

## Standard online reader survey



**Q: Do you think Warren County should elect all 24 of its County Commissioners at the same time?**

**YES or NO**

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Safety of children must be top concern

"Probably" isn't a word you want to use when talking about whether children are safe. But that is precisely the word that comes to mind as we review the recent controversy that erupted over whether the federal government "lost" 1,475 migrant children who had been placed in the homes of caregivers.

Here's what we know: In April testimony to Congress, a Health and Human Services official revealed the government didn't have a good handle on nearly 1,500 kids it had placed with caregivers. That testimony resurfaced recently when immigration activists fanned the public debate with a series of tweets linking these children to the Trump administration policy to separate families who attempt to enter the country illegally.

Regardless of whether we like it, children are part of the immigration debate. Some arrive with their parents. Others arrive seeking asylum, some of whom are eligible for such status in our system.

For years, as unaccompanied minors arrived in the United States, border patrol or customs officials transferred them to the custody of HHS, which then placed them with a relative or sponsor.

HHS has made it a practice to make phone calls to check on the minor's placement. The agency says the

#### Dallas Morning News

bulk of the sponsors are parents or immediate family members or others whom the children had some previous relationship. But not all calls get returned, caregivers move and, in some cases, kids run away. The net result is that there are some children who came into HHS' system for whom it cannot fully account now.

It is probable that most of these kids are in safe hands. But back in 2016, HHS was criticized for failing to protect unaccompanied minors from falling into the hands of human traffickers and other abusers. We understand that those reports prompted officials to conduct better background checks.

But we also understand something else: In an environment where immigrants are demonized, more people will live in the shadows of society where they can be exploited. We believe in the rule of law, so we prefer policies and rhetoric that encourage people to live in the open.

Only then can our legal system better protect society from all levels of abuse. And, yes, that includes ensuring there is no "probably" attached to talk about the safety of children who pass through the hands of HHS.



### Reflections on state history

In case you missed it, Friday was Statehood Day in Tennessee. As far as I know, June 1, 2018 came and went without a lot of fanfare from the media and political leaders. Still, it serves to remind those of us who follow history in general and Tennessee history in particular, that on June 1, 1796, Congress approved the admission of Tennessee as the 16th state of the Union.

Tennessee's founding fathers had long recognized the need for the Southwest Territory to become a state. By 1795, they reckoned the time was ripe to act on their hopes and dreams. That's when a territorial census confirmed a sufficient population for statehood, and a referendum revealed a 3-1 majority in favor of joining the Union.

Therefore, Gov. William Blount called for a constitutional convention to be held in Knoxville. Delegates from all the counties convened there and crafted a model state constitution, including a democratic bill of rights. The voters chose John Sevier as governor, and the newly elected Legislature picked William Blount and William Cocke as senators and Andrew Jackson as representative.

Wisely, Tennessee leaders transformed the territory into a new state, with a constitution and an organized government, before submitting their request for statehood to Congress for admission. Even so, admission was a close call. The Southwest Territory was the first federal territory to seek

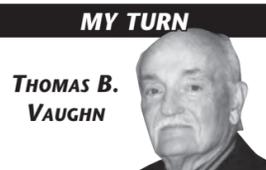
admission to the Union as a state. Hence, there was some hesitation on how to proceed. Ultimately, though, Congress divided along party lines, and in a narrow vote on June 1, 1796 admitted Tennessee as the 16th state of the Union.

Tennessee has come a very long way since it was transformed from territory to statehood 222 years ago. Tennessee's progress and problems are aptly attested to in the 2017-18 edition of Tennessee Blue Book. From "Tennessee's Coming of Age" and

"The Age of Jackson," to "The Time of Troubles," and "Reconstruction and Rebuilding," and on to the "Early Twentieth Century" and "Modern Tennessee," the Tennessee Blue Book is a single-source treasure trove of useful information on the history of our great "Volunteer State." It also includes details on state and local government as well as other interesting facts and figures

On a personal note, I've heard folks say, "History is boring and dull," to which I say, "au contraire." Some people may be "boring and dull," but history is a living thing, with larger-than-life characters. It can enlighten, entertain, and at times, edify and inspire. Surely, that pertains to Tennessee history, too. More later on how and why Tennessee counties were named.

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#### MY TURN

THOMAS B. VAUGHN

#### JUST A THOUGHT

LISA HOBBS



### More people needed for Animal Control

It's time for both McMinnville and Warren County governments to unleash longstanding funding limits on Animal Control.

I don't know why, but neither government seems to be in a hurry to increase the budgets of their Animal Control departments. If you feel your Animal Control services are sufficiently funded, I challenge you to spend an 8-hour day job shadowing your one and only full-time employee. I believe 8 hours would be more than enough to convince you that you are wrong.

I'd like to see both budgets expanded to include at least one more full-time person for safety reasons. They should never be out on calls alone. These should be two-person jobs. With the way the world is getting, I couldn't imagine knocking on someone's door and telling them you're concerned for their animals not having food, water, or shelter. I can see how some people wouldn't take that news well.

I'd be the first one to admit I'm slightly shielded from the seedier world we live in, but I'm smart enough to know there is danger lurking everywhere in this town. You don't have to look any further than a docket to know it. Going anywhere unknown alone isn't safe. If I were an Animal Control officer, I wouldn't knock on any door or go onto anyone's property by myself.

I always assumed a law enforcement officer went with them. Thanks to the whiner, a deputy, who complained about going out on animal calls, I now know that's not common practice. It is on an as-needed basis.

What initially drew my attention to the situation was a request by Warren County Animal Control director Kim Pettrey during last year's proposed budget for fiscal year 2017-18. She called having a second full-time person a "desperate need" within the department.

She wanted to increase the hours of one of her two part-time people and provide them with training. The county Health and Welfare Committee dismissed that request.

A few months later, I'm sitting in another county committee meeting listening to how Pettrey injured her back and needed surgery. Her return date was unknown. Committee members were attempting to figure out how to keep the department open without another full-time person. There are two part-time employees in the county department. However, neither are allowed to work full time and neither have been given the proper training to do Pettrey's job.

While I haven't heard the same complaints coming from the city's Animal Control department, it only has one full-time employee. There really should be two. Aldermen have talked about making the city more pet friendly by expanding services to include a dog park and installing dog fountains at its other parks. Can we not show a little love and consideration to the homeless animals of the city by enclosing the kennels?

As budget discussions begin, please consider including an additional full-time Animal Control officer. Both departments would benefit greatly from it.

Standard reporter Lisa Hobbs can be reached at 473-2191.

### Phones distract from real life

According to an article by the *New York Post*, Americans check their phones 80 times a day.

This is tough to read, but easy to believe.

I go to Tennessee Tech University, and I see this all over campus. People walking with their nose stuck in their phones looking at pretty much the same content over and over again. Many people put themselves in harm's way so many times because they are fixed on their screen and don't pay attention to anything else surrounding them.

For example, one day I was walking to class on campus, and a man was looking at his phone, just like every other person on campus, but he decided he would walk into the middle of the road unannounced. Considering this was on school grounds, and every car travels at the speed of snails, cars are jammed on the road.

I watched him walk right in front of a huge truck that could have easily mashed this guy into the asphalt. The truck stopped abruptly and the driver gave him a whole flock of birds so generously. The man walking never even budged.

This experience is not even close to how dangerous my next experience is.

As I was traveling home on I-40, I noticed a double-semi was weaving. Me being a worried driver in the slow lane, I decided to pass him in case he wanted to double cross me. As I approached the driver's window, he is watching Netflix on his phone stand while driving.

I was boiling mad. I honked my horn and rolled down my window hoping he would notice my insanity. He finally looked over, and I'm giving him my crazy eyes and start pointing at his phone.

He looked back to the road with his phone still on and wouldn't look at me again. I thought to myself how awful it would be if he hit someone because of a dumb show.

Another thing that chills me to the bone is when people are clearly on dates and they are scrolling on their phone instead of talking to their date.

My fiancé and I went to a nice restaurant in Nashville one day and saw this disappointing scene.

The girl was dressed to impress her date, while he was shoveling his meal in his face while looking at his phone. She looked so sad while she spun her pasta being as quiet as can be.

Now I understand that people need to look at their phone for communicating and for fun in their free time. But there are times when a person shouldn't, and I consider my experiences as bad times to fixate on a phone.

My 2 cents is to look up from a screen and look at your surroundings because the student walking across the street missed free ice cream, the driver missed a van full of softball players, and the guy on the date could have missed the chance with the girl of his dreams.

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