

Behind the opinions

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

Editorial Page

Editorials 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.

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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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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RODGER JONES

Editorial writer, 59



A 24-year Texan, Rodger arrived in time for the state's Sesquicentennial. 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



Michael oversees the Letters team, and he works with 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 page 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



Politics is a passion for Colleen, who covered local, state and national

campaigns before joining the editorial 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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MASTHEAD

This tells you the paper's top news executives and past publishers.

Additional executives are listed on 2A.

The Dallas Morning News
Established October 1, 1885

James M. Moroney III
Publisher and Chief Executive Officer

John C. McKeon
President and General Manager

Robert W. Mong Jr.
Editor

George Rodrigue
Vice President, Managing Editor

Keven Ann Willey
Vice President, Editorial Page Editor

Barl Osborne 1986-2001

Sam Dealey 1885-1940

W. J. Boyce 1890-1980

Henry Jr. 1980-1985

Don Jr. 1985-1986

Saturday, April 4, 2009

EDITORIALS

This Makes Natural Sense

Legislature must quit starving our state parks

Maybe 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 visit to one of our scores of state parks is an affordable family adventure close to home. It's a natural choice. Texas Legislature has had a reputation for being miserly — we rank 49th in spending among the states public good. It shows in the state parks.



Texas Parks and Wildlife Department **Big Bend Ranch State Park** is Texas' largest, one of more than 90 of our woefully underfunded public parks. **Harvey Hilderbran** is working to change that.

EDITORIALS

Here we offer the newspaper's institutional opinion.

Blame 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 lawmakers have long dipped into the kitty to pay for other things.

A new bill filed by Rep. Harvey Hilderbran, R-Kerrville, 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 expenditure won't be nearly enough to maintain a respectable parks system — especially with the state's fast-growing population.

Austin should grant the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department its full funding request 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 — and ought not be shy letting Austin know.

Hits and Misses



Disgraced police officer makes the right choice

There's not much good to say about Robert Powell's actions in one of those traffic stops in videotaped memory, but you have to say: In the end, he did the right thing. Only days after exposure and practically begging not to be fired from the Department, Powell quietly resigned. He spared the department a public relations disaster. He spared the public a possible reinstatement. Now, he can retreat from the mistakes in the Ryan Moats stop, when he arrogantly kept a man from his car. And the rest of us can move along.



Frank Paulson, LIT

HITS AND MISSES

This quick, witty Saturday staple offers a venue for comment-in-short on a wide variety of developments.

head, and the public wins

in and Washington took important steps this week to ensure that government about skull-duggery to journalists without fear of having their names divulged. The state and federal 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 subpoena. Passage in Washington would 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.

Research ban would hurt Texas families

We know that using stem cells harvested from human embryos to research medical cures seems unethical 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 funds in such work. Sadly, the budget the Senate approved this week would limit the ability of Texas' enormous medical research community to reap people suffering from debilitating diseases, whether in Texas or elsewhere. May the House have the good sense to lift this prohibition in its budget.



Throwing out a throwback

One of the endearing features of the Rangers' 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 opted that throwback in his effort to spiff up the stadium for the 2009 season. New lights, screens and gizmos will blink and flash to the alleged delight of fans. Well, it's his team, and he can do what he wants — even if it does make the stadium 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.



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.

LETTERS

Drawing gun for safety's sake

Re: "Behind the headlines," by Carroll Deal, Thursday Letters. Deal stated a 20-year Dallas Police veteran 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. It should be obvious that waiting to draw a sidearm until that instant when there is a clearly justifiable need for invoking deadly force is a severely flawed and potentially fatal policy. Hopefully, the writer misquoted the officer.

David Cutcomb, Rockwall

... but violence lasts forever

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 in life." Violence begets violence. Any adult who does not realize this fact should not be in a position to teach children. Everyone involved 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?

Linda Jackson, Euless

HOAs keep standards high

As a proud homeowner in a deed-restricted community, I cringe every other year as some of our beloved representatives, namely Rep. Bud Solomons, seek to down the ability of homeowners associations to collect assessments from homeowners.

I view my HOA as a way to preserve the lay of the land, so to speak, to keep purple and pink rooftops, loud obnoxious colors, 15-foot boats clogging our streets up on concrete blocks and all of outrageous landscapes.

HOAs would effectively put HOA to an impossible situation to collect assessments and the HOA would dry up and disappear, effectively wiping out its value as well as our property values.

I hope people call their Texas state legislators today and tell them to vote no on 1976. Let us at least keep what's left of home values intact without any more eminent intrusion.

Frank Paulson, LIT

At least 'licks' don't stick

Re: "Report: Boy took 21 'licks' — Coach broke 'cane paddle' reprimanding stu DISD finds," Thursday news story. I think we sorely miss the point in article. We completely leave out the ability of the boy. What did he do to deserve the corporal punishment he received?

During my 21 years of military service, I utilized corporal punishment often quite effectively. It was always preferred give some sort of appropriate, meaningful and immediate discipline rather than errant behavior a permanent part of one's record. Had my superiors choose make some of my guff a part of my career record would have been cut some 17 years.

Do bruises and welts heal? You bet. Does embarrassment pass? It takes time, but it passes. Can a written item enter into an official record ever be forgotten? Never. It is permanent.

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

Mac McGuire, Flower Mound

LETTERS & VIEWPOINTS POLICY

We value reader submissions. We receive far more than we can print and publish a representative sample. Limit letters to 200 words, with not more than one published every 30 days. Viewpoints columns should not exceed 600 words and also are edited for length and clarity. Include your name, address with ZIP code and daytime phone number. Submissions become property of The News.

NOT TOPICS: I: the economy, jobs; Moats; Powell, 94; evolution debate; 29

Joanna M. England

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