

CARROLL COUNTY COMET

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Guest commentary: Our future depends on improving the public dialogue

By Lee Hamilton

Wherever I go these days, people want to talk about how much trouble we have talking reasonably to one another about current public policy challenges. The quality of the public dialogue, they say - our ability to reason with one another and to sort through issues - is lamentable.

Al Gore's new book, "The Assault on Reason," decries the decline of public discourse. In my view, he's hit a nerve.

And for good reason. Our political system is riddled with problems: cynicism and low voter turnout; intense partisanship; the outsized influence of money. But if Americans feel that we can't even set about fixing them because we're incapable of holding a discussion that isn't distorted by spin, misleading studies, media manipulation, 10-second sound bites, and accusations of suspect motives, then we've got a really serious problem.

It doesn't just affect efforts to reform the political system, of course. Woodrow Wilson once said, "I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow." What was true in the early decades of the 20th century is even more true today. The complexity of the problems we confront, from how to handle our role in the world to how to fix our health care system to what to do about public education, demands that Americans of different beliefs and perspectives think together about what to do. No one individual or small group can know all there is to know.

Yet we suffer from a poor and superficial imitation of debate, often the equivalent of playground name-calling, rather than the deep exploration of challenges and their potential solutions that the times call for.

Our electronic media, in particular, is drawn by the quick-and-easy. You are far likelier to learn about a candidate's debate style, mannerisms, attire or expensive haircut than you are his or her ideas about fixing our health care system.

Yet in the end, I believe we have no one to blame but ourselves. Living in a democracy takes work, and if we want to enjoy its fruits, we have to labor a bit to prepare them.

I'm sometimes disappointed by how ready we Americans are to believe polls and studies and the assertions of those in authority, rather than to gather information, think for ourselves, and make discriminating judgments. If we want the quality of public dialogue to improve, then it's up to us to improve it and let our political leaders know we will no longer let them get away with offering inadequate solutions to difficult problems.

We can do this in several ways:

- First, pay attention to reason and fact, not propaganda and half-truths. Don't accept an assertion of fact on its face. Obtain your information from a variety of sources.

- Don't let yourself be diverted by fluff. We love the clutter of celebrity lives, gossip and the extraneous details of politics, but letting them dominate our attention has a real cost. This country has made serious mistakes over the last decade in no small part because we were distracted by the diversions we wanted to pay attention to, rather than focused on the issues we needed to pay attention to.

- Listen to the experts, but make up your own mind. As the psalm says, "Put not your trust in princes."

- Do not attack the motivations of adversaries. Give them the respect of speaking to the merits of their arguments.

- Try to take a step back from ideology. Listen carefully to different sides in a debate, be prepared to see the logic in what people of different viewpoints have to say, and above all look for pragmatic approaches that work, not ideologically rigid approaches that don't comport with the real world.

Many Americans have simply checked out of the debate, and many others who do participate ignore these precepts. Among the great gifts of living in this country is the right to speak out, but that right carries with it a responsibility. All of us have the responsibility to work to increase the quality of the public dialogue. The future of our country is on the line.

Lee Hamilton is Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

Restaurant Inspections

McDonalds
Routine inspection: 6/20/07
Summary of violations: 2 Non-Critical
There was a wet wiping cloth on the hand sink not stored in sanitizing solution. Directed to correct by one day.
There was a food employee not wearing a hair restraint. Directed to correct by one day.

Pizza Hut
Routine inspection: 6/21/07
Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

All-BBQ's
Routine inspection: 6/22/07
Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Camden Auction Barn
Routine inspection: 6/29/07
Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

The Dinner Bell
Routine inspection: 7/2/07
Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Burlington Mid-Land Meals
Routine inspection: 7/2/07
Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Bassett & Talbert - Blimpies
Routine inspection: 6/29/07
Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

Smitty's Taco's
Routine inspection: 6/26/07
Summary of violations: No Violations Noted

29 Mara Mart
Routine inspection: 6/26/07
Summary of violations: 1 Critical, 3 Non-Critical
Critical
The sanitizer in the three bay sink read over 400 ppm. Corrected.
Non-Critical
There was not a thermometer in the upright freezer to measure the air temperature. Directed to correct by three days.

There was a buildup of frost in the upright freezer. Directed to correct by three days.
There was not a test kit to measure the ppm of the sanitizing solution. Directed to correct by one day.

Graham's Saloon
Routine inspection: 6/27/07
Summary of violations: 3 Non-Critical
Non-Critical
The ladies restroom did not have a cover on the trashcan. Directed to correct by two days.

The chest freezer did not have a thermometer to measure the air temperature. Corrected.

The clean utensils were drained on a towel. Directed to correct by one day.

The black Saab convertible in front of me and I were inching along in traffic when the Saab abruptly pulled out of line and over into the opposite lane of traffic. The oncoming lane was empty so I figured the brunette with the long curly tussles was going to cheat and sneak ahead of some others idling in front of her.

Instead, the Saab pulled up close alongside a roadside trash barrel. There she proceeded to do a little late in the year car spring cleaning. Over her door and into the barrel she tossed a serious quantity of newspapers, crumpled fast food bags and other unidentifiable and assorted trash. Before I knew it, she revved her engine, shifted gears and effortlessly maneuvered back into the proper lane and back in with those of us still waiting to move forward in line.

I don't know who it was who put that first open trash barrel outside for us motorists to use. But car drivers and passengers alike everywhere owe him or her a huge heap of thanks and credit for keeping our cars out of the scrutiny of the local health department.

Over the years I've grown to expect a garage container outside just about every public establishment I frequent. This is especially true when I fill the car at the gas station. Part of my normal routine while the pump is running is to conduct a fairly extensive trash purge. I fling open the doors one by one and rummage under, around

Midwest Memo

by Alan Shultz



Tidy

and between the seats for the paper cups, candy wrappers, plastic drink bottles, junk mail, newspapers and assorted clutter that needs to move on.

Depending on the diet of the week I've embraced, some of the finds strike me momentarily with a touch of nostalgia. Since Hostess cupcakes have a special calling to me, I have conflicted feelings when I fish one of those empty containers out from between a seat and the shift counsel or when I stumble onto a smashed container underneath a floor mat. Of course nostalgia turns to a memory challenge, then a caloric nightmare, when I find a supersized empty container with the "3rd one free." Rarely can I recall where exactly that third one wound up being consumed, or shared, - surely I didn't eat them all in one sitting.

But I don't expect trashcans just to be waiting on me at the service station. I pretty much count on them being outside just about every public establishment I frequent. This expectation occasionally proves to be incorrect and leads to awkward moments. I've been known to enter a mall bookstore with a crushed Starbucks cup in one hand and two or three McMuffin wrappers and

a little junk mail in the other.

The other day I had to pop into the White Hen Pantry just to make use of their garbage can because they had failed miserably in providing any form of outside trash relief. I did not feel guilty about the lack of my purchase on that particular visit. Over time I've removed a lot more from every brand of convenience store than I've returned to them in the form of trash.

The other day I needed the services of a plumber. When Mr. Lents, the plumber, pulled up in front I realized from the sight of his van that there is, indeed, an alternative to all this public garbage disposal. The alternative is, just keep the stuff. That's what my plumber must do.

Wedged tight between the dashboard and the windshield, piled high from the dash to one's eyeballs, my plumber convinced me there is more storage room in a car than I ever would have dreamed possible. No pulling over out of traffic, no scurrying around the gas station, no awkward moments at the bookstore without the garbage can, Mr. Lents just takes his discards and wedges them into his dashboard for all the world to see.

Me, I'm too proud for that. And, there's a decided risk in that approach. What about the 3rd one free cupcake package - and you can't find it amidst all the other trash. Then again, they've got a shelf life of about a decade. I'd probably trade the car in before it really went bad.

Letters to the Editor

The Comet welcomes letters to the editor responding to articles and events in the news. They must include the author's name, address and telephone number. The letter writer's name and city/town will appear in the paper - no exceptions. Letters must be 400 words or less in length. Please send your letters to editor@carrollcountycomet.com; Letters to the Editor, Comet, P.O. Box 26, Flora, IN 46929 or P.O. Box 179, Delphi, IN 46923; or fax 574-967-3384 or 765-564-2010. By submitting a letter or opinion article, the author grants the Comet the right to publish, distribute, archive or use the work in print, electronic, on-line or other format.

Thumbs down to fireworks

I just wanted to express my disappointment in the fireworks display the Town of Flora did this year. I am from Carroll County but now live in Tampa, Florida, and came home to visit family the week of the 4th. My family and I have always went to Flora to see the fireworks because it was always the best in Carroll County. I was so disappointed and now wish I would have went to Delphi instead. The park was packed and I'm sure I'm not the only disappointed patron. Thumbs down to the Town of Flora for a big dud on the 4th!

Debbie Frier
Tampa, Fla.

Explains parade absence

One of the highlights of past Independence Day holidays for me has been the chance to participate in the Canal Days 4th of July Parade. I had been looking forward to participating in the parade again this year. However, I was given the opportunity to visit our servicemen and women in the Middle East and, unfortunately, this trip conflicted with the Canal Days 4th of July Parade.

As we celebrated our country's independence, I felt it was critical for me to personally assess our progress on the ground and be there to support our men and women in uniform. I regretted not being able to be with you at the parade as it has always been a special event to me.

I took with me to the Middle East all of your best wishes and kind words for our service members. Our dedication at home means the world to our troops abroad and I did my best to convey that care and concern. Thank you for understanding my absence this Independence Day. Please say a prayer for our troops and our beloved country.

Joe Donnelly
U.S. Congressman

Not in favor of Jefferson Township Conservancy District

To the taxpayers of Jefferson Township:

Sometimes when we are presented with an idea, it sounds great until we take time to examine it more closely and see if it will benefit us. I fear that is what happened when the idea of a Jefferson Township Conservancy was presented to us without having all the facts.

So let's examine what it means to our pocketbook. It is suggested that the conservancy would hook up to White Oaks, The Landings, or go to Reynolds.

If this could be accomplished at half the price of the \$21,000,000 proposed by TUSD, the cost would be \$10,500,000 plus at least another \$100,000 for engineering, etc.

According to Carroll County Assessor's Office, there are 3,470 parcels of property in Jefferson Township. \$10,600,000 divided by 3,470 is \$3,054. Remember some of us own more than one parcel of land.

So perhaps a \$1,000 hookup fee and \$65 a month would be better than \$3,054. If I sell my parcel it would increase in value because it is on a sewer system.

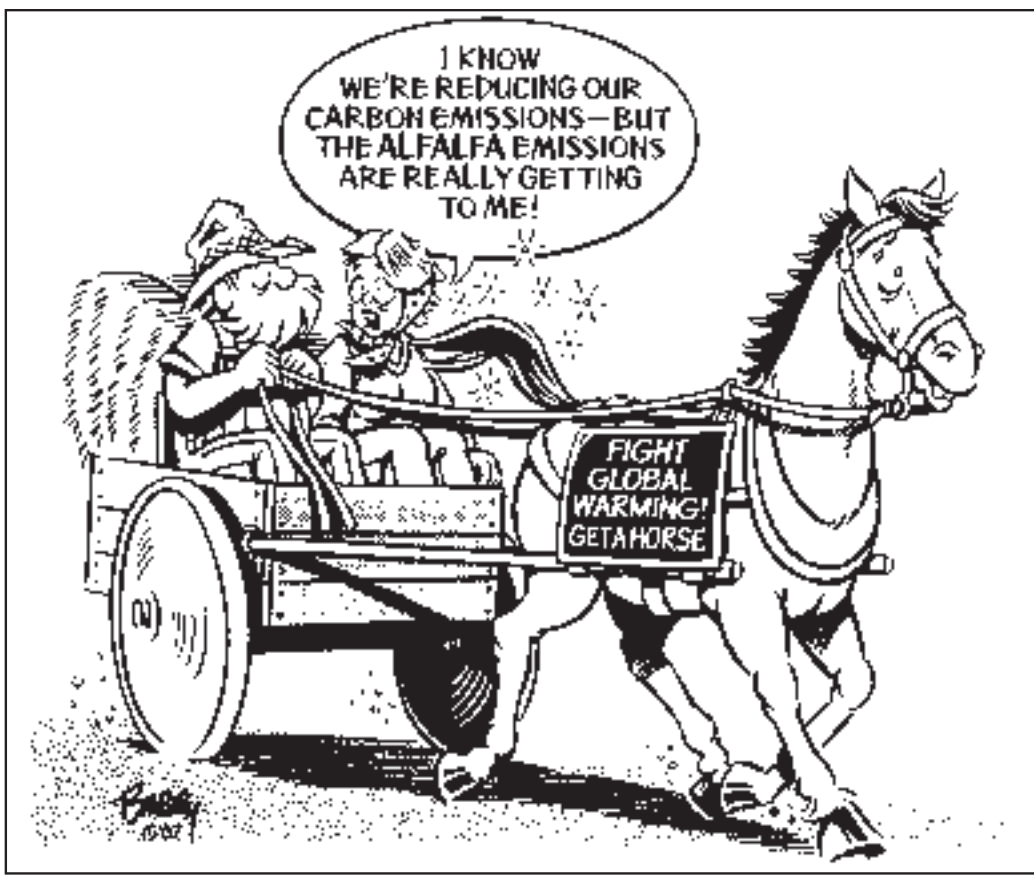
Of the total parcels, 1,060 would actually benefit from the conservancy while the other 2,428 parcels would not receive any benefit. Of course, there is talk that they could help repair a non-functioning septic system in the rest of the township. But then we will have to add more to the cost of the total project.

Please think about this and see what would be most cost-effective for you.

Robert Mills,
property owner
(574) 965-2553

Marriage Licenses

Brian Lewis Schnieb, 44, and Vontella Mae Appleton, 49, both of Camden.



Circuit Court Judge Donald Currie

New filings are from public records available in the Carroll County Clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse, Delphi. Other information regarding judgments and marriage dissolutions is gathered from public records found in the clerk's office.

A decree of dissolution was granted between the following: Abram Humphreys and Jessica Miller-Humphreys; Cheryl Holmes and William Holmes, with wife's former name of Sullivan restored; and Randie Lynn Graves-Wherley and Brandon Kyle Wherley, with wife's former name of Graves restored.

A sentencing order for Michael B. Bradbury was amended to read five years suspended.

A sentencing order for Brain Shanks was amended to read two years in prison instead of six years.

Leon C. Sprinkle, 49, was found guilty of attempted child exploitation and pled guilty to five counts of possession of child pornography. He was sentenced to eight years in prison.

LVNV Fuding LLC filed a complaint against Eddy E. Marley Jr.

Midland Credit Management Inc. filed an application to confirm arbitration award against Virginia L. Brown.

Palisades Acquisition XVI LLC filed an application to confirm arbitration award against

Jessica L. Hanaway.

Midland Funding Corp. filed a complaint against Claudia Brown.

AFS filed a complaint against Justin Stewart.

Wells Fargo Bank filed a complaint on note and to foreclose mortgage on real estate against Jeffrey Daily.

Pablo Francisco was charged with forgery, two counts of identity deception, operating a vehicle without ever receiving a license, false/fictitious registration and speeding.

Carl R. Robbins was charged with dealing in methamphetamine, illegal possession of anhydrous ammonia, burglary, forgery, auto theft, theft, maintaining a common nuisance, possession of marijuana, possession of paraphernalia and habitual substance offender.

Shawn J. McKinley was charged with two counts dealing in marijuana. Marriage licenses
Shain Dale Sivils, 48, and Lisa Joan Rainwater, 46, both of Delphi.

Timothy E. Wright, 26, and Cassie N. Sexton, 21,

both of Camden.

The following cases were dismissed: Regions Bank vs. Douglas R. Abdon and others; and State of Indiana vs. Mark A. Westlake.

A decree of dissolution was granted between the following: Corrina Sue Harvey and John Marc Harvey, with wife's former name of Combs restored; Brian K. Shaw and April L. Shaw; and Ricky Nehrig and Heather Nehrig, with wife's former name of Heather Joan Ellis restored.

Because the public has a right to know...

In an effort to help our readers understand what government meetings are happening when and where, the Comet will now print upcoming meetings on a weekly basis.

Thursday, July 12

- ✓ Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District: 7 p.m. - White County Gov. Building

Friday, Sept. 13

- ✓ Burlington Town Council special meeting: 10 a.m. (budget work session)

Monday, Sept. 18

- ✓ Commissioners: 9 a.m.
- ✓ Delphi Board of Works: 5:30 p.m.
- ✓ Jefferson Township Conservancy District in Circuit Court: 9 a.m. - Carroll Circuit Court

Public Notices appearing in this issue of the Comet:

City of Delphi-Water Rpt.....3B
Comm-Ord. 2007-063B
Burton Estate3B
Embarq-Link-Up3B
Dague-Zoning3B
Draper-Zoning3B
NWINSWD-Budget3B
Wabash & Erie Canal3B

Questions concerning Indiana's Open Door and Public Access Laws may be directed to the state's public access office, at
1-800-228-6013.

Web poll

Tell us starting Wednesday at our web site, carrollcountycomet.com

Each week the Comet polls its readers on a different topic. Vote online at carrollcountycomet.com starting each Thursday, and then click the Comments link to send us an email voicing your opinion. The best responses will be printed the following week.

What is your favorite part of the county fair?

The animals
The food
The merchant's building
The projects
The carnival

Last Weeks results

How often do you respond to our Web poll question?

32% Always
39% Sometimes
18% Seldom
11% This is my first
Total responses: 38