

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Reduce littering

TO THE EDITOR:

This is in reference to Keith Boyd's letter to the editor about litter along local roadways in the Friday, May 18 edition of the newspaper.

I agree 100 percent with what Keith had to say. I would also like to add it's not hard to make room in your car for a small garbage can to put your garbage in, nor to make room for a few garbage bags.

You can buy them both very inexpensively and

dispose of the garbage in a receptacle or take it out when you get home and put it in your garbage. It only takes a small amount of common sense.

It would make our roadways and lawns much prettier! So do the nice thing and don't litter our roadways nor lawns. Help keep Tennessee beautiful.

Faye Gunter
Shellsford Road
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GUEST EDITORIAL

Maybe forces are out to get President Trump

Revelations the FBI used an informant to monitor the Trump campaign in 2016 serve to reinforce the president's contention that "deep state" forces are out to get him.

He let the world know his displeasure via Twitter on Sunday: "I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes — and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!"

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein announced the Department of Justice would have the inspector general look into the informant issue, noting in a statement he would "expand the ongoing review of the FISA application process to include determining whether there was any impropriety or political motivation in how the FBI conducted its counterintelligence investigation of persons suspected of involvement with the Russian agents who interfered in the 2016 presidential election."

The informant, named by multiple media sources, is Stefan Halper, a 73-year-old Cambridge University professor who has done work with several Republican presidential administrations

The Boston Herald

and has ties to intelligence services in the United States. He had several conversations with members of the Trump campaign in 2016 and corresponded in email as well. This is troubling.

Best-case scenario, a counterintelligence investigation focused on Russian election tampering organically led to members of the Trump campaign and FBI resources were dispatched to investigate.

Worst-case scenario is the Obama DOJ looked to compromise either candidate or President Trump or both and sent the FBI buzzing around the campaign looking to entrap whomever they could. It is not fair to impugn the entire FBI, but 2016 was not its best year.

Let's remember, there is no evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russians. Even if there were a willingness to collude, that would not be a crime unless it was acted on. So what are we still doing here?

We may have to wait for the inspector general's report on that.

Until then, it looks more and more likely the misdeeds were committed by the "swamp" and not the man trying to drain it.

Where are truth-tellers?

Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson never denied calling President Trump a "moron" in private. But only after he was fired did Tillerson have the guts to say publicly what he really thought about a president who has no regard for facts.

Speaking at the Virginia Military Institute, Tillerson made his target completely clear when he thundered: "If our leaders seek to conceal the truth or we as people become accepting of alternative realities that are no longer grounded in facts, then we as American citizens are on a pathway to relinquishing our freedom."

Tillerson thus joined a small band of Republicans who have shaken free from Trump's suffocating influence to publicly state their true feelings about the president.

Some have been liberated by termination. Others, including Sens. Bob Corker and Jeff Flake, shed their inhibitions by deciding not to run again. Sen. John McCain, always a candid Trump critic, has grown even more vociferous in the face of a terminal illness.

There are two lessons to be drawn here. The first is Trump's assailants form the small tip of a large iceberg. Corker, who has called the president an "utterly untruthful" person, told *The New York Times* the "vast majority" of Republican lawmakers "understand what we're dealing with here" — namely, a leader who has caused "the debasement of our nation."

The second lesson is many of those legislators are cowards, intimidated by Trump's powerful following within the Republican Party and the president's well-known capacity for vindictive retaliation.

Still, the truth-tellers are worth listening to.

And one of their main criticisms is what Tillerson focused on: Trump's utter disregard for facts that contradict his worldview, an impulse that makes rational policy-making almost impossible.

"We are a mature democracy," Flake said on the Senate floor. "It is well past time that we stop excusing — or worse, ignoring — these attacks on the truth. For if we compromise the truth for the sake of our politics, we are lost."

Many Trump critics are deeply worried about his attacks on independent institutions designed to check and balance the president's power.

One of Trump's favorite targets is the media, and Flake warned, "When a figure in power reflexively calls any press that doesn't suit him 'fake news,' it is that person who should be the figure of suspicion, not the press."

Rep. Charlie Dent, a Pennsylvania Republican who is also retiring, said Trump has rejected the GOP's traditional embrace of law enforcement by constantly undermining public confidence in the FBI.

Some of the strongest criticisms focus on Trump's personality, not his policies. Steve Bannon, once a close adviser, said the president acts "like a 9-year-old." Corker compared the White House to an "adult day-care center."

We owe these truth-tellers a debt of gratitude, even if they are, as Hillary Clinton said of Tillerson, "a tad late." But where are the others? Why won't they speak up against an "utterly untruthful" president?

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THE SCOOP

JAMES CLARK



NFL should be flagged for this

In a perfect world, everyone would rise, remove their caps and stand for the playing of our national anthem.

This simple gesture takes about two minutes and is an easy way to show respect for the United States of America.

Unfortunately, for all our glory, America is far from perfect. Senseless shootings, racial profiling, and political corruption are three widespread problems which come to mind that have no solution anywhere on the radar.

That's why our right as Americans to peacefully protest is so vital to our culture. We can state our objections in hopes of enacting positive change. Other people may not agree with our protests, but if they are conducted in an orderly manner, protesting is our constitutional right.

That being said, I cringe at the NFL's policy which was announced Wednesday that requires all players to stand during the "Star-Spangled Banner" or face disciplinary action. If a player does not wish to stand, he has the option of remaining in the locker room until the song is finished.

I'm confident this NFL mandate will be applauded by a great many people. Since the NFL's national anthem protests, I've heard a number of fans express disappointment in pro football.

I remember a conversation I had last year with a longtime Titans fan as the team was preparing for a prime-time TV appearance.

"This will be the last Monday Night Football game for me," the guy told me outside USA Gym. "I've been a season ticket holder since their first year, but I'm not going to renew my tickets. I don't like how they're disrespecting the flag."

Personally, I don't view it as disrespecting our flag. I view it as America's greatest privilege.

Should we be told when it's OK to protest and when it's not? And if parts of free speech begin to be banned, do we really have free speech?

I'm sure it was seen as disgraceful when Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Ala., to a white passenger in 1955. But her peaceful protest produced results and helped further the fight for equal rights for all Americans.

More than 60 years later, we know discrimination still exists. There are countless examples of it everyday, from black people being handcuffed and removed from Starbucks, to police using a stun gun on an NBA player over a parking violation.

Patriotic pride tells us we live in the greatest nation in the world. But a fair-minded evaluation will also show America is plagued with problems. Hindering our ability to express our opinions should not be one of those problems.

I'm not a fan of the NFL's new national anthem policy. Thankfully, I can voice my displeasure by writing this column, unless someone decides to pass a policy forbidding this type of behavior.

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



It's hard for anyone — let alone a former president — to visit Liberty University these days without mentioning President Donald Trump.

Sure enough, former President Jimmy Carter opened his recent Liberty commencement address with a quip linked to Trump's claims that his inauguration crowd was larger than that of President Barack Obama.

The set-up: Trump addressed the school's 2017 graduates.

"This is a wonderful crowd," said Carter, after being introduced by Liberty President Jerry Falwell Jr.

"Jerry told me ... that it's even bigger — I hate to say this — than it was last year." With a slight grin, he added: "I don't know if President Trump would admit that or not."

The key to this day was Carter and Falwell treated each other with respect, and even affection, setting the tone for an encounter between the evangelical left and right.

Calling the 93-year-old Carter the "world's most famous Sunday school teacher," Falwell praised his declaration of born-again Christian faith while in public life and his legacy, as an ex-president, of serving others. Liberty's leader stressed that Carter showed political courage, and paid a high price among Democrats, when he signed the Hyde Amendment banning the use of federal funds to pay for most abortions.

Carter's visit, he added, was an example of Christians "uniting ... on issues where they agree, rather than fighting about issues where they disagree."

In the heart of his address, Carter placed his strongest emphasis on a

topic — women's equality — that still divides many Baptists. Clashes over the ordination of women led to his own decision in 2000 to leave the Southern Baptist Convention.

For decades, Carter noted, he thought that the possibility of nuclear war was the greatest threat facing humanity. "Recently I changed my mind. ... I think, now, that it's a human rights problem, and it's discrimination against women and girls in the world," he said.

For example, there "are about 150 million girls and women who are not living today, because their parents — in order to comply with laws or customs, and to have just male sons — either killed their daughters by strangling them at birth or they had the modern-day ability to

decide before the baby was born what it was going to be, and if the fetus is female then they abort the child." Surely it's possible, said Carter, for Baptists to work together "as friends" more often, a dream he said he discussed with Falwell while at Liberty.

Most of all, he challenged graduates to strive for success — success as it is judged by God.

"We may not be rich. We may not live to be an old person. We may not have many loyal friends. But neither did Jesus have any of those things, but he lived a perfect life," said Carter. "We decide whether we tell the truth, or benefit from telling lies. We're the ones that decide: Do I hate, or am I filled with love? We're the ones who decide: Do I think only about myself, or do I care for others?"

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ON RELIGION

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