

EDITORIAL

Smoking ban needs voter input

New city commission should not take up ban, but let voters decide

You have to hand it to Leonard Dahl. He and other opponents of a new and tougher smoking ban are excellent strategists. Dahl is one of the organizers of a petition drive to repeal the near-total ban that was approved by the Salina City Commission in January. They were successful at collecting more than 1,600 signatures — more than the 1,390 signatures required to trigger a public vote.

As reported by the Journal's David Clouston, organizers deliberately chose not to turn in the petition by Monday's deadline for getting the proposal added to the April 7 school board and city election ballot.

Now the petitioners can call a special election for a later date, which will cost city taxpayers about \$20,000 because an additional public vote will be held.

Dahl said they purposely passed the deadline to give smoking ban opponents two shots at repealing it. The first will come if the majority of the new commissioners support a repeal. If that does not occur, then the special vote can be held in an attempt to repeal it at the ballot box.

We disagree with the tactic to force a separate special election. We hate to see \$20,000 of our tax dollars spent on a public vote that could have been conducted for free.

It's too late to change that. But there's a chance the public can get some benefit from that \$20,000.

Let's go ahead and have the special election after a new commission takes office. Let's see how voters feel about the smoking ban when it can be decided apart from school board and city elections.

But in the meantime, the new city commission should not take up the smoking ban issue until after this public vote is held.

Dahl and petition supporters say the public should be included in this decision. They are correct. And the best and purest way to accomplish that is through the ballot box. Let us have that vote, regardless of who sits on the city commission.

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"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

— First Amendment, U.S. Constitution



To call the opinion line, dial (785) 823-6464, Ext. 333. Speak your mind, but please keep comments courteous and brief.

"Why waste time talking about who owns what near the BiCenter. Get the merger between the city and the country done. Put it on the ballot and let the citizens of Salina decide that we control the county in numbers of people. Oh, by the way, has anyone noticed the beautiful downtown Hilton lately, let's build another hotel or motel in the middle of town."

"There will always be murder, war and human sacrifice. That doesn't mean it is OK. That doesn't mean we shouldn't strive to stop it. God allows evil because of man's fallen nature. He does not make evil and imperfection. Our purpose and challenge is to overcome evil and imperfection."

"If anyone wonders what America is going look like shortly, take a look at the European economy. That's exactly what we're headed for."

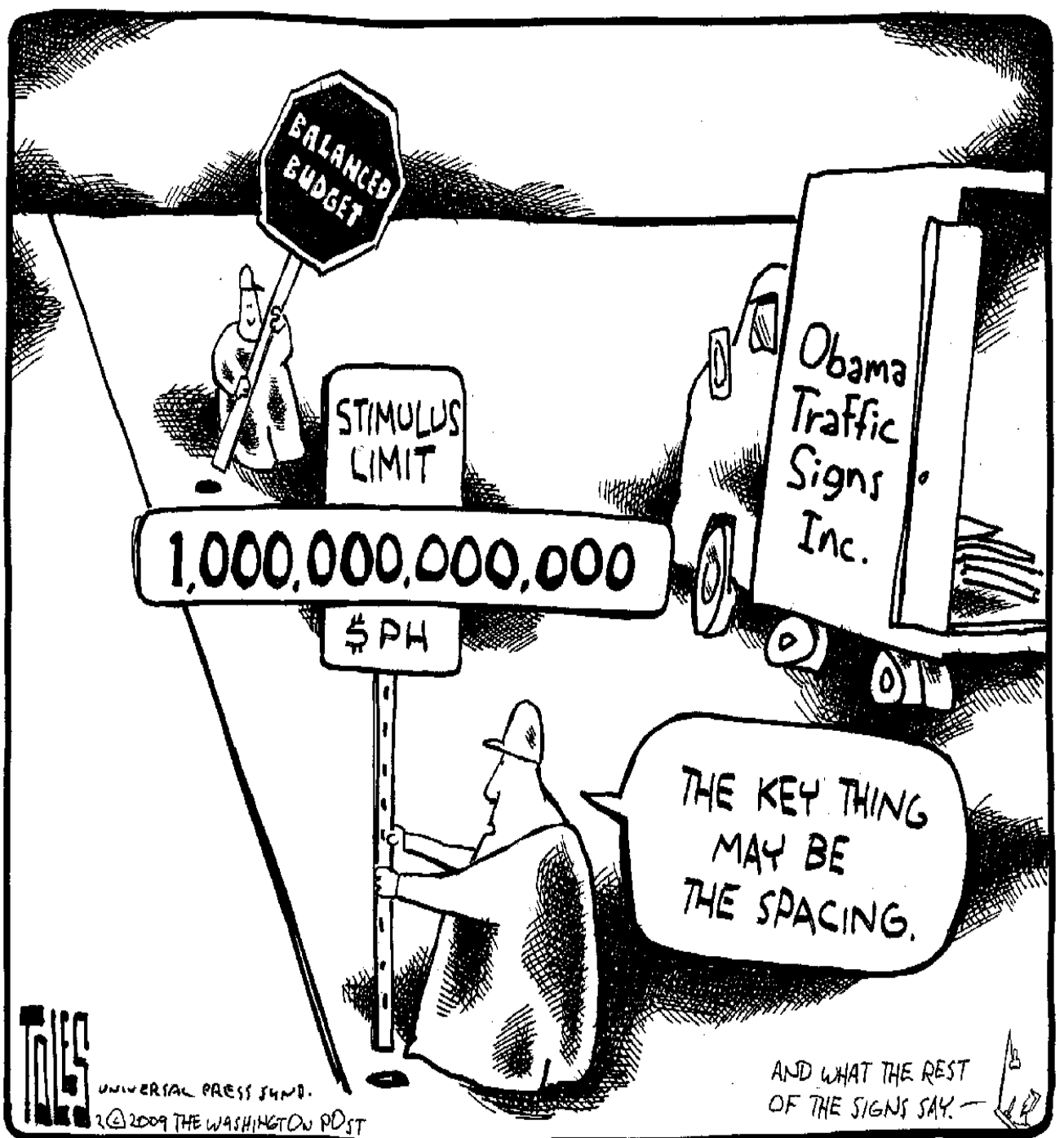
"It's laughable. The government is chewing out big companies and banks for wasting money, when the government wastes the most money of anybody."

"Why would they take a women to court before a jury for shocking her daughter with a cattle prond, when she admitted she did it? That was stupid. You didn't need a jury. She said she did it."

"I'm disappointed the Journal decided to charge for wedding, engagement, and birth announcements. I've noticed the number of announcements has gone down drastically since they started charging for that."

"Start paying city workers by the job they complete. I'll bet our city would look a lot better. Example is to video tape five men fixing a pot hole. What a joke."

"This is concerning the people who keep whining about the price of gas in Topeka, and wherever else. Obviously, you have enough money to buy gas to get to Topeka, so why are you whining about it?"



The truth about Sen. Leahy

Democrat's commission on truth aimed at Bush has several security problems

So here's Patrick Leahy's great, grand idea — let's establish a truth commission, dig up all the dirt we possibly can on the Bush administration and convert our marvelous tradition of cordial transitions of power to one of crucify the old regime.

The Democratic senator from Vermont wouldn't put it quite that way, of course, saying instead that we really need to find out why we went to war in Iraq, get the details on Guantanamo torture and figure out the extent to which George Bush's buddies politicized Justice Department prosecutions.

Establish a commission appointed by President Obama and leaders in Congress, give it the power to grant witnesses immunity from prosecution as it pursues these questions and we can thereby rise up from the gory past without a lot of political hulla-baloo, say Leahy and supporters of a similar idea in the House.

Excuse me, but this proposal is political from its snout to its tail, a vicious, fraudulent, constitution-

ally dubious scheme that starts, it has been noted, by comparing the Bush years to the apartheid years in South Africa. That's where the name comes from — a truth commission established in that country to draw confessions from former, sometimes murderous oppressors after Nelson Mandela came to power.

Some dangers as spelled out by Republican lawyers in a Washington Post article could be an infringement on separation of powers and the undoing of due process, an invitation for international courts to prosecute President Bush and even setting Barack Obama up as a war criminal.

As the authors note, Obama has already said OK to attacks in Afghanistan, and if a commission figures that those enemies should be understood as civilians suspected of criminal activity, then he could be criminally liable under international law.

There are other dangers, such as revealing classified information important to national security, and the whole thing would be redundant — congressional Democrats have already studied all this stuff to death. If they think they didn't learn enough because Bush would not share some information they sought, all they need do is knock on the door of the new president and ask him, one Republican has been quoted as observing.

The truth about this truth commission is that it's an effort to set up Bush and others in his administra-

tion for even more virulent castigation than they've endured already, and that a next step could in fact be prosecution, even though the commission itself could not carry that out. What it would do is push us toward vengeance seeking even to the point of imprisonment against the losing party in elections.

That could obviously work both ways. Some Internet bloggers have been pointing out, for instance, how interesting it would have been in the Bush years for a commission to find out the extent to which laxity in the Clinton administration paved the way for the attacks on 9/11 among many other matters, some of them with legal overtones.

And how about getting at some interesting facts about Leahy himself, described by Jay Nordlinger in a National Review article a few years ago as "the meanest, most partisan, most ruthless Democrat in the Senate" in the opinion of Republican senators?

This man who is forever portraying himself as a saint in senator's clothing was once forced to resign from the Senate Intelligence Committee because of a couple of instances of leaking important classified information.

Some bloggers theorize those leaks could have gotten people killed. I don't pretend to know, but maybe a truth commission could find out if the Republicans ever return to power and that's how we are henceforth going to conduct politics in America.

Comment



JAY AMBROSE
Scripps Howard News Service

Caprice should be paid for by now

General Motors and Chrysler are asking the government for billions more of our dollars. If they end up getting a second round of rescue revenue, my mother should be allowed to keep her portion.

My parents did their part to help General Motors and Chrysler a long time ago. Most of the vehicles in my family's motoring history are in fact either GM or Chrysler products.

There was a Volvo in the earliest part of my father's driving career, but he took a sharp GM turn in 1965. Dad bought a Chevy Impala that year, a white four-door with a black vinyl top.

Somewhere in my mother's attic are color slides of that car hauling our family and a pop-up camper along the Lincoln trail in Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois.

Later, there was a trip out west to New Mexico and Colorado. We took a snapshot of Dad standing outside the car about halfway up Pikes Peak

to illustrate how deep the snow was beside the road.

We were a one-car family in those smiling pictures of Dad. He never could have guessed the drastic extent to which that was going to change.

The Impala was still kicking when I became a licensed driver in 1977, but it didn't see much of '78. Dad was well into his Dodge Colt years when I drove the Impala into the ground.

He bought a total of four Colts during the next few years. I totaled the red one and the blue one; he totaled the green one. The gold one I managed to hold between the ditches during most of my college years.

My father believed in keeping his vehicles clean, well oiled and paid for. He got Christmas cards from bankers and car salesmen, and he faithfully patronized dealership service departments after one failed attempt at changing his own oil.

Pouring in the fifth quart, he realized he'd forgotten to replace the drain plug. Then, back from the store with new oil, he had two more quarts in before realizing the oil pan was in drain mode still.

Comment

MARK RUTLEDGE
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