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VIEWPOINT

Quotation for today
Bad politicians are sent to Washington by good people who don't vote.

William A. Simon

Thought for today
The one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines.

Proverbs 18:17

OURVIEW

Editorials

Tennis courts don't need late-night lights

Dimwitted expenditure: Who left the lights on at the Frontier Park tennis courts? Passers-by have noticed that the bright lights are shining 24 hours a day. Penelec says a lightning strike blew a transformer in July and then the timers went out in mid-August.

This isn't the first time that Erie taxpayers have wondered about who foots the bill for these late-night lights. In 1991, our newspaper reported on similar complaints. At that time, the explanation was that the lights had been remounted high on poles to avoid vandalism. City workers forgot that Penelec needed to be called to set the nightly timer and also to turn the lights off at the end of the season. Back then, the city of Erie paid a monthly electric bill of \$240 for the lights at the court. This time, Penelec says it won't charge for the extra electricity. But we can't help wonder why, in this age of energy conservation, the repairs weren't made a priority.

Bright idea: Glowing lights can be a good thing, when they're part of the brightly lit balloons marking the annual Light the Night Walk for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. This year's event is Tuesday. More than 70 teams are preregistered and at least 1,000 walkers are expected, according to Betti Knox, campaign coordinator for the Erie walk. The event starts at 5:30 p.m. at the main entrance to Jerry Uht Park with pre-walk festivities, including mini-massages by the Erie Chiropractic Association, and activities for kids. The two-mile walk starts at 7:30 p.m. and runs west to State Street, north to Third Street, east to French Street and back to the ballpark. It's always an emotional moment to see survivors carrying lighted white balloons and supporters carrying lighted red balloons. This year, those who have lost a family member or friend to leukemia, lymphoma or a blood disorder will carry gold balloons. The EMTA Bayliner Trolley will also be available for patients who are not capable of walking the route. If you haven't preregistered, you can still register on the night of the walk.

Power trip: We've already applauded the decision of Lake Erie Biofuels to change its name to Hero BX, but here's another reason to recognize local businessman Samuel P. "Pat" Black III. The owner of Erie Management Group, parent company of Hero BX, hosted a pre-release showing of the new documentary, "Fuel," at the Warner Theatre on Tuesday night. The movie, which promotes the use of renewable energy, won the Best Documentary award at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008 and opened in New York on Friday. You can watch the energetic trailer at www.thefuelfilm.com. The movie is generating lots of buzz; let's hope it gets another showing in Erie, now that it's been released nationally.

Constructive thinking: The first person to benefit from the Maleno Family-to-Family Fund is Patricia Fronzaglia. Her Warsaw Avenue home will be renovated to make it more accessible for Fronzaglia, 57, who has used a wheelchair since she was hurt in a 1999 car accident. "I'm an independent person," says Fronzaglia, who lost her husband, Roy, to cancer five months before the car accident. "Washing and drying clothes and a lot of things that people would kill not to do, I want to do." Her application for help was selected from 60 reviewed by the St. Martin's Center, which distributes the funds. John Maleno and his family started the fund as a follow-up to the construction company's lead role in renovating Clara Ward's house for ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." Most of the renovations at Fronzaglia's home will be covered by donated services and labor. "This is only the beginning," says Maleno. "We hope to do a number of these projects every year." You can learn more about donating at www.malenoextremehome.com.

In these tough times, it's inspiring to see businesses, workers and the community come together to help rebuild hope as they renovate homes.

Victory at sea: The Vancouver Courier, a community newspaper in British Columbia, recently carried a complimentary article about the Erie Maritime Museum, in connection with the 196th anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie.

"A reconstructed Niagara is the centerpiece of the Erie Maritime Museum. Visitors can tour her when she's in port. The tall ship makes summer cruises on the Great Lakes as a 'goodwill ambassador' of Pennsylvania, of which she has been designated the official flagship," wrote correspondent Mitchell Smyth.

When the Maritime Museum sponsored a summer concert series a few years ago, it was always fun for the audience to hear from Canadian performers about their perspective on the Battle of Lake Erie, which "settled a border," in the words of the newspaper's headline.

Ed Stein/EdSteinink.com



Jeff Stahler/Columbus Dispatch



SATURDAY PUNCH

YOURVIEW

Letters to the Editor

"I am not a radical zealot. I am an unemployed college graduate looking for some help so I may survive if I get sick." — Thomas A. Warchol Jr., Erie

Outdoor workers: Watch out for Lyme disease

I am writing to provide important information to the Mercyhurst College students involved with the crown vetch cleanup around the Tom Ridge Center ("Out with the vetch," Erie Times-News, Sept. 1).

This was an excellent idea for their day of service, but perhaps not such a good idea for them. The photo shows students in the middle of the vegetation pulling the vetch while wearing shorts, short-sleeved shirts, no socks, etc.

I have Lyme disease. I carried it in my system for about 15 years before I was diagnosed.

The students and anyone else involved with this activity should have been given clear information about the appropriate type of clothing to wear while working in these conditions. I am not trying to be an alarmist, but there definitely should be some concern about this.

I know I was not infected at Presque Isle State Park; I was infected while crawling around and walking in vegetation when I lived in a wooded area along Lake Erie.

I ask that Mercyhurst College please get the appropriate information about symptoms to every student who volunteered to work in any area containing heavy vegetation.

Michelle Smock|North East

Weindorf was wrong man to fire

Having known Joe Weindorf from the time he was a police officer, I have found him to be a very honest person. There is no doubt in my mind he asked Erie County Council and Erie County Executive Mark DiVecchio for the funding, and/or the personnel to run his office properly, only to have a deaf ear turned his way.

Shame on all of you, and especially DiVecchio, for firing Weindorf. They are the ones who should be replaced.

I will vote against every one of them if I can. Also, the idea of hiring an out-of-town firm to do a study of the problems is just a big waste of county funds.

Ruth Smith|Erie

Assumptions cloud health-care facts

"Of late the sheep had taken to bleating 'Four legs good, two legs bad' both in and out of season, and they often interrupted the meeting with this. It was noticed that they were especially liable to break into 'Four legs good, two legs bad' at crucial moments in Snowball's speeches."

This excerpt from Chapter 5 of "Animal Farm" — George Orwell's classic denunciation of totalitarianism — is a perfect characterization of what Jillian Meriweather of the Kansas City Young Democrat Examiner has labeled "orchestrated outrage" at recent town-hall meetings.



In our mail...

This week

Received: 66 letters
Published: 59 letters

Most popular topic:
Dogs
5 letters

Oppose.....1
Support.....4
No position.....0

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I don't know if the majority of "these protests are scripted and directed to merely disrupt the discussion," as she asserts, but I consider it quite tragic that so many members of our society succumb to logic-stifling fear mongering, such as Sarah Palin's irresponsible Facebook rant about "Obama's death panel."

We can only hope that the people whose emotions are being manipulated by disinformation and consequently engaging in these undemocratic tactics will eventually educate themselves and then choose to be — as Meriweather puts it — "focused on generating discussion and furthering the debate."

Historically, however, ignorant people rarely accept facts that refute their erroneous, fear-based assumptions without putting up a terrific fight.

Henry Shader|Cambridge Springs

Young deserve same health option as old

I have just written a letter to U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter expressing my concern for the possibility that the public option will be removed from the health-care reform debate.

I urge him to do anything in his power to stop this from happening. I am tired of watching great ideas die because of false statements that keep the public afraid and angry about true progress, prosperity and choice.

I find it hard to believe that the majority disagrees with the public option, if it truly knew what it entails, especially the ignorant opposition to Medicare.

I am not a radical zealot. I am an unemployed college graduate looking for some help so I may survive if I get sick.

All that I ask is that I am given

the same opportunity, in a public option, as those 65 and older on Medicare.

Without this vital part of the bill, how can prices of premiums be driven down so they are affordable? How will we create competition in a venue that has been monopolized by big insurance?

I urge those who have similar concerns to not sit on their hands but to make their views known in any way they can. The people of this country deserve a public option, and democracy requires participation.

Thomas A. Warchol Jr.|Erie

Dirty sidewalks chronic problem

My biggest complaint is this: What's with all of the doggy doo all over the city sidewalks?

I've had company from out of town a couple of times, who were originally from Erie, and they were totally embarrassed. They wanted to see our city, so we walked from 12th and State streets down to Hamot Medical Center.

They were pleased to see the beautiful gazebo and the fountain was still there. But, on the way down State Street, they asked what all of the "stuff" was on the sidewalks.

I was told to call the mayor's office about this and I did, but they didn't return my call. I have said things to people who are walking their dogs, and was told to mind my own business.

Do we have to start taking pictures from our cars, out our windows or just on the street from our cell phones?

You have to constantly watch where you are walking. These friends said they are glad they do not live here anymore because we do not even care about our main streets and parks.

Carole Kaczmarek|Erie

Service businesses can't support city

I think reporter John Guerriero's story about the potential loss of revenue at Presque Isle Downs & Casino ("All eyes on Ohio, elsewhere as competition comes to Erie casino," Aug. 23) addresses a basic underlying economic truth that has been long ignored by our politicians.

That is, solid manufacturing jobs bring wealth to our area, and relying on a service economy doesn't.

There can be no doubt that a strong economy in today's world is based on a balance of a strong manufacturing base that fosters a strong service base.

And who do we have to blame? Ourselves. We can argue the effects of greedy management, strong-arm unions, restrictive environmental rules, changes in tax codes, foreign competition or whomever else you want to blame.

But the real truth is that we, the voters and taxpayers, allowed this fiasco.

We've allowed our elected and appointed leaders to turn a blind eye to aggressively pumping tax dollars into supporting industry with the same vigor as other areas of our economy, a fact not lost to our

world competitors in China, India and just about everywhere else.

I'd prefer to see empty factories revitalized to create new industry rather than be allowed to rot or converted into apartments.

That certainly would be a better use of gambling funds and would provide future prosperity. These ideas are not new. We did this during the Great Depression and World War II.

If we spent even a tenth of the public money we've spent in Iraq and Afghanistan on subsidizing manufacturing in this economic war, a lot of our resultant economic and social problems would not need as many tax dollars.

Paul Jaworski|Erie

Slow down when exiting onto State to protect walkers

I am writing this letter to register my concern that someone is going to be seriously hurt or killed if something isn't done — and soon. On three different occasions, I have observed this problem, so it is an ongoing issue.

There is a driveway that runs east/west, immediately north of the Boston Store complex and south of the child-care center. Cars pull onto the sidewalk from State Street with no regard for people walking there.

The bigger concern, though, is that cars exit the parking area. For some reason, they drive at break-neck speed, not slowing at all until they reach State Street.

Hundreds of people walk this block in a week's time and there is going to be a catastrophe if the situation isn't addressed.

Sandi Carlson|Erie

Even Democrats can't vote for health-care bill

The letter with the rambling tirade against town-hall protesters ("Shouts, jeers cloud health-care debate," Aug. 21) fails to mention that Republicans are now the minority party that can't stop anything.

Both houses and the presidency are Democratic and could pass any bill brought to the floor.

The reason health-care legislation is in trouble is because it's such a monstrosity that even Democrats can't vote for it.

My wife and I attended the town-hall meeting in Harborcreek hosted by U.S. Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper. Although misinformed, Dahlkemper presided over an informative, civil debate.

Because of its high cost, lack of tort reform, and the fact that most people are satisfied with their present health-care provider, the audience appeared to be 100 percent against the Barack Obama health-care plan. I did not see one fanatic in the room.

For eight years, President George W. Bush was subjected to daily vicious attacks by the left. I don't recall letter writers objecting to any of the hatred that was far worse than anything directed at Obama.

Ray Fitzgerald|Erie

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