Behind the opinions

A user's guide to the commentary pages of The Dallas Morning News

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Editorial Page

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ditorials represent the institutional opinion of the newspaper. That opinion is shaped by the editorial board on behalf of the newspaper's owners. The editorial board is advisory to Vice President and Editorial Page Editor Keven Ann Willey, who is advisory to the newspaper's editor and publisher. The editorial board developed this statement of philosophy to guide its thinking:

"As the soul of the newspaper and the conscience of the community, the editorial pages provoke, inspire and challenge readers. We believe in a progressive conservatism that advocates civil rights, fiscal responsibility, environmental stewardship, effective local governments, public accountability and an internationalist foreign policy."

How editorial opinions are developed: Editorial board members offer topic ideas during regular staff meetings. The topic, message and tone of the proposed editorial are often hotly debated. The editor listens carefully to the debate, selects a course of action and asks for a volunteer writer. Often the editorial writer whose arguments have carried the day volunteers. Editorials are unsigned because they represent the institution's view, rather than the view of the individual writer.

The best editorials are persuasive, compelling, relevant to readers, passionate, constructive, timely and provocative. They are well-researched and smartly written. They are, by definition, opinionated.

Sometimes, the most powerful editorial is a photo with a single sentence. Other times, it's a 1,000-word treatise. The power is in the topic selection, the logic employed and the rhythm of the writing. In shaping the content of daily and weekly commentary pages, the editors keep the department's five aspirations top of mind: Provide strong community leadership, provide a forum for informed debate, get new voices/viewpoints on the pages, actively engage readers and increase readership of these pages and the newspaper as a whole.



aybe you've noticed that more folks are taking their families camping in Texas state parks. That shouldn't be a surprise. In the economic crunch, a weekend ne of our scores of state parks is an af-ive a family adventure close re writer Richard Louv re-**EDITORIALS**

tressed-out families, spend-he natural world — a nature Here we - may be instructed () doe offer the Texas Legislature has had tarvation diet. It's a scandal n so miserly — we rank 49th newspaper's institutional s spending among the states public good. It shows in the opinion. cilities

Blame state lawmakers, who have starved biame state lawmakers, who have starved the people's parks of their rightful funding. The 1993 statewide sporting goods sales tax was supposed to pay for park upkeep, but lawmak-ers have long dipped into the kitty to pay for other things.

A new bill filed by Rep. Harvey Hilderbran, R-Kerville, would finally make sure that the tax dollars that are supposed to go to the parks actually get there. Hilderbran spearheaded a successful effort last session to boost park funding but that one-time expenditume work funding, but that one-time expenditure won't be nearly enough to maintain a respectable parks system — especially with the state's fastgrowing population. Austin should grant the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department its full funding request

Big Bend Ranch State Park is exas' largest, one of more than 90 of our woefully underfunded public parks Harvey Hilderbran is working hange that for the next biennium. More than 10 million

people visit Texas state parks every year. Given the economic crisis, these parks are important to even more Texans, who want free or inexpensive places to visit for outdoor recreation. The state ought to be increasing parks funding — not in spite of tough times, but *because* of them. Texans who can afford to escape to Disney World or to faraway places of natural beauty may not appreciate that quality public parks are not a luxury, but a necessity. But the rest of us do - and ought not be shy letting Austin

Hits and Misses

Disgraced police officer makes the right choice



on a wide variety

There's not much good to say about Robert Powell's actions in one of



LETTERS

Drawing gun for safety's sake ... but violence lasts forever

Re: "bennut the nearannes, by Carron Deal, Thursday Letters. Deal stated a 20-year Dallas Police veter-an described his sidearm policy as never drawing his weapon unless he intended to use it. If by, "intended to use it," the officer

meant firing his weapon, the public and the officer himself are fortunate he is still alive and apparently no longer a police officer.

clearly justifiable need for invoking deadly force is a severely flawed and potentially fa-tal policy. Hopefully, the writer misquoted the officer.

HOAs keep standards high

As a proud homeowner in a deed-re-stricted community, I cringe every other year as some of our beloved representat namely Rep. Burt Solomons, seek to down the ability of homeowners as tions to collect assessments from h owners.

I view my HOA as a way to preser lay of the land, so to speak, to keep or purple and pink rooftops, loud obno colors, 15-foot boats clogging our st cars up on concrete blocks and all of outrageous landscapes. HB-1976 would effectively put HO:

to an impossible situation to collect as ments and the HOA would dry up an appear, effectively wiping out its val well as our property values. I hope people call their Texas state

lators today and tell them to vote no o 1976. Let us at least keep what's left home values intact without any more ernment intrusion Frank Paulson, Litt

At least 'licks' don't stick .

Re: "Report: Boy took 21 'licks' - C

CARTOON

We subscribe to cartoonists nationwide and cull through drawings daily to pick the best.

Political cartoons on the editorial page are generally consistent with the newspaper's views on issues.

Cartoons on the Viewpoints page reflect a variety of perspectives.

Former head football coach Jerry Sands stated that by swatting this child on the buttocks until the paddle broke and then taping it together and continuing the beating, he was trying to help the child find "a way to get out of the inner city and make it

does not realize this fact should not be in a position to teach children. Everyone in olved in this incident should be charged with a crime. This is at best assault and at worse child abuse. My question: Should coach Sands be given 21 "licks" to make him a better coach?

Re: "Limits sought on kids' meds — Bill requires approval for poor children to get

LETTERS

With all we offer, it may be an overstatement to describe Letters to the Editor as the heart of a vibrant editorial /op-ed section. But on many days, they are at least the raw nerve.

Want to get something off your chest? Letters are your chance, impeded only by our 200-word limit and our editing for clarity, style and accuracy. The News receives about 700 each week; about 10 percent will see print in our representative sampling.

There is no shortage of online forums where people can anonymously call others names, make up facts and throw bombs. But in our published letters to the editor, people sign their names and publicly stand behind their

Re: "Behind the headlines," by Carroll in life.

It should be obvious that waiting to draw a sidearm until that instant when there is a

David Cutcomb. Rockwall

Violence begets violence. Any adult who

Linda Jackson, Euless

Keeping kids off of pills

KEVEN ANN WILLEY

Vice president and editorial page editor, 51



At The Dallas Morning News since late 2002, Keven developed her interest in politics early. When her family lived in Washington, D.C., her

mother used to take Keven as a baby in her bassinet to the U.S. Senate gallery to watch the likes of Everett Dirksen and Estes Kefauver debate the issues of the day. Three decades later. Keven was a political columnist for The Arizona Republic in a state that for most of the '80s and '90s was best known for impeaching, indicting or otherwise politically impaling its governors. Her editorial pages in Texas and Arizona have three times been finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. Keven studied briefly in Europe and Mexico before graduating magna cum laude from Northern Arizona University and starting (but never finishing) a master's program in Spanish literature. She is a member of The Pulitzer Prize board, enjoys hiking and biking, and lives with her chef husband in downtown Dallas.

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mistakes in the Ryan Moats stop, when he arrogantly kept a man from his . And the rest of us can move along. offers a venue for comment-in-short

head, and the public wins

velopments. In and Washington took important steps this week to ensure that govern-ation about skullduggery to journalists without fear of having their names urvugea. I ne state and receral Free Flow of Information acts both passed overwhelmingly, leaving the next step up to state and U.S. senators. Passage in Texas would bring the state in line with 36 others that give reporters a qualified privilege to withhold sources if under subpona. Passage in Washington would of developments. extend the protection to federal jurisdictions. Both are key to keeping the news media aggressive and free to root out misfeasance, malfeasance and nonfeasance that hurt the public. free to root out misfe

Research ban would hurt Texas families

We know that using stem cells harvested from human embryos to research medical curves seems unefficial to some Texans. But we also know many Texans who suffer from Parkinson's and other diseases could benefit enormously from breakthroughs in such research. That's why it made no sense for the Texas Senate to prohibit investing state Finds in such work. Sadly, the budget the Senste approved this week would limit the ability of Texas' enormous medical researce community to neip people suffering from debilitating dis-eases, whether in Texas or elsewhere. May the House have the good sense to lift this prohibition in its

Throwing out a throwback



ers' traditional ball yard in Arlington (and no, we're not about to mention the team) has been the old-timey, out-of-town scoreboard on the left field wall. You know, the one where a hidden guy hoists new numbers into place. Team owner Tom Hicks has now ejected that throwback in his ef-fort to spiff up the stadium for the 2009 season. New lights, screens and gizmos will blink and flash to the alleged delight of four Well it's his toam and how doubt fans. Well, it's his team, and he can do what he wants - even if it does make the stadi-

One of the endearing features of the Rang

um look more like a video arcade. Here's a revolutionary idea: How about spiffing up the place with a team that'll make a run into the post-season?

Public trust betrayed in Ted Stevens case ... again

There isn't an easier way to mess up a high-profile corruption conviction than to play "hide the testimony," which Justice Department prosecutors did when they failed to turn over witness statements to defense attorneys representing former Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens. Attorney General Eric Holder has asked a judge to throw out the conviction and has launched a review of the prosecution team's tactics. It doesn't get much worse than this: A lawmaker betrays the public trust, and the prosecutors assigned to bring him to justice break the law to do it.

broke 'canoe paddle' reprimanding DISD finds," Thursday news story. I think we sorely miss the point in article. We completely leave out the c bility of the boy. What did he do to de the corporal punishment he received? During my 21 years of military se

we utilized corporal punishment ofter quite effectively. It was always preferr give some sort of appropriate, mea and immediate discipline rather than errant behavior a permar et part of s one's record. Had my superiors chos make some of my guff a part of my re my career would have been cut sho some 17 years.

Do bruises and welts heal? You bet do. Does embarrassment pass? It take ger, but it passes. Can a written item en nto an official record ever be forgo Never. It is permanent.

Did the coach go too far? Maybe, applaud their caring enough to give young man a second chance. I only hat he blew it and gave up the faith they ha rusted in him.

Mac McGuire, Flower

OUT

America's harsh economic climat become the scapegoat for what ails us, lessness, poverty, crime and greed are s toms most often targeted by our letter ers for which the sour market is to b But as readers look to cast off bad many letter writers have complained our new president isn't fixing Americ enough.

Robert Powell has resigned from Dallas Police Department after prolonged outcry over his treatment of NFL player Ryan Moats during the well-publicized traf

LETTERS & VIEWPOINTS POLICY

972-263-0450 MAIL From Reader

The Editorial Board and staff

MIKE HASHIMOTO Assistant editorial page editor, 51

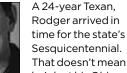


Everything and nothing about Mike's first 20 years at The News prepared him for life on the

opinion pages. In 20 years with SportsDay and the city desk, he had grown used to being the only right-wing nut — with staunch Democratic parents and sisters and typical college (UT-Arlington) and newsroom experiences - so the editorial board offers him a little company. Today, he writes editorials, manages columnist William McKenzie and our other regular columnists, and assists on the new Web version of our Opinion page.

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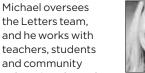
That doesn't mean he's lost his Ohio State allegiance - he still smarts from his alma mater's recent record vs. UT.

He joined the editorial board in 2004 after 10 years as state editor and more with Metro. A Richardson resident, he is a mass transit user, zealous pedestrian and regular contributor to the Dallas Transportation blog. He also focuses on state issues, criminal justice, downtown and the arts. Rodger has explored "alternative" editorial forms, such as the world's first on-line singing editorial.

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MICHAEL LANDAUER Assistant editorial page editor, 35

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teachers. students and community columnists through

the popular Voices program. He and his team take regular folks and transform them into prolific and powerful pundits. He started Voices and the weekly Sounding Off feature on the Community Opinions pages with six people in 2002. Now more than 1,800 people are raising their voices on the local pages through the two programs. A graduate of Texas A&M, Michael and his wife, Holly, and their dog, Parker, live near White Rock Lake in Dallas

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COLLEEN McCAIN NELSON Editorial writer. 35



for Colleen, who covered local, state and national campaigns before joining the editorial

Politics is a passion

board in 2006. She criss-crossed the country with John Kerry and George W. Bush in 2004 and spent a few years at Dallas City Hall. She's still writing about politics and has added air quality and southern Dallas to her areas of expertise. She also has plenty to say about pop culture and sports. A graduate of the University of Kansas, Colleen is crazed about KU basketball. She and her husband are raising a dog named Phog and are perpetually training for their next marathon.

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WILLIAM McKENZIE Editorial columnist, 55



Bill joined The News in 1991, after spending 12 years in the wilds of Washington, D.C. The University of

Texas grad worked there for 1980 presidential candidate John Anderson and then edited the Ripon Forum. Texas drew Bill back home to join the editorial board, where he writes editorials and a weekly column. The Fort Worth native spearheaded the launch of Texas Faith, a weekly online discussion about religion, politics and culture. He also now moderates The Education Front, a daily debate about ideas that can improve our schools. He and his wife are raising enthusiastic twins.

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opinions. We never thought that would make them stand out among the chatter, but it does.

Letter writers are thrilled when their missives are chosen from more than 700 submissions each week for publication on our pages. We love focused letters that make a point with

humor, irony or precision. We place a priority on letters that disagree with our editorial positions. (For tips, see dallasnews.com/ letters)

This year, we launched a new online presentation of letters

(dallasnews.com/letters). They are easier to find, sort and share - and, of course, you can leave comments and even engage the writer in a debate. We're even finding that more commenters are choosing to sign their real names online. There's just something about standing behind your own words.

Write to letters@ dallasnews.com; Letters From Readers, TDMN, P.O. Box 655237, Dallas, Texas 75265; or, via fax, to (972)263-0456.

Always give us your name, street address, city/state, ZIP code and a daytime phone number to verify your authorship.

HOT TOPICS: The economy, 156; Moats, Powell, 94; evolution debate, 29. Joanna M. England

E-MAIL