

Lansing State Journal

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OPINION

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Lansing State Journal Founded 1850



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Our opinions

'No' on guns Urge lawmakers to reject liberal weapons permits

Would more guns lurking on Michigan streets make us safer? This week's delay on a state House of Representatives vote on liberalizing gun-permit laws gives mid-Michigan residents who feel strongly about concealed weapons more time to speak up. Whether a vote comes next week or next fall, concerned citizens should contact their legislators. We continue to believe the Constitution's Second Amendment — promising the right to bear arms — does not mean most of us were meant to carry concealed 9mm Glock pistols. We believe the emotional debate over this gun-permit bill should end one way: in a "no" vote. We urge the House to reject any legislation making it easier to obtain concealed-weapons permits. Gun-permit applicants should continue to shoulder the burden of proof, not local gun-permit boards. They should have a demonstrable need to carry a concealed weapon. The bill's supporters say criminals will be less likely to attack for fear their prey has a gun. Others argue that verbal arguments will too often end in gunfire. We recognize the system for issuing gun permits needs reform. Local gun boards, consisting of three law enforcement officials, tend to be secretive and vary in operation from county to county. They have been accused of making permit decisions arbitrarily, issuing them to applicants they know, while others have a more difficult time. The legislation does propose such progressive changes. It also requires that two civilian members serve on each local gun board. The House should retain that language, making the process more accountable to the public. But let's not "open the door to a fiasco," as Rep. Kwame Kilpatrick, D-Detroit, said this week.

DeVos 'terms' nudge lawmaker limits

Republican leader's candor refreshing, also unsettling

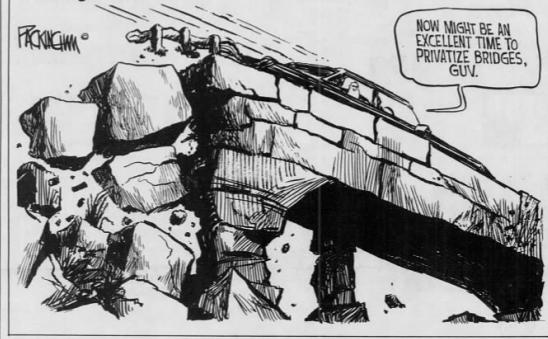
You have to give her credit. She speaks her mind based on her convictions and the consensus of her party, certainly refreshing in this current election climate of not saying anything likely to perturb anyone. But when state GOP chair Betsy DeVos talks, not every one of her Republican buddies is enamored with her forthrightness. In fact, some, which her office labels as an "extreme minority," are frustrated with her wrongness. First there was her unabashed bashing of legislative efforts earlier this year to undo term limits. Some maverick Republicans were taken to the woodshed by the chair, and they didn't like it. The latest installment of this continuing DeVos vs. "them" saga came at a meeting with 20 House Republicans at a local eatery the other day. The life and death issue on the menu was assisted suicide, along with a variety of other goodies. She opposes legislating assisted suicide and wanted all good Republicans to march lock-step with her. Not everyone had their marching shoes on and, if they had, they might have been kicking. This time it was not just the usual bunch of malcontent moderate Republicans, if there is such a thing left in the party. Nope. This go-around even some pro-life types took a step back from what the chair was suggesting. Some say the idea of taking a stance and fighting the ballot plan was an across-the-board loser. Some claim the anti-abortion lobby is fragmented on this issue. It doesn't oppose it with the same passion as it fights abortions, so why get involved. Some correctly point out that forcing lawmakers into a stance was, in and of itself, suicidal.



Tim Skubick Capitol Comment

Some contend there is nothing, zero, nada, to be gained by taking a public position on an issue that cuts every which way in the electorate. There also was a worry that an all-out attack by the GOP against this issue would only serve to energize the other side. The result would be a huge turnout at the polls which all self-respecting incumbents know is not good for them. One Republican snitch reports things got "heated" as the chair was put on the defensive by some, but not all, attendees. Later in the week a former Republican lawmaker observed that this push by DeVos to force members to fight assisted suicide was sending a mixed message. The party boasts about getting government out of the lives of indigent, but here is the chair plugging government right into the death bed of those very same citizens who don't want the bed partner. DeVos obviously thinks the government has a right to tell you how you can croak and when. Some folks might find that hypocritical at worst, selective government intervention at best. And some party members also are suggesting the same "two-faced" policy is tearing its ugly head in another arena. A party directive recently was filed to House Republicans who have the audacity to challenge sitting Republican senators. This is one of the consequences of term limits and, since DeVos favors that, some argue she should lay off this intra-party battle. The House folks have been frozen out of using voting lists to drum up support. They have been banned from attending candidate schools and they've been told to basically get lost and leave those scared old GOP senators alone... the poor babies. DeVos defends the moves as non-discriminatory in that "it has always been the role and tradition of the party to support officeholders." She argues the House upstarts are not being treated any differently from other non-cumulative challengers. So there. On the assisted suicide question, DeVos says the debate is about life and you should not keep a person alive for the sake of prolonging life, but she does not agree that the individual has the right to choose when and how to die. "That is God's to determine," she suggests, some of her detractors might retort God's role is exactly what her party is trying to usurp. What do you think? Write to Tim Skubick, Lansing State Journal, 127 E. Lathrup St., Lansing MI 48919.

A Michigan view



Your opinions

Spread Wings story OK, so Michael Jordan is the god of basketball and the Chicago Bulls are the army of this god. Yes, the Bulls are a great team. But the fact that they have won another NBA championship is well known. What should be front-page news is a certain Detroit hockey team. The Red Wings went 40 years without a Stanley Cup, they won it last year and have done it again this year. It was disappointed in the Lansing State Journal's coverage of the Stanley Cup finals and the Red Wings sweep. The Lansing State Journal represents the capital of Michigan. I think a home state team that has proven its work in sports and humanity deserves to be front-cover news. The Lansing State Journal should show this Detroit team more support than the Chicago Bulls. So the Bulls have won. Ho-hum. Celene Swager Holt

Prevent drug use On the drug scene: Unlimited illegal profiting promises no end to the drug problem. Drug usage may fluctuate but enforcement expenses accelerate. Estimated annual drain on American paychecks \$150 billion. Mandated prison sentences, especially for life, affront the sense of justice, particularly when death to kids commuted by criminal elders. Prison construction, now a growth industry, bursts public budgets. Why not try exchanging the futile, force-backed, ultra-expensive "war" for a persuasive system of preventive education combined with medical instead of criminal oversight of drug matters. James Geraghty Okemos

What a waste I was outraged to learn from an article in the July/August issue of the Sierra Club magazine that Michigan (Ann Arbor) has become a garbage magnet. It seems that since Michiganians are so conscientious about recycling some cities are selling landfill space to other states and Canada. The more Michigan saves, the more others can dump. It is only pathetic that city officials cannot be more creative in finding ways to generate revenue and that they would sell their souls for garbage which we work so hard to reduce. Lori McCrea East Lansing

Express yourself

Letters to the Editor We encourage readers to write opinion letters for publication. Letters must be 150 words or less. Include address and telephone number for verification purposes only. Letters are subject to editing. Questions? Call 377-1174. By fax: (517) 377-1298. By mail: Letters to the Editor, Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lathrup St., Lansing, MI 48919. By e-mail: lsj.news@intnetmci.com

Point of View Do you wish to write a 500-word opinion on a topic of general interest? Call Marcia Van Ness at 377-1256. Editorials If you have an opinion on newsletters, columns or other matters regarding the editorial page, call Mark Nixon at 377-1038. Bottom Line Voice mail, call 485-5463 and press 9083. With a rotary phone, call 377-1112. Doonesbury



Friends: Meet shelter volunteers, from left, Jason Hawkins, Leigh Trimmer, Eric Hawkins and Chrissy Taylor. Also part of the volunteer brigade: Katie Sue DeBarr.

Buddies Count on Charlotte teens

Ever heard of 4TC? No? You aren't alone. Thanks to 4TC (Take the Time to Care for Children) neither are Eaton County's homeless youngsters. They've found buddies in Charlotte teens who, through the SIREN/Eaton Shelter three days a week to play games, do arts and crafts or help with homework. Organizers Jason Hawkins, Leigh Trimmer, Eric Hawkins, Chrissy Taylor and Katie Sue DeBarr launched the project. Charlotte High School Student Council liked the idea enough to contribute \$600 for the kids. Caught being good? "Extraordinarily" good, says Nancy Oliver, director of the SIREN/Eaton Shelter. We agree. Caught Being Good is dedicated to the thousands of good kids in mid-Michigan. To nominate someone ages 7-18 write: Caught Being Good, c/o Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lathrup St., Lansing, MI 48919. Or fax us at 377-1298. Include your name and daytime phone number, along with a brief summary of why this young person should be Caught Being Good.

Safeguard cultural studies

Let's not think small; we all need coaching to grasp diversity

Ward Connerly, the Sacramento crusader against affirmative action, has turned his sights on a new target: Ethnic studies. And that's not all. He's also suspicious of women's studies, gay and lesbian studies, "Black Welcome Week," Latino orientation day, separate graduation ceremonies, ethnic "theme houses," in some dorms and everything else he sees as "Balkanizing" life on the state's campuses. He admitted to me in a telephone interview that he doesn't know much about gay, ethnic or women's studies, to name just three issues. He also insisted for the record that he does not — "Repeat, not" — plan to crusade against them as a University of California regent the way he led the successful Proposition 209 campaign. But he does plan to visit classes and talk to faculty over the next couple of months to conduct his own "private investigation. He may come away convinced, he says, although he admits, "I do have my biases."

Clarence Page

Connerly, who happens to be African-American, raised eyebrows in more than California when he told an Associated Press reporter he suspects Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American, Native-American and other ethnic studies programs are promoting "self-imposed segregation" at the state's colleges. If so, he said, he wants to put a stop to it. It was the rise of a recent student movement to form a gay and lesbian studies department at the University of California at Davis that looked to Connerly like the last straw, he told me. He questioned whether the purpose of the classes was truly academic or whether they were exercises. "When I pointed out that many students have enrolled in studies about groups to which they do not personally belong — white and Latino students in black studies, for example, and men in women's studies — he said he was impressed, but added, "that has not been my experience" during campus visits. "Too bad. But Connerly's idea intrigues me. What if he's right? If we got rid of those divisive ethnic studies, which barely existed before the late 1960s, can we can get back to the togetherness we had before?" Ah, yes, whatever happened to those halcyon days of old, those days of unity, those days before those Balkanizing ethnic studies came along? Those days happened to those jolly days of housing co-ops, legal job discrimination, segregated lunch counters and other aspects of American togetherness? How united we were when the only people who really counted in history and literature classes were white and, for that matter, male. How light-hearted our students could be, unburdened by any obligation to learn about anybody else. But, why, I wondered, stop with studies about women, gays and ethnic? Let's not think small. Why not pull everyone together by eliminating any courses that don't teach everybody the same basic stuff? That's a good way to make everybody the same, together and equal. Equally ignorant. What do you think? Write to Clarence Page, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1500, Chicago, IL 60611-4008.