

commentary

from other pens...

Diversion of money betrays giver's trust

Lawrence Journal-World on American Red Cross contributions: Funding for the Sept. 11 victims has been diverted in wrong directions, and the Red Cross needs to answer serious questions.

... The ARC does not seem to be handling the current effort to aid the Sept. 11 terrorist victims the way it should.

It's little wonder a number of people who had contributed to the Sept. 11 emergency fund through the Red Cross are perturbed. ...

The main bone of contention is the Liberty Fund, which was set up to meet attack victims' needs for at least a year. As of a few days ago, \$547 million had been pledged to Liberty Fund, and some Red Cross officials determined that would meet the one-year goal. ... At one point, it appeared more than \$60 million that should be going to the Liberty Fund was being rerouted to bolster the Red Cross and its hierarchy.

That amounts to a betrayal of the trust of the people who gave to the Liberty Fund desiring to assist the victims of the attacks. ...

... As of now, contributions coming in will be deposited in the Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund unless donors specify that the money is for the Liberty Fund.

It appears things have not been handled nearly as properly and as well as expected, and the result is that the American Red Cross has suffered a serious blow to its reputation. ...

Meanwhile, what can be done to channel the funding to aid the needy in the way it should be proportioned? How many other agencies have taken funding detours that will further erode the goal of aiding those who need help the most?

The Hutchinson News on the governor's plans:

Gov. Bill Graves put an end ... to speculation about his future when he pledged to serve out his second term, which ends in January 2003.

The governor's disclosure also provides the public with the information to monitor whether his ties to a future employer influence his state policy proposals.

Graves announced at a press conference that he will serve out his remaining 14 1/2 months as Kansas governor. Then, the day after his term ends, he plans to become chief executive officer of the American Trucking Associations.

Graves said he doesn't plan to start briefings for the industry job for another year. He won't sign a contract with the ATA until after he leaves office. Both moves, he said, should prevent him from being distracted from his duties as governor.

State law limits Kansas governors to two consecutive, four-year terms in office. At age 48, Graves has another 15 to 20 years left in his work career. It only stands to reason that a variety of private and public sector employers would recruit a person of his capability and experience well before he leaves office.

Hidden connections or unknown ambitions could influence a governor's stand on any initiative — but, in most situations, voters would only be able to use hindsight to gauge the impact of those relationships.

By laying his cards on the table months in advance of his final year in office, Graves has told every Kansan about his future plans. That sort of frank and full disclosure separates Bill Graves from other politicians.

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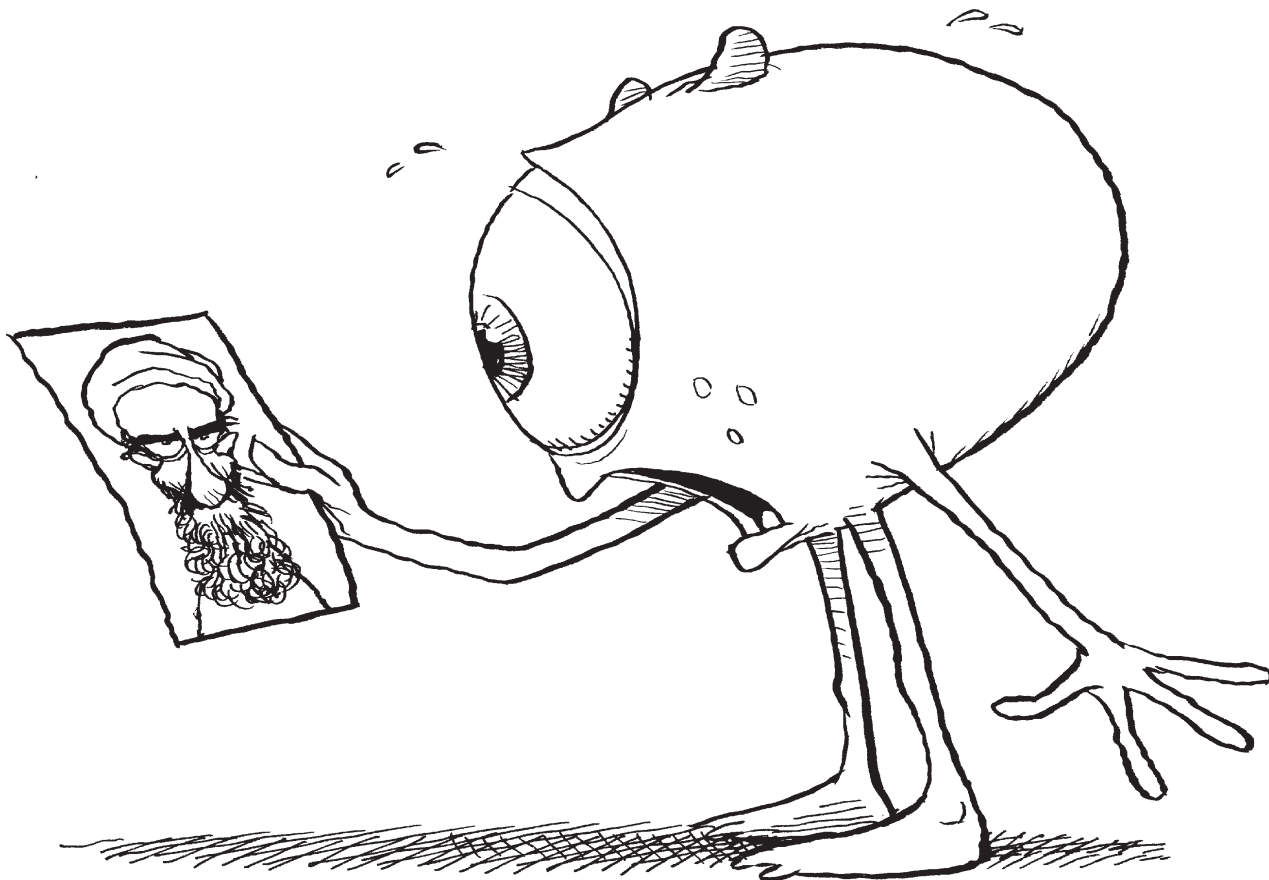
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Focus on the real terror — gun violence

How much of our national resources — money, research, work hours — would you have been willing to spend if it meant saving the thousands of Americans who died from terrorist attacks on Sept. 11?

And what resources would you now allocate to lift the anxiety that those deaths, and the subsequent deaths from anthrax, have generated across the country?

Most of us, I imagine, would spend whatever it would take. What is more valuable than the lives of fathers and mothers and best friends and sons and daughters? What is more precious than living free from daily fear?

Yet, Americans are killed every day on our streets. Their deaths are no less debilitating and tragic to their friends and families than those on Sept. 11. The fear left behind is no less chilling.

Last year alone, more than 10,000 Americans were murdered by gunshots. More than 530,000 victims of violent crimes faced attackers carrying guns. These terrorists don't fit a particular profile. They don't slip into the country on student visas. They don't subscribe to a common set of twisted religious beliefs.

But they take more American lives every single year than any outside terrorists ever have. In fact, since 1965 about 1 million Americans have died of gunshot wounds in our homeland, more than the number of Americans who were killed in all foreign wars during the 20th century (617,000).

"Whole communities have been terrorized by gunfire for a very, very long time," said Philip Cook, Duke University professor and co-author of



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"Gun Violence: The Real Costs." "But this is not just a problem for the poor and disenfranchised. The impact is much broader than the people who are killed. It affects property values, taxes, schools, quality of life."

In the wake of the 5,000 or so deaths on Sept. 11, President Bush allocated \$11 billion for anti-terrorism efforts, which included the creation of a new Office of Homeland Security headed by Tom Ridge. Yet, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can't get even \$10 million from the president to create a national, centralized database on homicides and suicides.

It's astonishing that such a system doesn't yet exist. Researchers and policymakers looking for information on violent deaths have to piece together reports from medical examiners, coroners, police, crime labs, the FBI, the Department of Justice, the death-certificate registrars and the CDC.

"The federal government can tell you how many women dye their hair each year but can't tell you how many women are killed by guns in domestic violence situations," said Stephen Hargarten, director of the Firearm Injury Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Comprehensive information is crucial to formu-

lating policies that would decrease gun violence. "Right now, we're dealing with a lot of rhetoric without any real facts," said David Hemenway, director of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center at the Harvard School of Public Health. "How many assault-weapon killings are there? Where do teen suicide victims get their guns?"

And why, for example, were just two people killed with handguns in New Zealand in 1996, 13 in Australia, 15 in Japan, 30 in Britain and 9,390 in the United States?

When the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration began collecting data on every highway death, the number of deaths dramatically decreased. Policymakers could pinpoint how and why people died in cars and advocate specific reforms, such as seat-belt laws and collapsible steering columns.

Clearly, the feds know no battle can be won without solid facts. Right now, they are desperate for information about the foreign terrorists and the anthrax attacks. Without good info, they can't know who or what they're fighting.

By contrast, information about gun violence is easily attainable but is too scattered to be of much use. The CDC is pushing for \$10 million in the 2002 budget for the National Violent Injury Statistics System, increasing to \$20 million a year thereafter when it is fully operational.

It won't eliminate gun violence. But it might finally give us a fighting chance against a terrorism that is, unfortunately, too distinctly American.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Send comments to her e-mail at joanryan@sfgate.com.

Too nice for your own good



red
green

• north of forty

I think I'm a pretty average person, friendly and relatively easy to get along with. But once in a while, the world sends me a dangerous message. Like, for example, last week when I had to deal with a company that wasn't giving me good service. The nicer and more reasonable I was with them, the more cavalier and dismissive they were with me. When I finally had enough and started ranting about my dissatisfaction and threatening to cancel my business, all of a sudden they began treating me with supreme deference. Once they complied with all my demands, I hung up with the impression that you don't get your way by being thoughtful and reasonable. You get your way by being stubborn and belligerent. Well, I'm here to tell you that although that may work in a business relationship, it's not the way to deal with personal disagreements. I've really learned a lot this week. I've learned that although you need to be firm and aggressive with your suppliers, you need to be charming and persuasive with your significant other. I've also learned that it's almost impossible to sleep on a sectional couch.

THE PHONE PHUTURE

I was having lunch the other day with a few guys. One works for the phone company. One of them is really, really old. So the phone company guy starts talking about all the innovations that are taking place in the telephone world: call answering, call waiting, caller I.D. and Ident-I-Call. Personally, I'm looking for Caller Buzz Off, which is a feature that hangs up automatically when anyone calls. But the old guy asks him what Ident-I-Call

is. The phone guy explains that it's a way of identifying that the phone call is for your wife or your kids so you don't have to bother answering it. Everybody has his or her own ring. The old guy says, "Oh, you mean a party line? Surely they're not charging extra for a party line." The phone guy moves on, telling us about all the features that are coming in the future. He says, "Pretty soon you won't even have to dial. You'll just pick up the phone and say the name of the person you want to call." To which the old guy responds, "Big deal. We had that 75 years ago."

SPEED VS. ACCURACY

These days a lot of emphasis is put on doing things quickly. Don't be fooled. Here is a list of situations where accuracy is far more important than speed:

- Eating fondue.
- Pulling into a garage.
- Performing a vasectomy.
- Getting into a hammock.
- Testifying.
- Zipping up your fly.

THE EXPOSURE OF THE RICH

A lot of people dream about winning the lottery

and what they'd do with the money, but there's a downside to suddenly being rich. When you don't have money, you can keep your priorities to yourself. It's a secret. Nobody really knows what you like and what you don't like. You have a lot of privacy. But once you have a fortune, all of that is gone. Whenever I hear about a lottery winner spray painting "Up Yours" on his boss's house and running off with a swimsuit model in a new Hummer, well, that sends a message. I think you can learn everything there is to know about someone just by watching what he/she does with his/her money. It seems to me that the less money you have, the more mysterious you are. Sadly, every woman I've met is completely unintrigued by this mystery.

Quote of the Day: "Thinking is good but don't overdo it." - Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

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"GUESS WHAT! MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL ISN'T THE ONLY PLACE WHERE 'CONTRACTION' IS GOING ON."

