

Editorial Page



Election 2011 Local politics

Washington dominates political attention. Presidential races draw the largest turnouts. Campaigns for city and county offices draw the smallest. Yet despite the vast difference in vote totals, local elections may have a greater visible impact on citizens' lives than the national ones.

Gerrymandering inhibits competition for the state legislature. This year the Richmond Metro Area lacks stop-the-presses campaigns for the General Assembly. Don Quixotes are making futile charges in several districts. The windmills will prevail. Gerrymandering disgraces both parties and the entire political class. The situation will not change until the public demands reform, but a lazy citizenry does not mind being exploited by cynics. Endorsements would be superfluous. We will say only that senators and delegates such as John Watkins, Ryan McDougle, John O'Bannon, Jennifer McClellan, Lee Ware, Walter Stosch, Manoli Loupassi, Betsy Carr and Chris Peace do not need outside boosting. Henry Marsh resembles a relic yet remains a political force. Donald McEachin's ambitions may transcend his sinecure in the Senate. Peter Farrell will be a welcome addition to the House of Delegates.

The counties offer more competition in their races for school board and board of supervisors. The contests at those levels often focus on personalities and issues of interest primarily to neighborhoods. Attendance at candidate forums ranges from pathetic to modestly encouraging. Partisan involvement annoys more than it persuades. Mailed material angers sentient recipients. We decline to make across-the-board endorsements.

The composition of the Henrico County Board of Supervisors has not changed since Capt. John Smith made landfall nearby. Residents believe that the county is well run, and their confidence appears justified. County Manager Virgil Hazelett serves in an appointed position yet likely would claim a landslide in a campaign for Henrico's mayor. Varina's Jim Donati ought to remain in the team. Henrico's School Board has seen contention in recent years. The latest edition has disappointed, as did its predecessors. The image of the county's schools may be more flattering than the reality, but the public seems satisfied. The Times-Dispatch hears good things about Darrell Jenkins in the Brookland District. A Tuesday editorial expressed an inclination for Bill Janis in the preposterous race for commonwealth's attorney.

As it often does, Chesterfield is producing some of the region's feistiest matchups. The county frequently features the most vitriol as well. Yet, like Henrico, it is well run, thanks considerably to County Administrator Jay Stegmaier. Development has dominated Chesterfield's debate as the county has contended with rapid growth. Its goal is to strike a balance between residential communities and commercial real estate. Many of its residents work outside its boundaries. Regarding the Board of Supervisors, The Times-Dispatch supports the Bermuda District's Dorothy Jaekle. Midlothian's Dan Gecker is running unopposed because, we would like to think, his constituents consider him among the most thoughtful elected officials in the region. Marleen Durfee offers a maverick voice in Matoaca. The Dale District's Jim Holland responded with dignity to a difficult situation regarding the board's chairmanship.

The campaigns for school board will not have decisive consequences for the content in the classroom. The new board ought to dedicate itself to promoting openness and communication. Chesterfield's schools are not under siege yet administration acts as though they are. Joseph Horbal should return as commissioner of revenue.

Hanover has established itself as a full player in the metropolitan area while retaining its character. This year its school system made a major transition as the excellent Jamelle Wilson succeeded the excellent Stewart Roberson as superintendent. Hanover's appointed School Board produces pleasing results. The Board of Supervisors boasts electoral action. John Gordon first won in the South Anna District in 1996. His tenure has coincided with the county's successful transition, and his re-election on Tuesday is greatly to be desired. Ed Via has represented Ashland well. Deborah Winans ably has served Mechanicsville.

Bevill Dean's certain re-election as clerk of the circuit court in the city of Richmond will make us glad.



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Letters to the Editor

Is Clinton still so blinded by politics?

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

Bill Clinton certainly is more "slender-looking," as your news article, "Clinton warns of GOP takeover," stated, but he's no less slick: "There is not a single successful country on the planet that operates on the theory that the government is the problem. Not one."

He may be right — or he may be quibbling. The truth depends upon what Clinton's definition of a "successful country" is. Would the German people being asked to shoulder the financial bailout burden of decades of failed socialist promises and policies agree that the spendthrift and broke governments of Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain are not problems that threaten to bankrupt the European Union, indeed, the whole planet? Or, is Clinton admitting that the profligate spending of these progressive nations — all uber-leftist role models for Democratic Party leaders — has driven these aspirant socialist utopias into the quickly expanding column of unsuccessful countries?

As one ponders the Occupy Wall Street movement and its clear parallels with Bill-and-friends' anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in Oxford, one wonders if he wasn't thinking, back then, that the American government was broken. Did he think America was not a successful country in 1969? Is he now 'fessing up that America's Vietnam policy was right and he was wrong in demonstrating on foreign soil against it?

As America deals with its own fast approaching financial Armageddon and the growing OWS menace, one cannot help but think about Clinton's statement and wonder: Does he remain so partisan at this stage of his life that he cannot see that America, today, would be better served by more thoughtful leadership and less partisan drive?

RANDAL G. TART.
POWHATAN.

And we still keep creating veterans

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

Being a veteran, a combat medic, conscripted no less, after years of silence, I offer some thoughts for Veterans Day:

If you have a loved one assigned to a combat zone you probably should not read the following.

What's it like becoming a veteran? Ask any cop or EMT to tell you about the worst accident scene he or she ever worked — one where people are dying but not dead yet.

It's watching and attending to soldiers who know they are not going to make it. They call out to their mother, their spouse, to God until they lose consciousness.

It's wondering how the mutilated bodies of three kids on bicycles, who happened into the automatic ambush you helped set up, can be classified as enemy combatants.

It's remembering your frantic efforts to tie off what remained of the legs of your friend "Surfer" after he was mangled by one of our own mines the enemy had moved the night before.

It's seeing and recovering the charred remains of the commander and crew of the tank in front of you after it was destroyed by an RPG hit.

It's knowing that the most common last words of a dying

CORRESPONDENT OF THE DAY

Decreasing menhaden harvest is a no-brainer

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

Regarding the Op/Ed column "Chesapeake wildlife in the balance," by Bryan Watts: My grandfather built a place on the lower Potomac River in 1936, my dad inherited it, and now I have (with family). We all have had boats and love to spend a day on the water dragging lines.

I remember when several species of fish and crab were plentiful in the Potomac. Overall fishing in recent years has been awful. The last time I saw a school of menhaden at the mouth of the Potomac was probably 10 years ago. We don't even see seagulls diving on breaking fish intermixed with baitfish in the Potomac today — it's even rare on the

Chesapeake Bay. We see more seagulls in urban centers eating fries than we see on the Bay.

I did not realize how important a menhaden diet was to waterfowl until I read this column. It took too long to stop the winter dredging of crabs in the Bay. It was a no-brainer solution to help the crab population. Politics were involved for too long.

Harvesting menhaden to 8 percent of a guessed population is blatant over-fishing of a natural resource — another no-brainer. If the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission won't increase the population threshold to 15 percent, then it has gone the same way as most of our status-quo politicians.

TSCHARNER D. WATKINS III.
MIDLOTHIAN.

soldier are "Please!" or "I'm sorry."

It's recognizing the universal wail of a mother who has lost her son, a wife who lost her husband, a sister who has lost a brother.

It's looking around when you deploy and wondering, just for a moment, who among you isn't going to make it.

It's losing your religion. It's having a different point of reference for Veterans Day.

It's knowing that even after all these years that there's not one damned thing you can do about it — that we will continue to create veterans as the natural order of things.

BOB SHIPP.
STUARTS DRAFT.

Nuclear industry is fronting its speakers

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

Christine Todd Whitman and Patrick Moore have appeared in your paper recently. Former EPA administrator Whitman was a keynote speaker at Gov. McDonnell's energy conference ["Nuclear power clean and safe, former EPA head says"]. Moore, who also attended the conference, wrote an Op/Ed column promoting nuclear power and uranium mining ["Environmentalism supports nuclear power"].

Whitman and Moore certainly have a right to voice their opinions about nuclear power. But readers have a right to know that they are paid spokespersons for the nuclear industry.

For the past five years, Whitman and Moore have been plugging nuclear power as co-chairs of the benignly named Clean and Safe Energy Coalition. They rarely, if ever, mention that the coalition — not much more than a website with a list of utilities, businesses and unions with a financial stake in nuclear power — was founded and is solely funded by the Nuclear Energy Institute, the industry trade association. NEI paid the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton a reported \$8 million in 2006 to promote a nuclear "renaissance." The PR firm launched the phony grass-roots coalition and tapped Moore and Whitman to front for it.

Your readers won't hear from Whitman and Moore the fact that a Fukushima-like accident could happen here. Likewise, they won't hear about lax government oversight or the nuclear industry's chronic failure to meet safety regulations. That's because the two are paid to put a positive spin on an industry that would prefer the public not know about its serious safety and security problems.

ELLIOT NEGIN,
DIRECTOR OF NEWS AND COMMENTARY,
UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS.
WASHINGTON.

Bless their furry little hides

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

In regard to Correspondent of the Day Julie Adler Noyes' letter ["We are charged to protect, not kill, animals"]: Yes, the Ohio fiasco was unforgivable. The animals might have killed humans. Quoting Scripture is wonderful, especially the part about humans reigning over animals.

I like the part about the small animals that scurry along the ground. Scuffling squirrels cost me \$2,000 to replace the wiring in my attic. Then they ate the wiring in my car, which was towed and repaired for \$400. Bless their cute little innocent heads and furry tails.

Can I stop them? No. I called Henrico and the commonwealth of Virginia several times to ask. I thought humans were to take reign over all animals, as she quoted from Genesis.

DAVID M. FULLER.
RICHMOND.



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