

CARROLL COUNTY COMET

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Congress needs proper leadership

As Congress moves beyond last November's elections and turns its attention to governing, it has to perform one of the toughest pivots in American politics. Governing is much more difficult than campaigning. After going at it hammer and tongs in congressional races, Democrats and Republicans now have a branch of government to run and policy to produce. Switching priorities to put the country and the institution of Congress ahead of politics can be a stretch for members.

The key to whether they succeed, enabling Congress to reach its potential as a representative body more equal in weight to the presidency, will be the congressional leadership. Its members set the tone of the Congress: They can act as stewards of its institutional strength, integrity, and effectiveness, or squander its potential.

They signal how much weight they'll attach to ethical behavior and tough ethics enforcement, and can make or break legislation designed to further it. They determine whether cooperation across party lines will be the order of the day, a rarity, or out of the question. They decide how the budget is to be put together. Above all, they craft the congressional agenda and determine whether it's going to be used merely to score political points or to respond in good faith to challenges facing our nation.

Leaders are the ones in a position to determine which issues will come forward for consideration, and which will be set aside; what oversight will be done and what ignored; what will get the media spotlight and what will remain in the shadows; which programs will be included in appropriations bills and which won't.

They have enormous power, in other words, over both the substance and the style of Congress. And they are the ones who largely determine whether Congress will become a stronger partner in our representative democracy or defer to the president to take the lead.

In some periods, as during the Great Society era during the 1960s, Congress was highly regarded because it was seen as addressing the key problems facing the country. There were significant accomplishments amid bipartisan cooperation, if not collegiality. Other periods have seen a breakdown on both fronts. And still others may produce a less productive record on legislation, but still be marked by an overall respect for Congress's integrity as an institution.

When House Speaker Tip O'Neill and Minority Leader Bob Michel squared off in public debate during the 1980s, for instance, it was only after intense but congenial discussions over how each of their caucuses viewed a measure; they would give a ringing speech on the floor to rally their troops, but in almost every case each man knew how the vote would turn out. They knew how to work with one another to assure that Congress lived up to its constitutional responsibilities, while remaining true to their political responsibilities.

Leaders must be held principally responsible for the performance of the Congress. If the institution is not performing well under stress - if it is ignoring proper budget process, sidestepping tough issues, not disciplining wayward members, or deferring excessively to the president and neglecting its constitutional role - that is a failure of congressional leadership. Often, leaders are quick to blame the opposition for standing in the way of progress, and sometimes that's legitimate; frequently, though, it's because the leaders failed to work well together, putting political advantage over legislative solutions.

Over the last few decades, the leaders' responsibility for Congress's performance has grown measurably greater. This is because their power has, too: Leaders of both parties have worked to increase their budgets and concentrate power in their offices. Their staffs have grown - where a speaker or minority leader might once have turned for policy advice to the chairs of particular committees, they now have their own advisors on energy or foreign policy or the economy.

And they have changed the process, most notably with the budget, to favor themselves. When spending priorities were put together by the various committees, rank-and-file members knew, in detail, what was in the budget and they had significant input into its contents. Now, Congress often acts by omnibus bill, which puts enormous power in the hands of a few leaders and their staff.

This is not a favorable trend. The increasing concentration of power in the leaders diminishes the role of other members and distorts representative democracy. Congress derives its legitimacy and authority from its members, who represent the American people in all their diversity. This is why the Framers put Congress first in the Constitution. When that multitude of voices is ignored or weakened, it is hard to see how Congress will ever be able to assert its standing as a separate, independent, and forceful branch of government.

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.

Well we got some bad news from the folks over at TV 18 the other night. That's when they did a spot check for our us area viewers to see if our television sets are compliant with the upcoming digital TV transition. Analog transmission is to end and digital transmission will be the only service available. That's what they say, and have been saying for about two years.

In our house we've got a sorry collection of old televisions, four to be exact, and even the newest of the bunch displayed the same message as the oldest one during the test: "Your TV is not compliant with the digital...blah, blah, blah."

Digital, smigital, that's all I've got to say on the subject. Well, actually I've got a tad more to say.

I went on the Internet to see what this digital conversion is all about. Now besides being an analog television household, our Internet service is the ancient "dial-up" service. That means we get Internet over the phone lines. When we initiate the dial up there is a loud static noise and a series of blips and then a whirl and finally a "bop." If the squirrels in Yeoman have not been nesting in the switch box or if the trunk line in Idaville didn't get wet in last week's rain - well, then you're on the high speed information highway.

I did get on the Internet and found a doomsday clock telling me I have 35 days until sitting in my comfy couch recliner with a bag of Doritos watching a blank screen on



Little black box

the television.

There are worse things to fear than such a fate.

Oh well, all we need is the little black converter box.

According to the site on the Internet, old antiquated television set + black box + rabbit antenna = digital conversion.

The mysterious little black box is only \$40 and there are coupons (they're all out - sorry) and we've got one such coupon (long expired) and who's idea again was all this anyway?

OK, so apparently I am the last person in the world to even consider government conspiracy theories. I mean, what exactly is this black box doing and why do I want Uncle Sam to place it on my television set. In fact, why do I want to register as one of the few rabbit ear holdouts? Why do I want to be counted as the guy with dial-up Internet service, analog TVs and the VCR with the blinking digital clock read.

I write about switching from the analog signal to the digital signal like I have a clue as to what that really means. I still marvel at how radio works, how planes ascend, how the electric window in my car goes up and

down. I do not understand the difference between analog and digital television transmission. But I don't know how many officials I want knowing what I don't know.

Things are not always as they appear.

When I was in grammar school I was a member of the Bluebirds reading group. I remember liking the sound of that name and thinking that Bluebirds were kind of sharp. I don't know when it was I learned the truth. It turned out the Bluebirds were actually the dodo birds - we little slow learners. I think that's when I learned to be suspicious.

I'm not sure I want to be on record, or labeled by Uncle Sam, as an "analog" or a "rabbit ear." I'm not sure I want all my television feed through a little mysterious black box of unknown origin. It's one thing to be a little challenged by technology, it's another thing for the government to have you pegged as same.

So my conspiracy theory is that all we analogs (admitted low tech folks) will be identified as needing educational TV programming - thus the little black box. Under this theory if I go to watch "American Idol" the little black box may instead dish up a film-strip on how radio waves work, or a nice program called "The Amazing Mr. Edison."

Meanwhile the count down continues until four TV screens go blank in our household. So I'm thinking recliner + Doritos + a good book = analog anonymity.

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.

Enough fundraising

Am I the only one that has noticed that the focus of the Carroll County YMCA is getting money through fundraising instead of working to get people to buy a membership? My family's \$90 was turned away the other day because we did not want to again pay a joiner fee. We can only go in the winter months (due to our business) and so each time we go in they want that extra \$30 fee.

Why is the Y still burdening the community with fundraising? When is the Y, if ever, going to be self-sufficient? Hasn't the community done enough paying for the building and more?

Where was the free joiner fee for the New Year? What a great way to get all those people with New Year's resolutions in there. The community needs a Y that can grow on its own.. with good communication, marketing, and young, enthusiastic people who can come up with the newest equipment and classes, and more. I believe the Y can be self sufficient.

Gena Martin
Flora

Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Smith

Superior Court judgments are gathered from public records on file in the Carroll County Clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse, Delphi.

New filings

Gordon D. Ford, Jr. was charged with criminal trespassing.

Donald Cupp was charged with false informing and no valid operator's license.

Penny A. Houser was charged with check deception.

Adam J. Tracy was charged with one count of OWI-endangering and failure to stop after accident resulting in non-vehicle damage.

Ryan L. Brock was charged with operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangering a person, driving while suspended and driving left of center.

Marriage Licenses

Linzil Salyer, 39, and Karen R. Sisson, 42, both of Delphi.

David Clark Johnson, 50, and Vicki Lynn Baugh, 49, both of Camden.

Gregory A. Stockton, 50, and Kelly S. Chamberlin, 36, both of Monticello.

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.

Saturday, January 17

✓ Third House: 9:30 a.m., Brandywine Inn in Monticello
Monday, January 19

✓Carroll County Commissioners: 9 a.m.

✓Delphi Board of Works: 4:30 p.m.

✓Delphi Library Board: 5:30

✓Carroll County Park Board: 6 p.m., Camden Library

Tuesday, January 20

✓County Council: 8:30 a.m.

✓County Election Board: 4 p.m., clerk's office

✓Adams Township Advisory Board: 7 p.m.

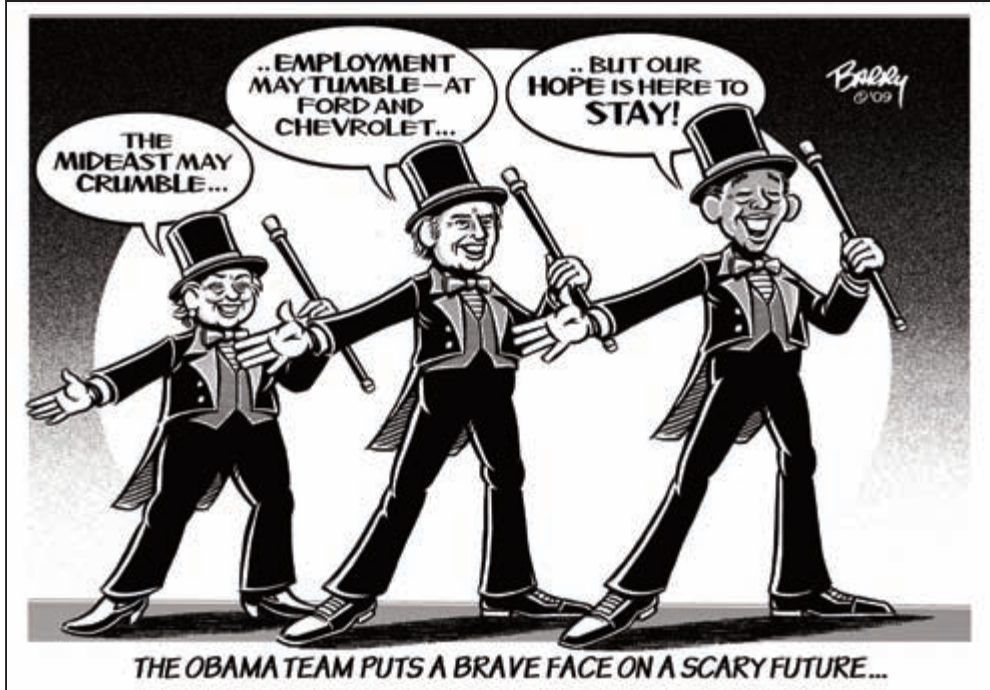
Thursday, January 22

✓Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District: 7 p.m., Administration Office, 921 W. Executive Dr., Monticello

Public Notices appearing in this issue of the Comet:

Sheriff Sale-McGinn4B
Flora Estate4B
Alberts Estate4B
Spitznagle Estate4B
Sheriff Sale-Shockley4B
CC Soil & Water Ann Mtg 4B
Town of Camden-Req4B
Sheriff Sale-Leap4B
T.L. Reg. Sew. District . . .4B

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.



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.

George A. Wells Jr. was named administrator of the George A. Wells estate.

50DL-Circuit Court
Adam J. Pratt was charged with burglary, theft, OWI/endangering and illegal consumption.

Salvador A. Juarez a/k/a Gerardo Villarreal was charged with forgery, identity deception and operating a motor vehicle without ever receiving a license.

Kathryn E. Ligget filed complaint against VMS, LLC d/b/a Paramount Homes, William E. Tully and Travis V. Pherson.

LVNV Funding filed complaint against Phyllis Johnson.

Midland Credit Management Inc. filed complaint against Bret A. Smith.

A complaint on note and to foreclose mortgage on real estates was filed by JP Morgan Chase Bank against Russell G. Young and Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems.

Cynthia Jean Bowers and Marjorie Lynn Bakeis were named administrators for the Bennett B. Connors estate.

Larry D. McCallie was named administrator for the Helen R. Landrum estate.

Amanda Darlene Robinson was named administrator for the Charles H. Shanks estate.

June H. Gill was named administrator for the James L. Gill estate.

Billy T. Williams II filed a petition for post conviction relief.

The following were found to be in arreage of child support: John Graves, \$3,691; Kenny Kittrell, \$11,244.78; Robert H. Wilson Jr., \$3,186.61; Shawn Kelly, \$2,930; John L. Barbee Jr., \$27,479; Julia M. Pardue, \$18,775.68; Leslie Field, \$12,803; James L. Bagley, \$40,284.86; Chad Johnson, \$907.03; Morgan Lucies,

\$359; Kevin Stout, \$4,889.98; Tom Laxson, \$21,209; Brian Graves, \$826; Bobby Smith, \$566.02; and Michael S. Fultz, \$24,091.31.

Marriage dissolutions granted were: Patricia J. Sandifur and Brett W. Sandifur; Stacy L. Spencer and Scott B. Spencer.

The following causes were dismissed: LaSalle Bank National Association vs. Sherri A. Moore a/k/a Sherri Moore and Terry R. Moore a/k/a Terry Moore et al; LVNV Funding LLC vs. Myles J. Piotrowski; and Midland Credit Management Inc. vs. Tricia L. Thompson.

Default judgment and foreclosure was granted the plaintiff in First Financial Bank vs. Peggy Garth a/k/a Peggy M. Garth, \$145,401.12.

Judgment was entered for the plaintiff in Liberty Dialysis LLC vs. Scott Ayres a/k/a Scott W. Ayres for \$36,347.11.

Saul A. Guerrero-Pena, 19, was convicted of child molesting and was sentenced to eight years in the Department of Correction, executed on in-home detention, six years suspended, and supervised probation;

James T. Shelley Jr., 27, was sentenced to executed time in Department of Correction after his probation was revoked.

Damiana Alarcon, 21, was convicted of identity deception.

Estates admitted to probate were: Shirley M. Heathcote - Marlene L. Joseph, personal representative; William E. Fite - Anna L. Fite, personal representative; Mary Alice Fisher - Bryan C. Fisher, personal representative; Paul Edward Hunter - Joyce Marie Hunter, personal representative; Dennis D. Lytle - Michelle Lytle, personal representative; and Francisca Martinez Reyes - Juan Daniel Matias Gonzales, personal representative.

Complaints filed included: Capital One Bank vs. Julie A. Plue; Midland Credit Management vs. Kristopher M. Jones; Capital One Bank vs. Crystal A. Bowman; Capital One Bank vs. Barbara L. Grimes; HSBC Bank Nevada vs. Jennifer M. Villarreal; and Gary Tedlock and Evon Tedlock vs. Kevin H. Thinnas and State Farm Fire & Casualty Co.

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 do you think will Tony Dungy's greatest legacy with the Colts?

- His strength of character
- His ability to inspire
- His leadership
- Winning the Super Bowl

Last Week's results

Do you think the economy will be better in 2009?

12% Yes, because Obama will be leading the country
06% Yes, if the bailouts are successful
55% No, it will take more than a year to see recovery
18% No, I'm not that optimistic
09% Don't have a clue!
Total responses: 193