

## Standard online reader survey



With President Trump getting to appoint another Supreme Court justice, there's talk major change could be in store.

**Q: Would you like Roe v. Wade to be overturned to make abortion illegal?**

**YES or NO**

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

## All sides should scrutinize pick for Supreme Court

Judge Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to replace retiring Justice Anthony M. Kennedy on the Supreme Court comes at a tense moment. It could drastically shift the court's tenuous ideological balance, and it comes not long after Senate Republicans disgracefully blocked President Barack Obama from making a court pick in his final year. More than ever, the court is in danger of becoming viewed as an instrument of politics rather than an independent, nonpartisan branch of government.

That is why senators must be even more exacting than usual when they evaluate Mr. Kavanaugh. They should insist on a justice who would rule with modesty and genuine independence of mind — and a willingness to resist abuses of power by this and future presidents.

Mr. Kavanaugh meets the basic qualifications for high court service. A Yale Law School graduate who clerked for Mr. Kennedy, he has served for 12 years on the powerful U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Mr. Trump's first nominee, Neil M. Gorsuch, was, in his confirmation hearings, the least forthcoming Supreme Court nominee in recent memory. Mr. Kavanaugh must do better. Fortunately, he comes with a huge record.

On hot-button questions, Mr. Kavanaugh has trended

*Washington Post*

conservative on issues such as abortion, indicating a narrow view of what constitutes an undue burden on a woman's right to end her pregnancy, and the Obamacare contraception mandate, though his take on the mandate was somewhat more conciliatory than right-wing activists would prefer.

A nemesis of the administrative state, he has frequently voted against the Environmental Protection Agency, arguing that programs to regulate greenhouse-gas emissions and cross-border air pollution went further than the law allowed; in each case he took an overly narrow view of the statute.

Most importantly, senators must extract an iron-clad commitment that Mr. Kavanaugh will act as a check on the president. That's a role he has not seemed comfortable playing in cases involving enemy combatants, or in a law review article suggesting that the president should not be subject to civil or criminal court proceedings while in office.

Just as Democrats should not have ruled out Mr. Trump's pick before it was announced, Republicans should not duck their responsibility to bring a critical eye to the coming confirmation process.



## Broken lives, broken promises

As a child in eastern China, Panshu Zhao worshipped the United States. "He read the Bible his parents gave him, watched Hollywood movies and studied the ideals of democracy," reports the Associated Press. "He jumped at the chance to attend graduate school at Texas A&M University."

In 2016, Zhao enlisted in a special U.S. Army program that offers a path to citizenship for immigrant recruits with special medical and language skills — from Albanian to Yoruba. He pursued his degree in geography, hit the gym to prepare for boot camp and trained with his reserve unit.

But now, the Trump administration has essentially dismantled the program, discharging recruits like Zhao and ending their dreams of becoming Americans.

"It's just like you're dropped from heaven to hell," Zhao told the A.P. "I'm not a national threat. On the contrast, I'm a national merit because people like me with higher education and critical skills, we want to serve this great U.S. Army."

Trump has consistently, even proudly, proclaimed his hateful attitude toward immigrants, deriding them as "rapists" and "animals" who "infest" and "invade" this nation. He's advocated barring all Muslims from the country, and slashed the number of refugees accepted for resettlement by two-thirds.

But one of his most despicable actions has been to strangle the program that initially welcomed Zhao, called Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest, or MAVNI. His

administration has set such high standards for security clearances that many recruits either fail the test or run out of time, since their eligibility ends if they're not called up for active duty within two years of enlistment.

Margaret Stock, a retired Army officer who helped create the program and now practices immigration law, says the background checks for MAVNI recruits are much tougher than for job applicants at the White House. "There's no explanation for this except xenophobia," Stock told *The New York Times*.

Xenophobia is definitely one explanation. So is Trump's relentless determination to ignore facts when he's stirring up his base with anti-immigrant invective. Zhao is right: The program's recruits are "national merits," not

threats, and the enhanced security standards imposed by the Trump administration are clearly not justified by reality.

As the Defense Department's own website points out, "Noncitizens have served in the military since the Revolutionary War." MAVNI was created because it serves the national interest. And it is being jettisoned just at a time when the military is consistently failing to meet its own recruitment goals.

Instead of welcoming and utilizing these recruits, this administration is finding every excuse to break promises, break lives and besmirch the "ideals of democracy" that Panshu Zhao admired so avidly as a child in China.

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### COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE ROBERTS



## FIFA and yellow cards for faith

History buffs probing the origins of the Cross of St. George will find themselves exploring a labyrinth of faith and legend in the late Middle Ages.

To see this heraldry symbol, just look at England's flag — a bright red cross on a white background. Soccer fans may notice the English side's 2018 World Cup kits feature a St. George's Cross on the back collar. During away games, a subtle cross covers the entire front of the red jersey.

This is interesting, since the International Football Association Board's "Laws of the Game" — used at the FIFA World Cup — state: "Equipment must not have any political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images." This rule "applies to all equipment (including clothing) worn by players," according to IFAB guidelines.

Does this apply to religious symbols woven into the flags and traditions of many nations?

"It's important to remember that the rules of soccer came from Europe," said Jennifer Bryson, director of the Islam and Religious Freedom Action Team at the Religious Freedom Institute in Washington, D.C. "The IFAB began in England. FIFA began in Europe. Both of these organizations are supposed to be truly international — but their roots are European. Basically, the word 'religion' in these rules means 'Christianity.' ... FIFA is still trying to come to terms with the rest of the world."

It's hard to imagine a more challenging task than imposing modern European secularism on this very religious planet, said Bryson in an interview. England's Cross of St. George is just one example of faith mixing with

football. Players from Iran wear their nation's flag, with a red "Allah" symbol and two bold horizontal bars consisting of 11 repetitions of "Allahu akbar (God is greatest)." Can Brazilian evangelicals keep wearing "I belong to Jesus" T-shirts under their jerseys?

Bryson has paid close attention during World Cup 2018, looking for expressions of religious faith. She summarized her early findings in a late June lecture in Washington entitled "Exorcisms and Exercise, Crosses and Cross Passes: What Religious Freedom Has to Do With the World Cup."

### ON RELIGION

TERRY MATTINGLY



goal," said Bryson during the lecture. Her bottom line: "Your own religious freedom is most protected when your neighbor of another faith also has religious freedom."

The goal, said Bryson, appears to be avoiding acts and symbols that offend other players. However, officials get to determine whether religious symbols, gestures or speech are intended to be provocative. Of course, a symbol that is secular in one culture — like a rainbow jersey — may have powerful religious implications in another.

"It appears that established symbols — like flags — are OK," she said. "It also appears that short, expressive prayers spoken to God are acceptable, as opposed to cries of triumph aimed at other players. ... In the end, the referees get to make the final decisions."

*Terry Mattingly is the editor of [GetReligion.org](http://GetReligion.org). He lives in Oak Ridge.*

### THE SCOOP

JAMES CLARK



## This town needs an indoor pool

I had the privilege of serving as a moderator for some amazing *Southern Standard*/ WCPI political forums this week at Warren County Administrative Offices.

The forums were a great chance to see candidates running for offices of all shapes and sizes. We had two candidates for governor, four candidates for U.S. Congress, six candidates for Tennessee House of Representatives, and dozens of candidates for county government jobs.

Over the course of Monday and Tuesday, I asked dozens of questions, ranging from federal immigration policy to the Warren County tax rate. Only one of my questions received a loud ovation from the audience — a question where I mentioned the possibility of an indoor pool in McMinnville.

There is undeniably great support for an indoor pool in our community. I can understand not having one because building such a facility would cost millions and millions of dollars. If we can't afford it, OK.

Then there's a story on today's front page that discusses upcoming renovations to McMinnville Civic Center. The cost of these renovations are not yet known, but the story suggests they could be anywhere in the \$6 million to \$9 million range.

Wow! Now that's some big-time money.

If the city is going to make that type of investment to improve our Parks and Recreation offerings, it's my opinion the investment should include an indoor pool. I don't see any way we can explain spending that type of money and leave out the one item everyone has so desperately wanted.

In my almost 19 years as this newspaper's editor, I've heard countless cries for an indoor pool. I've even signed a few petitions for an indoor pool myself.

Over the years, I've never, ever heard people rally around better basketball bleachers, or a bigger fitness facility, or a better indoor walking track. These are not things people rally around.

I understand the need to update the Civic Center. It's 40 years old and could use some love.

If the city wants to plop down some money for Civic Center revitalization, I think everyone would understand. Spend \$1 million to make the place ADA compliant and there will be cheers. Spend \$2 million to make some other upgrades and there will be applause.

But spend \$9 million and don't include an indoor pool and I think there will be outrage.


Government, at its core, should be about providing services people want. As a guy who has been all about fitness and exercise since age 13, I love what our Parks and Recreation Department is doing. Our walking trails, ball fields, and public parks are what make our community so grand.

To spend \$6 million to \$9 million on projects that aren't an indoor pool would be a huge error. It would be intentionally ignoring the one thing local residents have wanted for decades.

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