameras into the chamber, the congressional technicians who operate the cameras are limited to static, head-on shots of whoever is speaking at the podium.

Lamb said, "Rules and established practices prevent congressional cameras from taking individual reaction shots or from panning the chamber, leaving viewers with an incomplete picture of what's happening." Incomplete and boring, although the latter has never daunted C-SPAN.

He would like Pelosi to open the floor proceedings to regular C-SPAN coverage, the way the network covers House committee meetings and joint sessions with the Senate, such as the State of the Union address.

He also asked that the network be given immediate access to the electronic voting tallies instead of waiting for them to be made official, usually well after the House had moved on to something else.

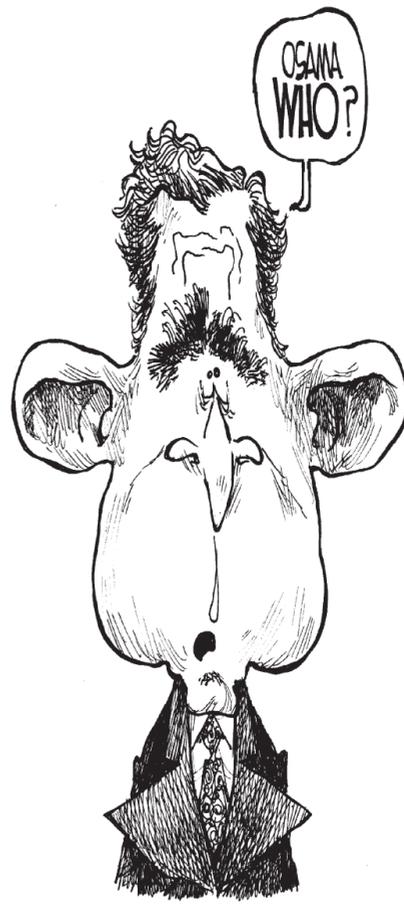
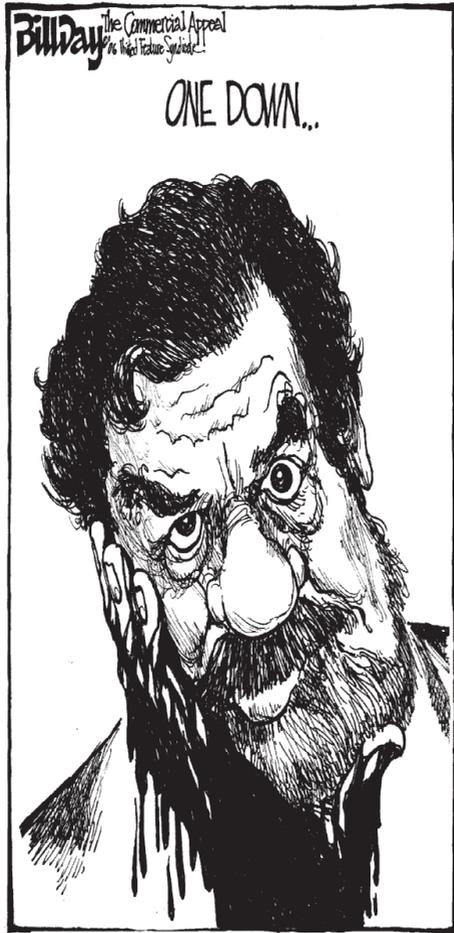
Lamb noted that he made the same requests of the Republicans when they took over the House 12 years ago and was turned down. Perhaps that was because in the early 1980s the young Republican backbenchers who would eventually lead their party's takeovers began giving regular speeches, called Special Orders, after the regular House business was over. The speeches were hard-hitting, partisan and, with only a tight shot of the orator, effective and dramatic.

The wily old Democratic speaker, Tip O'Neill, finally had had enough and ordered the House-operated cameras to pull back and show wide shots. The Republican firebrands were revealed to be talking to an empty chamber.

And making the tallies instantly available would have hamstringed a favorite tactic of the Republican leadership, holding votes open long after the count should have been announced in order to twist arms.

The Democrats could underscore that it is indeed a new day in the House by granting both C-SPAN requests.

It might even reinvigorate the lapsed tradition of vigorous floor debate.



Holidays mean creating new traditions, honoring old ones

It's New Year's Day, and we're taking down the Christmas tree. Has it been only a month since we put it up?

At the beginning of December, we worked together to set it in its proper spot in the living room. We fit it in the stand, evened it up, checked the water. Now we work backward: unhooking it from the base, Becky steadying the stand, while I lift it out and carry it to the door.

We own an artificial tree, but we don't use it. We just can't give up the real tree; it's a tradition. Just like the ornaments we put on a month ago and now take off are a tradition.

We combined the ornaments each of us had accumulated over our lives, so that our tree was decorated with little stories from our pasts.

As I took one out of its box, I would tell her its history. She did the same with her ornaments. Now we unhook each memory and place it back in its proper container.

When we put up the tree, we added the new ornaments we received as gifts from family, friends and students to the branches. Someone gave us an ornament with our names and the date of our first Christmas as husband and wife. We hung that, starting a new tradition.

I know people who take the tree



Norman Knight

down the day after Christmas. Clean up the place. Get back to normal. Others don't want to let go of the holiday season and leave it standing well into January. We decided to keep it up for the week after Christmas. Turns out, that was a tradition we both had observed.

The dry needles are sharp, and the sap is sticky; but I managed to get the tree outside the house. Needles are all over the floor. We swept them up as best we can, but know we will find them for next several months, usually as they stab us in our stocking feet.

If only I can remember, as I'm rubbing my sore foot, to think back to this easy time, this slow pause before the new year kicks in.

I dragged the tree down the hill to a gully behind the house. My hope is it will serve to slow the erosion.

I also remember that Christmas trees are great homes for rabbits, chipmunks and birds trying to get through the winter. I know some

people put their trees in lakes and ponds for fish habitat.

Some gardeners cut off the branches and lay them on flower beds as protection from the weather. When I lived in the suburbs, I put the tree in one of those big plastic bags and took it to the public park to be turned into mulch.

As I shoved it into the gully, I wondered if we got all the ornaments off. We inspected it carefully, but I've known ornaments to hide themselves inside the tree. I guess we'll find out if one turns up missing next year.

Taking down the tree is as much a holiday tradition as putting it up, I guess. It's one more human ritual that we participate in as we begin again the circle of the year, as we start another trip around the sun.

I climbed back up the hill to the house, looking back and looking ahead.

For lunch we made boiled cabbage. It's supposed to bring good luck for the coming year. I don't know that I really believe that, but I ate it anyway. It's just one of those things you do. It's tradition.

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

Ford's presidential legacy lies in Midwestern, no-nonsense character

Gerald Ford was the first president I interviewed in the Oval Office, and I came away from the session a little disappointed.

I had expected to be awed by the man and the office. Instead, I felt as if I had just had a relaxed conversation with a Michigan congressman, which is what Ford was before a series of extraordinary events catapulted him first into the vice presidency and then into the Oval Office.

Not a trace of ego or pretense in the nation's 38th president. He came across more Jerry Ford than Mr. President, and I've liked the man ever since.

I don't remember what we talked about during his interview with a small group of reporters, but when it was over I struck up a conversation with Ford about pipe tobacco.

He pulled a package of Half and Half out of his pocket and recommended that I try it. Half and Half. That's what my father smoked. It wasn't exactly the presidential moment I had expected, but it is one still vivid in my memory. It introduced me to the unassuming "accidental president" whose death at 93 last week brought forth an outpouring of tributes that remind us Washington has not always been the toxic political pit it has become in recent times.

Ford once told the Washington Post that he was "someone who enjoys having adversaries who are not enemies." Try to imagine those words coming from Newt Gingrich or Tom DeLay, two fallen Republican partisans whose slash-and-burn House leadership



Philip Gailey

had little tolerance for the kind of moderation and civility that characterized Ford's political career.

As the House Republican leader, Ford showed that partisanship could be civil and that at the close of the business day, Republican and Democratic leaders could put aside their political differences and enjoy a drink in the Capitol's hideaway offices. That was still possible when President Reagan and Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill were locking political horns by day and sharing Irish stories at the White House by night.

That Washington is no more. Leaders on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue treat each other as enemies, not political adversaries. Civility has given way to nastiness. Gerald Ford would be perfectly miserable in today's Washington political environment.

Ford will be remembered primarily for his decency and integrity and for his pardon of Richard Nixon for any and all Watergate crimes he might have committed.

He was admired for the former and savaged for the latter, at least at the time. Ford lived to see many of his harshest critics come around and acknowledge that he had made the right call after all.

At the time the country was

torn apart by Watergate and the Vietnam War, and Ford decided to spare the nation the ordeal of a criminal prosecution of a disgraced former president.

In 2001, Ford was honored with a Profile in Courage Award at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, and two of his harshest critics on the pardon issue used the occasion to say they were wrong.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat and the brother of the martyred president, said he originally opposed the pardon. "But time has a way of clarifying past events, and now we can see that President Ford was right," Kennedy told the audience.

Ford had his flaws, and he made mistakes. Before he pardoned Nixon, he defended him against Watergate conspiracy allegations. He kept Henry Kissinger, one of the architects of the Vietnam calamity, on as secretary of state when he should have replaced him. He chose Nelson Rockefeller as his vice president and then dumped him from the 1976 Republican ticket for Bob Dole to placate conservatives.

As political columnist David Broder wrote last week, Ford's legacy lies more in his "personal character," which helped get the country past its Watergate nightmare, than anything he accomplished in office — almost the opposite of what can be said about the man he pardoned.

Philip Gailey is editor of editorials and former Washington bureau chief for the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

C-P can keep taxes down and improve schools

To the editor:

Based largely on recommendations of a long-range planning task force, the Clark-Pleasant school board approved a 10-year, \$137 million facility plan to deal with enrollment projected to nearly double from 5,200 to 9,400 by year 2016.

Community members may find the cost staggering, but let's focus on what the plan offers our children.

Comprehend how fifth- and sixth-graders will respond to being part of an expanded 1,500-student intermediate school. Their super-sized school experience will continue in the seventh and eighth grades, as they proceed to a new 1,600-student middle school.

Lastly, their public education will conclude in an expanded 3,200-student Whiteland high school that includes a ninth-grade academy.

While we continue to pump millions of dollars into creating giant schools where our children feel increasingly isolated, alienated and anonymous, overwhelming evidence supports the smaller school model in terms of improved academic performance, higher graduation rates, increased participation in extracurricular activities and school safety.

A major reason for the documented success of smaller schools is increased parental involvement.

Similar to their children, parents feel a greater sense of belonging, which increases their participation in school functions and creates closer relationships and reciprocal accountability with their children's principals and teachers.

School administrators and local/state legislators claim that the mega-school movement is for the sake of curricular diversity and cost containment.

It's true that smaller schools may not offer as many electives, but they tend to have a stronger core curriculum that produces high academic achievement.

They also provide greater opportunities for everyone to participate in extracurricular activities, which contributes immensely to a diverse educational experience.

In regards to cost containment, the benefits of larger schools are more imagined than real.

Hidden "bureaucratic" costs such as added administrative tiers and security needs often eat up potential cost savings.

Also, the greater societal costs of larger schools are consistently ignored as education decision-makers look at costs through the lens of "economies of scale," rather than looking at the relationship of costs to the desired outcome (graduation).

When higher student dropout rates in mega-schools are factored, all presumed cost savings instantaneously vanish because dropouts tend to place a heavier burden on society by committing more crime, by requiring more government assistance and by earning less taxable income in the future. Considering the "cost per graduate," it's the larger schools we cannot afford.

This brings us back to the fate of the Clark-Pleasant school district.

According to administrative officials, the 10-year plan is not written in stone.

If this is true, they should let the concerned members of the community try to help manage some of this burden by exploring nontraditional ways, e.g., grants, alternative taxes, legislative changes, etc., to help fund a second high school and smaller middle and intermediate schools.

If the school board keeps options open and demonstrates a renewed commitment to fiscal restraint when building and operating schools, local taxpayers might be receptive to providing additional (unanticipated) funds to our school system.

I believe that a community already facing substantial property tax increases may be willing to make an additional investment (if needed) to send their children to a smaller utilitarian school that offers proven academic, social and safety benefits.

If this school administration and community succeeds at creating a smaller, more intimate educational environment, we will leave a valuable legacy to current and future generations in Clark and Pleasant townships.

The Clark-Pleasant school district is at a crossroads. Which road will it take?

Visit www.cpgt.org for more information on this topic.

Eric Overfelt
Greenwood