

Standard online reader survey



Q: Were you impressed with President Trump's first State of the Union Address?

- YES 60%
- NO 26%
- DIDN'T SEE IT 14%

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Expanding Medicaid would help Tennessee

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Gov. Haslam's State of the State address which was delivered Jan. 29. First of all, I would like to commend the governor for keeping his remarks upbeat and looking toward the future. However, I feel there were several important issues the governor failed to address.

Even though he proposed the expansion of Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act two years ago, it did not advance and the need for the program is greater now than ever before. Some, including many of our elected officials, believe ACA is all but dead, but this is not the case. There are over 250,000 Tennesseans, including 10,000 veterans, who could receive healthcare if this "expansion" were approved.

Just last week we saw another ramification of the non-expansion. A rural hospital in Decatur County was forced to close its doors, the 10th rural hospital in the state in the last three years. The \$1.2 billion expansion Tennessee would have received would have helped to keep that hospital open.

Rightly so, the governor stressed his program to address the opioid epidemic. But let's not forget, the single biggest step Tennessee could take to address the problem is to expand Medicaid.

The governor stressed making Tennessee govern-

ment more efficient. This is all well and good except in many cases this means cutting services for our citizens and the elimination of state positions which results in longer lines, poor customer service, and citizens experiencing more time away from their work and family.

One need look no further than the continual threat of closing our Driver Testing Center here in McMinnville. Our local officials are to be commended for keeping the center open the last two years, but it borders on ridiculous that the local community is funding what is a state responsibility.

Gov. Haslam highlighted the nearly \$450 million he has appropriated for educator salaries across the state over the last several years. However less than that has actually reached the educators during the prior five years in many school districts. The Tennessee Board of Education diverted much of the funding to school infrastructure and health care benefits.

While these are needed improvements, all money promised to hard-working, dedicated educators didn't make it into their wallets, and it appears the governor is touting an accomplishment that didn't happen.

A new governor will take office next January. Hopefully whoever takes office will serve this state well and address these overlooked issues.

Lee Campbell
Shadowlawn Street
McMinnville

I WON'T ACCEPT YOUR APOLOGY
UNTIL YOU POST IT ON SOCIAL MEDIA.



STAHLER. 1/29

Policies hurt old, white men

Here's who President Trump's anti-immigrant policies would hurt the most: his own base. That is, the aging white males without college degrees who form the core of his support system.

Without a vast infusion of youthful, hardworking, tax-paying immigrants, this country will find it much harder to afford the generous benefits promised to these Trump supporters as they age and retire.

"Trump's immigration plan may seem to be a politically expedient way to reach older whites, who are fearful of the nation's changing demography," demographer

William Frey told Ron Brownstein of *The Atlantic*. But "as more white baby boomers retire, the nation's labor force and economic vitality will increasingly depend on nonwhite immigrants and their children. They will become prime contributors to Social Security and Medicare."

Fred Hiatt argues in *The Washington Post* that "naked self-interest" should prompt Trump supporters to back an increase in immigration, not a roll-back. "A vote to choke off immigration is a vote for stagnation and decline," he writes.

Trump has spent his entire career stirring up resentment against foreigners, particularly nonwhite, non-Christian "others." Barack Obama was a closet Muslim from Kenya. Mexicans were rapists. Syrians were terrorists. Africa sent the "worst of the worst" to the U.S. Haitians and Salvadorans were from "s---hole" countries. Only white Norwegians seemed to be

acceptable -- a clear sign of his racist impulses and undertones.

The president continued the same deeply cynical, closed-minded theme in his State of the Union speech, demonizing immigrants as gang members and terrorists, without a single word about the enormous benefits they bring every single day.

Reducing legal immigration is seriously misguided from an economic perspective as well. Trump told Congress he wants to "put America first," but his immigration policy would do exactly the opposite. Sen. Tom Cotton, lead sponsor of the bill

Trump endorses, asserts that these newcomers have caused "a sharp decline in wages for working Americans." But that is flat-out wrong.

The nonpartisan National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine did an exhaustive survey of the research on just this issue, and concluded the impact of immigration on wages is "very small" and dissipates quickly. "Immigration has an overall positive impact on long-run economic growth in the U.S.," the 2016 report stated.

Social Security estimates the number of seniors will grow from 48 million now to 86 million in 2050. But if immigration is cut in half, projects the Pew Research Center, the workforce will not grow at all.

In short, when Trumpians cheer the president's call for reduced immigration, they are endangering their own future. As Trump might tweet: SAD.

Steve and Cokie Roberts can be contacted by email at stevecokie@gmail.com.

COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE
ROBERTS



Social media nurtures fake news

Maybe it's author Michael "Fire and Fury" Wolff hinting that President Trump is having an affair with United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley.

Maybe it's the waves of lies from Russian hackers that have flooded major social media sites, causing global confusion and chaos.

Maybe it's rumors that Pope Francis has a brain tumor or that he's preparing for a Third Vatican Council, one sure to split the Church of Rome.

Whatever "fake news" is, the pope's World Communications Day message made it clear he believes Satan is behind it all.

The problem is that few people -- especially in culture-wars America -- agree on what "fake news" means. It's hard to imagine a more partisan term, when Trump shouts it at a rally.

Concerning the crucial definition issue, Pope Francis wrote: "It refers to the spreading of disinformation online or in the traditional media. It has to do with false information based on nonexistent or distorted data meant to deceive and manipulate the reader. Spreading fake news can serve to advance specific goals, influence political decisions, and serve economic interests."

"The effectiveness of fake news is primarily due to its ability to mimic real news. ... It grasps people's attention by appealing to stereotypes and common social prejudices, and exploiting instantaneous emotions like anxiety, contempt and frustration."

Fake news can, in social media networks, spread so fast that "authoritative denials" fail to contain the damage, said Francis.

Part of the problem, however, is that consumers now distrust many authoritative voices in journalism and the government, noted veteran New York

City journalist Clemente Lisi.

Some journalists are part of the problem, but others carry on doing accurate, balanced reporting. Lots of fake information flows through social media channels, but many proposals to fact-check and control these public forums are frightening in terms of their implications for free speech. Would the public trust their new protectors?

Once again, what is fake news? Yes, it's rumors, acidic political fairy tales and outright hoaxes. But can the fake-news label be pinned on screwed-up, mistake-plagued news about current events? Are politicians accurate in yelling "fake news" whenever faced with

information they don't like and want to see suppressed?

The bottom line, argued Lisi, is clear: "Fake news is a real problem, but the devil really is in the details when it comes to who's really to blame."

For example, "unmasking" fake news can be hard, argued the pope, because so many news consumers are only paying attention to news sources that reaffirm what they already believe. They never encounter voices and information that "could effectively challenge prejudices and generate constructive dialogue."

Thus, news consumers -- using social media -- can easily turn into "unwilling accomplices in spreading biased and baseless ideas," he said. "The tragedy of disinformation is that it discredits others, presenting them as enemies, to the point of demonizing them. ... Fake news is a sign of intolerant and hypersensitive attitudes, and leads only to the spread of arrogance and hatred."

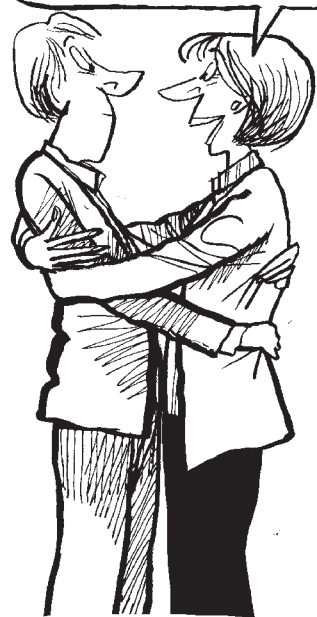
Terry Mattingly is the editor of GetReligion.org. He lives in Oak Ridge.

ON RELIGION

TERRY
MATTINGLY



YOU'RE BETTER THAN
BINGE-WATCHING ANYTHING.



STAHLER.
2/2

www.gocomics.com

© 2018 Jeff Stahl/Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Established 1879

Southern Standard

Publication No. 506-840

Patricia Zechman, Publisher
James Clark, Editor

Phyllis Vanatta, Business Manager
Jeffery Simmons, Advertising Director

Phone: 473-2191
105 College St., McMinnville, TN 37110
FAX: 473-6823

Email: standard@blomand.net
Website: www.southernstandard.com

Copyright Standard Publishing Company,
All Rights Reserved

