

Standard online reader survey



Q: Do you think people convicted of child rape should be eligible for the death penalty?

YES 84 percent
NO 16 percent

GUEST EDITORIAL

Can we refrain from incessant negativity?

We can do better than this. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders should not have been asked to leave the Red Hen restaurant in Lexington, Va.

Apparently the restaurant staff voted to have her tossed because she defended the administration's policies that they found offensive.

That is her job as press secretary. Just as it was for Josh Earnest under Barack Obama and Dana Perino under George W. Bush. They defended the administration and shaped messaging on a daily basis. To someone new to politics who holds opposing views, it may seem like brash double-speak or flat-out lying to witness a press secretary in action, but it is business as usual in Washington, D.C.

We should not encour-

Boston Herald

age political newbies to employ bullying tactics based on their anemic understanding of modern politics.

Likewise, we should not encourage the president to use the prestige of his office to denigrate a small business. On June 25, President Trump tweeted, "The Red Hen Restaurant should focus more on cleaning its filthy canopies, doors and windows (badly needs a paint job) rather than refusing to serve a fine person like Sarah Huckabee Sanders. I always had a rule, if a restaurant is dirty on the outside, it is dirty on the inside!"

Bad form. We need a time-out in this country.

WRITE A LETTER

Members of the community are encouraged to write letters to the editor

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Trump's Supreme opportunity

Scarcely 17 months into his first term, President Donald J. Trump is poised to pick his second U.S. Supreme Court Justice nominee. He has retiring Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy to thank.

Appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1988, Justice Kennedy was neither Reagan's first nor his second choice for the post. His first choice was famously or infamously "borked" by Senate Democrats. His second choice withdrew from consideration after fessing up to smoking the fabled weed. I'm not sure if he inhaled or not.

Anyway, Justice Kennedy turned out to be a solid choice. He has served on the Supreme Court for over 30 years. Along the way, he has earned the admiration and respect of political friend and foe alike. He's also been often characterized as "the man in the middle" on many controversial 5-4 decisions. Now 82, he has announced his departure, effective July 31. Asked why, he reportedly responded, "To spend more time with my family."

Predictably, President Trump and his supporters are happy as clams for this opportunity, dropped in the president's lap barely four months before the 2018 mid-term congressional general elections. Conversely, President Trump's opponents, notably Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and his ilk, act like they just had a bad clam over all this.

Therefore, the battle lines are already being drawn for the epic war of words in the Senate, with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell leading the charge to get President Trump's Supreme Court nominee

swiftly approved by the Senate. Count on Sen. Schumer and his Democratic colleagues to mount a deliberate defense against any Trump nominee being confirmed by the Senate anytime soon.

The mid-term congressional election stakes were already high for both political parties. The looming Supreme Court vacancy raises those stakes exponentially, especially in the Senate. That's where the Trump Supreme Court nominee confirmation drama will unfold. And that's where the GOP majority margin is razor thin. With 51 GOP senators now, and

four of them not running for re-election, the challenge will be to win those four open seats in November, and pick off a few Democratic incumbents as well to further solidify

their Republican majority in 2019. Senate Democrats face an even greater challenge. With 26 incumbents up for re-election this year, they could be vulnerable in those states Trump won by double digits over Hillary Clinton in 2016. Senate Republicans have only four incumbents running for re-election this year.

As if the Supreme Court vacancy weren't enough to motivate both parties, 36 governors are theoretically up for re-election in 2018, 26 of them Republicans. The outcome of these races will affect how legislative districts are re-drawn after the 2020 decennial census.

All in all, expect a brawl, from now on through the mid-term general elections in November.

Retired Army Col. Thomas B. Vaughn can be reached at tbvwmni@blomand.net.

MY TURN

THOMAS B. VAUGHN



The Underground Railroad

CINCINNATI, OHIO -- Lest we forget: The American Revolution was fought in the cause of freedom, but the battle for freedom did not end at Yorktown. And lest we think that the great monument to freedom is in Philadelphia, remember that another stands here on the banks of the mighty Ohio River, and it contains a message for us as we approach the birthday of the Declaration of Independence and its all-men-are-created-equal credo.

That monument is the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. It is a reminder, for our time and for all time, the struggle for freedom never really ends.

The transit from slave-state Kentucky to free-state Ohio seems like a simple journey, just as the movement from rights-for-some to rights-for-all seems like a simple progression.

Some of the 19th-century transit came with the Underground Railroad, which was never a railroad and not always underground, but a powerful movement and metaphor.

By geography and history, Cincinnati was a natural locus for the Underground Railroad. The city was pro-slavery in an anti-slavery state. The fastest growing city in the steamboat era, it sat on the primary water route to the slave markets of the South, even as it was a natural destination for runaway slaves. Blacks here were free, though not free from fear.

The Underground Railroad -- the term perhaps first surfaced in 1839, when a slave said he hoped to ride to freedom on a railroad that "went underground all the way to Boston" -- had a vocabulary ("conductors") and a

route map (sometimes bulkheads, sometimes trap doors, sometimes clandestine tunnels) all its own.

This metaphorical railroad moved by secret signals, whispery passwords, even directions derived from the position of the stars.

It was the precursor of the Great Migration of the 20th century, when descendants of slaves moved north in search of economic opportunity. And it required enormous daring. In his 1845 autobiography, Frederick Douglass spoke of being haunted by the notion that there was "at every ferry a guard, on every bridge a sentinel and in every wood a patrol or slave hunter."

Even so, the obstacles to freedom -- political, cultural and economic -- were immense.

Eleven of the first 15 presidents were slaveholders. The cotton trade, which sustained slavery in much of the South, was larger than the economic value of all other products of the United States economy combined.

The great words of freedom ("We hold these truths to be self-evident") were written by a man who owned 600 slaves, 400 of them at Monticello.

That irony spurred another irony, that Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence was a fundamental impetus to the opposition to slavery.

Today, the Underground Railroad serves as a reminder the unrequited promise of our national narrative and an exhortation to continue the effort to extend freedom beyond its onetime boundaries. It is also an inspiration for our time.

Shribman is executive editor of the Post-Gazette (dshribman@post-gazette.com).

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

DAVID M. SHRIBMAN



JUST A THOUGHT

LISA HOBBS



I love our new street lines

Thank you, city of McMinnville, for painting the lines on the street in front of the *Standard* office. It was needed.

Can I make a little suggestion? I can actually hear city officials replying in one unified voice, "Sure, why not?" I don't normally hear voices in my head. When I do, they're always on my side. It helps me get my way, so I'm going with it.

While you're considering the proposed budget for fiscal year 2018-19, consider outsourcing the painting of streets. You're spending millions on paving to make the infrastructure of the city look good. Why not go that extra step and put some monies toward adding the final touch?

Don't get me wrong, Your McMinnville Public Works Department employees are doing a fine job with what they have to work with by way of equipment and supplies. Those guys are systematically making their way through the streets of the city painting lines and stop bars. I have no complaints when it comes to that. They're dedicated, wonderful employees.

However, I will say a professional street painting company would make its way through the city lickety-split. Everything would be painted as fast as possible and with equipment made for the job. After all, that's what they do for a living. I would expect the job to be done as fast as possible and very professionally.

Also, a company that specializes in painting streets probably uses a different type of paint. I don't know much about it, but I can Google. It's called thermoplastic road marking paint, which is almost like hot plastic. Sounds like wonderful stuff. I would think that would last a lot longer and hence, make the streets look better longer. That would be well worth it, in my opinion.

I'm still talking to McMinnville officials. If you need more of an incentive to outsource this type of work, I'd like to invite you to College Street. Specifically, I want you to stand at the bottom of the hill and look up the street. Please be careful of oncoming traffic. I wouldn't want to get anyone hurt with my suggestion. Take due care, please. Suing me would be the definition of frivolous lawsuit. If you did win for some weird reason, you won't get much. My wallet is like an onion, because it makes me cry when opened. Sad, but true.

How about this? Bid out street striping and see what the cost is? If it's too much, reject the bids. No harm in checking, right? We will never know unless we try. What if the price is very reasonable?

Incentive: when all the streets are striped practically overnight, I'm sure everyone will be eternally grateful and delighted in how good the streets look. I know I'm reaching with that last statement but it could happen. Fantasy can sometimes be rooted in reality.

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