

Lanier County**News**

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OUR GOAL: Lanier County News is created proudly for the citizens of Lanier and the surrounding area by Good Shepherd Media in Lakeland, GA. Our goal is to produce a quality, community oriented newspaper that you, our readers, are proud of. We will reach this goal through hard work, teamwork, loyalty and a strong dedication toward printing the truth.

OUR POLICIES: Letters to the Editor are welcome. Please sign and include address, telephone number and e-mail.

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OPINIONS & VIEWPOINTS



HISTORICALLY

current events through a historical lens

SPEAKING

Dr. James Finck, USAO History Professor

Are Super Bowl Commercials Shaping Our Country? If so, at what cost?

By James Finck, Ph. D.

In 1984, Democrats needed a candidate to challenge the very popular Republican incumbent President Ronald Reagan. Democratic frontrunner Walter Mondale, an ex-U.S. senator and state attorney general from Minnesota who had also served as Jimmy Carter's vice president, seemed as though he would be a shoo-in for the presidency; this was confirmed with his dominating Iowa Caucus win.

Yet, at the caucus, a lesser-known U.S. senator from Colorado fared much better than expected. Still, nobody really paid much attention to Gary Hart. That is until he shocked the political world by winning the New Hampshire primary. Though 10 years younger than Mondale, Hart, another Democrat, seemed like a different generation. His youth and charisma reminded voters of Kennedy—something he did not try to discourage.

Hart then continued his run, winning both Vermont and Wyoming. He insisted he was a new type of Democrat who had new ideas. He wanted to cut taxes while at the same time increase welfare and healthcare for all. What helped halt Hart's momentum was during the March 11th televised debate after Hart laid out his plan, Mondale turned to the camera and said, "Where's the beef?"

Mondale's question implied Hart was all talk and no substance. While the slogan itself did not solely defeat Hart, it did stick to his campaign and made more people question his policies.

The line resonated with voters because it had recently aired as a slogan for Wendy's Restaurants during the previous Super Bowl. The commercial starred three elderly ladies eating at Home of the Big Bun. When one lady opened her burger to find an exaggerated tiny hamburger patty, she exclaimed, "Where's the beef?"

It's no surprise that Super Bowl commercials made their way into political campaigns. Super Bowls in this country are a big deal. In fact, of the top 30 most watched television programs of all time, 23 are Super Bowls.

Part of the reason for large crowds is that many Americans love football. But that alone does not account for such high ratings. Another major factor are the commercials. Even viewers who are not sports fans watch this one game more and more regularly because of the heartwarming, comedic or even sometimes outlandish advertisements.

During the regular season only 35% of women watch football. Super Bowl ratings show that number jumps up to 75%. That is a huge leap! And it's mostly because of commercials. Even for men, the next morning around the water cooler, it seems like more are debating which were the best commercials more than recapping the plays on the field. Commercials have taken the Super Bowl from a paramount sporting event to a cultural phenomenon.

"Where's the beef?" is not the only phrase to make it into our everyday vocabulary. In 1993, after Larry Bird and Michael Jordan played the greatest game of HORSE ever for a Big Mac and fries, the phrase "nothing but net" became the catchphrase that is now heard during every basketball contest from schoolyard picks to the NBA. In 2010, the E*TRADE baby first used the line, "Well, that's going to cost you a lot of money." That phrase has been used in boardrooms ever since. Of course, let's not forget that in 2002 the greeting for any group of guys became "Whassup" after the Budweiser commercial.

While "Where's the Beef" may be the most famous example of the relationship between the Super Bowl and politics, there have always been subtle political or cultural messages—especially recently.

Many ads have catered to the left's message of diversity and inclusion. Coca-Cola's "It's Beautiful" 2014 commercial showed every shade of humanity while "America the Beautiful" played in multiple languages, and Airbnb's 2017 "We Accept" commercial was pretty much the same as Coke's, but with pictures of diverse people and written text claiming they accept everyone. Days after President Donald Trump announced his travel ban, Budweiser showed the harrowing immigrant story of their German co-founder, Adolphus Busch. And finally, Audi's daughter ad with a father concerned that his daughter would not be treated fairly in a soapbox derby race full of boys aired in 2017.

The right has also had their share of ads like the Servant Foundation's "He Gets Us" campaign with the message that Jesus loves them, and a string of patriotic ads like the NFL's Ragged Old Flag in 2020, and Chrysler's 2012 "It's Halftime in America" commercial starring Clint Eastwood. But probably the most notable is from 2002, when Budweiser's famous Clydesdales knelt to honor the victims of 9/11. With no dialogue, the reverent Budweiser commercial aired only once.

While the first Super Bowl was in 1967, most consider the first famous Super Bowl commercial came a few years later in 1973. The ad was for Noxzema Shaving Cream and the company cracked at least one successful code by using celebrities to push their products. This particular ad had Farrah Fawcett from Charlie's Angels smearing shaving cream all over the face of New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath with the tagline, "Let Noxzema cream your face." The line might not get past censors today, but it opened the door to famous football players and models—think "Mean" Joe Green or Cindy Crawford.

Finally, it should be noted that the 1973 Noxzema commercial cost a whopping \$42,000, (roughly \$288,000 today) while 30-second spots for this year's game ran for around a measly \$7 million. Yet, as more than 100 million consumers were expected to tune in, for companies with the means, it is worth it. If Super Bowl commercials can stand out, advertisers' brands become immortal.

James Finck, Ph.D. is a professor of history at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and writes for the Southwest Ledger. You can follow Historically Speaking on Facebook or at Historicallyspeaking.blog.

Valdosta Monkey's Thoughts & Opinions

Send your questions for

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Thoughts on legal and illegal Public Meetings

Opine Monkey is still out of country and has asked me to pen this week's column. Allow me to introduce myself, I am Political Monkey.

Recently I've seen some hate on social media aimed at this publication. I've also noticed a common denominator in the origin of said hate, which I will keep to myself for the time being.

In reference to "Public Meetings" and "Illegal Public Meetings" let me paste the following...

The public must be given full access to all open meetings and may make video and audio recordings of all open meetings.

In addition to mandating open meetings, the Law requires that agencies provide notice to the public in advance of all meetings, even emergency meetings. That means agencies must make information available to the general public by, in the case of regular meetings, posting at least one week in advance a notice containing the information in a conspicuous location at the agency's regular meeting place and on its website if the agency has one. The notice must do more than simply meet the technical requirements of the Law. It must be sufficient to reasonably apprise a concerned party of an upcoming meeting and must not be misleading.

Special or emergency meetings that are not held at the regularly posted time and place require more rigorous notice procedures. Such notice includes the posting at least 24 hours in advance at the regular meeting place and oral notification to the newspaper which serves as the legal organ for the county. In counties where the legal organ is published less than four times a week, notice also must be given to any local media outlets that make a written request to be so notified. Such outlets must be notified at least 24 hours in advance of the called meeting. In those rare circumstances where a meeting must be held upon less than 24 hours' notice, either the county's legal organ or a newspaper having a circulation at least as high as that of the legal organ must be notified, as well as other media that have requested to be notified by the agency.

Prior to all meetings, including emergency meetings, the agency holding such meetings must make an agenda of all matters expected to be considered available upon request and must post the agenda at the meeting site as far in advance as possible within two weeks prior to the meeting. Items not on the agenda may be considered at a meeting where it becomes "necessary" to do so and such items were not anticipated in advance and deliberately omitted from the agenda.

Minutes of all public meetings must be kept in writing and made available to the public for inspection no later than immediately following the next regular agency meeting. Such minutes must contain, at a minimum, the names of the members present at the meeting, a description of each motion or other proposal made, the identity of the individuals making and seconding the motion or other proposal and a record of all votes. These minutes are subject to the Open Records Law after approval, unless voluntarily released before approval. A summary of the meeting also must be provided by the agency within two business days.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

All actions taken during a meeting closed in violation of the Law are void and can be set aside by a court if challenged within ninety days of discovery. Anyone who "knowingly and willfully" conducts or participates in a meeting without complying with every part of the Law is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not in excess of \$1,000.00. Alternatively, a court may impose a civil penalty not to exceed \$1,000.00 against anyone who negligently conducts or participates in a meeting without complying with the Law. The court also may impose a criminal fine or civil penalty not in excess of \$2,500.00 for each additional violation committed within a year of the first violation.

Additionally, public officials who participate in closed meetings in violation of the Law can be subject to recall. Moreover, failure to give adequate notice can result in the invalidation of the proceedings, the issuance of legal injunctions and the requirement to pay the objecting party's legal costs. In addition, the Attorney General may bring a civil or criminal action to enforce compliance with the Law. As with the Open Records Law, a government agency may be liable for the attorney's fees of a party who brings a lawsuit to require compliance with the Law if that agency has acted without substantial justification.

Let me be clear, I'm not saying that illegal meetings have or are taking place. I'm just stating the Georgia Sunshine Laws concerning public meetings.

What would be outstanding is if more of the public would take the time to attend such meetings. Especially when those that you have elected are having the meetings and are spending your tax dollars.

I think more people should request to see the operational budgets of all governmental agencies. It might be interesting to see exactly how, where and with whom your tax dollars are being spent.

Is it a bad thing to demand good stewardship and accountability when the politicians are spending our money?

If everything is on the up-and-up then there should be no issue with being as transparent as is required by law.

Some of you may be asking yourself, "Why did Political Monkey paste the Georgia Sunshine Law?" Because "ignorance of the law" is no excuse.

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