

Standard online reader survey



Q: Which local government do you think is run better?

CITY or COUNTY

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EDITORIAL

It's time to remove Martin as chairman

There is no place in Warren County government for the behavior Commissioner Michael Martin displayed Tuesday night.

He insulted a fellow commissioner, tossed the director of Animal Control out of the meeting, then yelled an obscenity at a reporter.

That was all during a 45-minute Health and Welfare Committee meeting. It's a committee where Martin is inexplicably the chairman despite a long-running feud with Animal Control.

It makes no sense to put a person with a grudge against Animal Control as the chairman of the committee which oversees Animal Control, but that's what has been allowed to happen for nearly four years.

We here at the *Standard* hope this arrangement ends immediately. We hope Mr. Martin is replaced as chairman of the Health and Welfare Committee, effective now.

It would be easy, far easier, to do nothing and allow Martin to remain chair of the committee.

After all, the county elections are just six weeks away. County Executive Herschel Wells is not running for a second term. Many of the commissioners currently seated will not return.

The county could just ride this problem out in hopes it will eventually go

away.

But it would be far more appropriate to show we are committed to values and decency in county government. Rude, obnoxious and hateful behavior by a man who is expected to be a county leader should not be tolerated.

This is not Mr. Martin's first outburst pertaining to Animal Control. Just a few months ago he wanted to shut the doors and close the facility to save \$100,000. That amounts to .001 percent of the county's annual budget.

Mr. Martin always has nasty words to level at Animal Control director Kim Pettrey, who has shown dedication to saving animals and trying to find them good homes. She's done this despite a constant drumbeat of criticism from Mr. Martin.

It should be stressed no other county commissioners have voiced agreement with Mr. Martin's negative views on Animal Control. The only statements being made are those which are distancing fellow commissioners from Martin.

The Warren County Commission has long been a distinguished governing body. County government officials have worked through disagreements and policy differences, but they've done so with class.

Not so with Michael Martin. He deserves to be removed as Health and Welfare Committee chair. He's earned it.



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Politics is women's work

Some names to remember as the political year unfolds: Abby Finkenauer, Debra Haaland and Mary Gay Scanlon.

Finkenauer, a 28-year-old state legislator, is the Democratic nominee to take on Rep. Rod Blum in Iowa's first district. The race is considered a toss-up, and if she wins, Finkenauer would be the youngest woman ever elected to Congress.

Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo and a solid favorite in New Mexico's first district, would be the first Native American woman to serve in the House.

Scanlon, a lawyer specializing in education issues, should win an open seat in suburban Philadelphia and integrate Pennsylvania's congressional delegation, which is currently all male.

These three pioneers reflect a critical storyline in this year's elections. Democrats need a net gain of 23 seats to take control of the House, and their hopes rest heavily on the energy and enthusiasm of women.

The primary season is not finished, but political scientist David Hopkins of Boston College concludes, "It's apparent enough by now that we are witnessing a dramatic and historic change in the gender distribution among Democratic congressional nominees."

According to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers, a total of 455 women have filed as candidates for Congress, easily topping the old record of 298 in 2012. Fifty-one women have entered Senate races, compared to 40 who set the previous standard in 2016.

Gubernatorial candidates are even more striking: 60 this year, far

exceeding the 34 women who ran in 1994.

Women are not just running; they're winning. Congressional expert David Wasserman examined 65 Democratic primaries pitting a man against a woman with no incumbent. Women enjoyed a "gender bonus," running ahead of their male rivals by an average of 15 points and posting 45 victories. Just this week, Virginia Democrats nominated female candidates to challenge Republican incumbents in that state's four most competitive districts.

There were always women in the voting booth. They made up 53 percent of the electorate in 2016, and there was a huge gender gap, with men favoring President Trump by

11 points and women backing Hillary Clinton by 13 points.

Democratic pollster Stan Greenberg conducted interviews with women in that demographic in the Detroit suburbs, and told *The Washington Post*: "Trump every day gets up and drives away those voters and gives them a reason to vote."

The Women's March in January of 2017, barely 10 weeks after Clinton's defeat, and the rise of the #MeToo movement both played a significant role in energizing women candidates. But the single most compelling reason behind their activism is simple hatred of the president. As Dunn told the *Times*, "As long as Donald Trump is in the White House, there will be oxygen in this movement."

Election Day is a long way off. But if a "blue wave" materializes this fall, it will be fueled by women.

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



COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE ROBERTS

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JAMES CLARK



Eminem and the Bonnaroo gunshots

It was last week around this time when the relaxation of Bonnaroo was pouring over my shoulders like a soothing waterfall. I was chilling.

You could say the atmosphere was suiting my fancy, right down to the chocolate cake I had the good fortune of encountering. Our group had wandered from the campground to the concert area to see Eminem on the main stage. The night air was crisp. The field was packed.

Then, about four songs into the headline performance, it happened. Gunshots rang through the air. These weren't real gunshots, I soon determined, all just a very disturbing part of the show.

Some people jumped. Others ignored it. A lady next to me began saying it was an inappropriate sound effect to blare during a concert.

Then, if once wasn't enough, the gunshots returned a few songs later. And so did the comments, both during the rest of the show and then back at the campground. Some folks were angry and felt the gunshots showed real disrespect considering the largest mass shooting in U.S. history took place less than a year ago at an outdoor concert.

To be sure, the gunshots were a calculated sound effect. They weren't inserted by happenstance.

The immediate impact for me was it was a mood kill. One minute I'm dancing at a concert, the next minute I'm scoping out the tree line to see if there's any place for a gunman to roost.

I thought about the folks in Las Vegas who were doing nothing more than I was doing Saturday night in Manchester, swaying to music and smiling with friends.

As much as I didn't want to think about gun violence during my Bonnaroo weekend, there I was thinking about the worst. Gee, thanks Eminem.

My initial reaction was Eminem is a jerk for allowing the real world to creep into my time to get away from it all. But on further review, I'm beginning to appreciate his willingness to draw attention to gun violence and its regularity in our everyday lives.

We can be gunned down anywhere at any time. The past few years have seen gunmen strike churches, schools, shopping malls, businesses, and even a Waffle House in Nashville.

Narrowing down innocent people is beginning to rival baseball as America's pastime.

I think that's what Eminem was trying to bring into focus and his concerts are the best avenue for this. It's an effective way to reach a huge audience.

I probably wouldn't stop and pay attention to an Eminem TV interview. I doubt I'd read an article about him in the paper. I don't care that much about his music.

But he's got my attention when I'm standing there watching him on stage. That's his only hope of influencing my mindset.

As much as I didn't appreciate it at the time, Eminem provided a lasting memory from Bonnaroo. I can be thankful it was just a thought in my head, not an eyewitness account.

Standard editor James Clark can be reached at 473-2191.



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What next after cake decision?

The Pulitzer Prize-winning "Angels in America" has long been a touchstone for gay spirituality, so it wasn't surprising that actor Andrew Garfield celebrated winning a Tony Award in the play's revival with remarks mixing faith and politics.

It's crucial, he said, to celebrate the play's "spirit that says 'no' to oppression. It is a spirit that says 'no' to bigotry. ... It is a spirit that says we are all made perfectly."

Garfield concluded: "We are all sacred. ... So let's just bake a cake for everyone who wants a cake to be baked!"

The baker behind the U.S. Supreme Court's recent Masterpiece Cakeshop decision has heard pronouncements of this kind many times since that fateful day in 2012 when he declined to create one of his hand-crafted, personalized cakes to celebrate the same-sex marriage of Charlie Craig and David Mullins.

"The biggest myth I hear all the time, pretty much, is that I turned away a gay couple. But the truth is, I never turn away any customers. I do, sometimes, have to decline to create cakes that violate my faith, and that was the case here," said Phillips, in a Lutheran Public Radio interview soon after the June 4 decision.

"The two gentlemen that sued me were welcome in my shop that day. I told them, I'll sell you cookies, brownies, birthday cakes, anything else, custom cakes -- it's just that I can't create this one, because this was a cake that goes against the core of my faith."

While this was a 7-2 ruling, Justice Anthony Kennedy's majority opinion focused on evidence that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission had demonstrated open hostility to Phillips and his Christian faith. Thus, he avoided a broader ruling on First Amendment protections of free speech and the "free exercise" of religion.

Some insiders -- on right and left -- have mildly praised the decision, seeing it as a dodged bullet, since Kennedy failed to clearly affirm either side. Everyone knows this culture war will continue.

Many conservative religious-liberty activists acknowledged this was a narrow decision, but they noted there are pending cases in which Kennedy's criticism of anti-religious bias will be relevant.

Some appreciated that, while the court avoided crucial religious liberty issues, it signaled that these issues must be settled.

Meanwhile, Phillips said he is looking forward to creating more wedding cakes, now that he is free to do so while following his convictions.

"It was worth the fight," he said. "The state should not be allowed to force creative professionals, like myself, to create artwork -- in my case, cakes -- to convey messages that go against their faith. The First Amendment would clearly protect that. ... It was worth it because this clearly protects all creative professionals."

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



ON RELIGION

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Patricia Zechman, Publisher
James Clark, Editor

Phyllis Vanatta, Business Manager
Dale Stubblefield, Circulation Director

Phone: 473-2191
105 College St., McMinnville, TN 37110
FAX: 473-6823
Email: standard@blomand.net
Website: www.southernstandard.com

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