

# commentary

from other pens...

## Denying education is short-sighted view

**The Topeka Capital Journal on educating children of illegal immigrants:**

Despite a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that forbids it, at least one candidate running for the State Board of Education would like to deny the children of illegal immigrants access to public education.

How short-sighted and mean-spirited.

Connie Morris, herself a teacher, says the cost of educating the children of illegal immigrants is draining state dollars. The St. Francis Republican has no opposition in the November election.

Thankfully, she doesn't speak for every educator.

Milt Pippenger, superintendent at Garden City, deals with many immigrants in his district...

Pippenger, however, doesn't worry about whether they are legal or illegal.

"From a moral standpoint, I owe it to educate every youngster living in my district," he said. "They have no control over what their circumstances are..."

Exactly...

Race and citizenship aside, children who grow up without an education get into trouble that costs the state far more to correct than providing an education does...

Barring children of illegal immigrants access to public schools is wrong. It makes the children pay for the sins of their parents, and it smacks of racism.

**The Garden City Telegram on Ad Astra statue:**

Two items out of Topeka can leave reasonable people scratching their heads.

The first is that work is continuing on erecting a 21-foot, 3-ton statue, called "Ad Astra" atop the Statehouse dome...

It's apparently the only sacred cow in Gov. Bill Graves' effort to pay the state's bills...

And the news doesn't get any better. The other item paints a bleak revenue picture. Tax collections from July 1...through Aug. 31 were nearly \$37 million short of projections made by state officials and university economists in March...

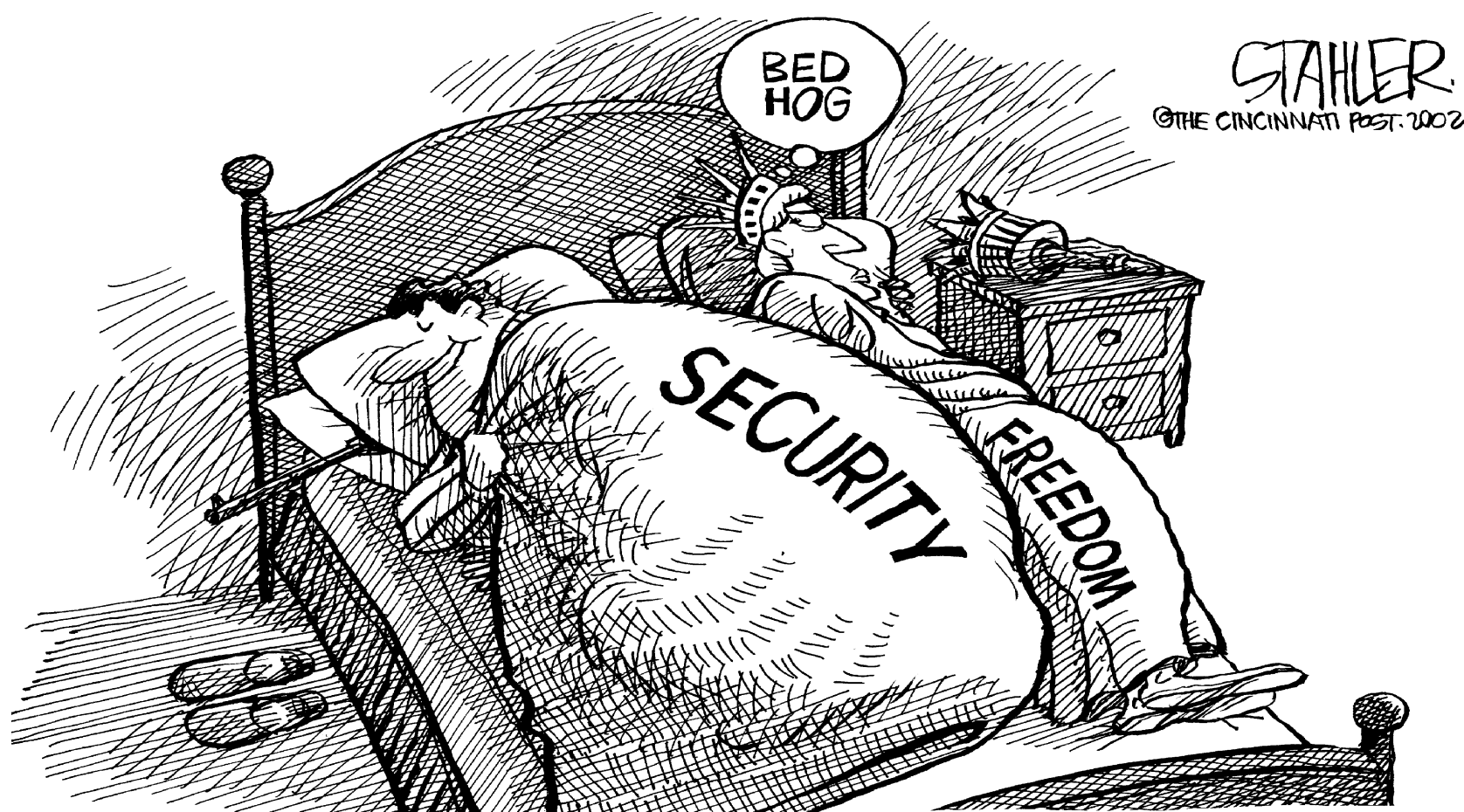
Local governments that rely on state revenues to support their needs are right to wonder about the seeming arrogance of the governor to push the statue project through...

Budget cuts affect citizens directly, in shelved projects or reduced services. It means Kansans, who are paying more in sales taxes to finance government services, will wait longer or go without. It's hard to imagine many Kansans endorsing the statue project while paying more to get less.

It's not that anybody has any real problem with the project. It has its merits and will no doubt be a more attractive element atop the Statehouse than the 1,000-watt light bulb that's there now.

But the timing couldn't be worse.

When people face tough times they make sacrifices, and luxury items are the first to go. The statue isn't a necessity right now, other things are. The money's needed elsewhere.



## The way things are now



joan ryan

• commentary

Ronald Collins wasn't watching the round-the-clock coverage of the Sept. 11 anniversary. He wasn't reflecting on how he has changed, or how America has changed, or how all of us are learning to "cope" and "survive" (including, of course, those who weren't anywhere near New York City or Washington, much less touched by the attacks themselves). Collins wasn't losing himself in the gauzy, slo-mo TV images of the Stars and Stripes rippling in the breeze above ground zero.

"I can't focus on it," he said. "I don't have no choice."

Collins was sitting alone at a worktable in the state employment office at the corner of Turk and Franklin streets in San Francisco. Nearby, people waited quietly in line to take their place at the dozen or so computers, on which they could check job listings and download applications. Some were writing cover letters and resumes. On a long desk at the far wall, folks were hunched over the free phones, following up on interviews and setting up new ones.

Collins, 42, hasn't found much work since earning his bus driver's license more than a year ago. He moves furniture when the crew needs an extra man. He directs cars into parking spaces at Candlestick Park during 49ers games. Nothing regular. In early September last year, he had been interviewing at San Francisco International Airport to drive the bus between the terminals and the long-

term parking lot.

"I was about to get the job, and then everything went kaput," he said, looking up from a small stack of papers.

He was filling out a fax cover sheet with an application to Oakland International Airport. There is a job opening for a shuttle driver. "You learn to take it one day at a time," he said.

I can't say for certain why I ended up at the employment office talking to Collins. I guess I was looking for a counterbalance to the endless Sept. 11 commemorations and self-reflections, which had begun to seem not so much reverent as simply indulgent, a sort of emotional glutony.

It was beginning to remind me of how people can spend hours every week with a psychiatrist examining every nuance of their childhoods in order to become "whole" or to find their "true selves." There is nothing wrong with this. I have tried it a bit myself. But you can pretty much bet such folks aren't squeezing these therapy sessions in between the Laundromat and the unemployment line.

In other words, such an extravagant commitment of time and energy belongs to those who have plenty of both to spare. Collins doesn't. Even if he owned a television, he said he wouldn't be watching today.

"I don't have that luxury," he said, putting down his pen for a minute. "That's taking in too much negative stuff. I have enough to deal with as it is."

Despite the Indian summer weather, Collins wore a red ski jacket over a black, hooded sweatshirt. He kept them on even inside the employment office, a habit developed in the homeless shelters he frequents. Last month, he slept at Mother Brown's, a shelter in San Francisco's Bayview-Hunters Point. Now he's staying mostly at a drop-in center near City Hall.

When he thinks about last Sept. 11, it still doesn't seem quite real to him.

He thought it was fake at first, "some high drama to get ratings." He was scared, like everybody else. But he had to move on. The fear and uncertainty that fill his life have to do with finding a job and a place to live. There is little room left over for worries about terrorist attacks.

"This is the way things are now," he said with a light shrug. "What happened last year, happened. Nothing I can do about it. Nothing I can do to change it. I have to keep on going."

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

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## A year since Sept. 11



doug stephens

• wisdom from babes

The anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks has come and gone, and it might be a good idea to see how the world has changed in the past year.

Honestly, there's not much change. People are still people. Better columnists than me have written about the proliferation of flags in the weeks and months following the attacks, many of which are now stored in basements and attics, only to see light on holidays.

Many have commented that the events "which will change the world forever," seem to be falling further from our minds every day.

It's been pointed out that there was a period of about a month where people would smile at their neighbors and strangers on the street, but now most folks seem as crusty as ever.

Tragic events come and go, and except for those who were immediately touched, most people soon put them out of their minds and go about their normal lives.

There were gatherings and activities on the 11th, including some good ones right here in Goodland, but I predict that in a few years they won't bring any more attention than Veteran's Day — important to a few, but ignored by the majority.

I don't know if it's sad or not, but it is the way of the world. Life goes on.

There is one change that scares me, though. The government's efforts to prevent another attack are bordering on creating a police state.

There was a proposed program after the attacks called TIPS (the acronym escapes me) which would have created a network of spies and informers of normal citizens, especially those with access to people's houses like repair men and construction workers. These citizens would be paid for gathering information about "suspicious" activities.

Sounds familiar. I think I heard of something like it behind the iron curtain. It's been blocked, for

now, but some yammerhead congressman will propose it, or an identical cousin, sometime again. It might even pass next time.

Folks in Goodland were upset when neighbors were turning in neighbors for watering violations last month. Imagine if making a derogatory comment about a government plan could mark you as a terrorist. That would be a real police state.

Six weeks after the attacks, Congress passed the ironically named Patriot Act, which gives federal law enforcement officers unprecedented powers to tap phones and monitor the Internet, and gave the FBI the power to force bookstores and libraries to give up the names of their customers.

Some congressmen said, more or less, "Oh, we just need that for a little while, you know, just until we catch the terrorists."

I guess they never heard that there is nothing more permanent than a temporary emergency.

Two American citizens are being held by the government, not for committing a crime, but because they are suspected of terrorist activities. They aren't allowed to call their lawyers, and their stay is indefinite. The executive branch of our government is claiming the power to grab and question anyone they suspect of collaborating with terrorists, and the judicial branch is being told to butt out. Does this scare any one else but me?

There is an editor of one of our sister newspapers, an intelligent man I have a lot of respect for. He isn't too concerned about what the government is doing. He said that he is willing to give up civil liberties if it means lives will be safeguarded.

He is older, wiser and smarter than me, but he is dead wrong. Giving too much power to any group, including our government, is more dangerous than terrorists ever could be.

Let's say, for the sake of argument, that those who represent us are all angels who would never abuse their power. When they leave office, who is going to replace them? Ordinary men and women. Not evil, just people.

Give any person, or group, unlimited power, and they are going to make changes for what they consider the better. Their better might be a lot different than yours or mine. Stalin wanted to make the world better for himself. Hitler wanted to make the world better for a select few.

The worst tyrants seized power after an emergency, when the people let the government take their freedoms so they could have security. So by giving up civil liberties, the American people are inviting a tyrant to take over.

It's a scary world. We have to deal with anthrax, AIDS, terrorists, murders, forest fires, con artists, rapes, viruses of all shapes and sizes, child molesters and all manner of other horrible things. But we are grownups. We can't hide behind mama's apron, and we shouldn't turn to the government as a surrogate father.

The attacks were tragic, yes. They were horrible and such things should never have happened. But the way to deal with them is not to give up our liberties.

We should remember those who were murdered, and honor them as victims. We should not let our government use them as bargaining chips for more power.

### berry's world



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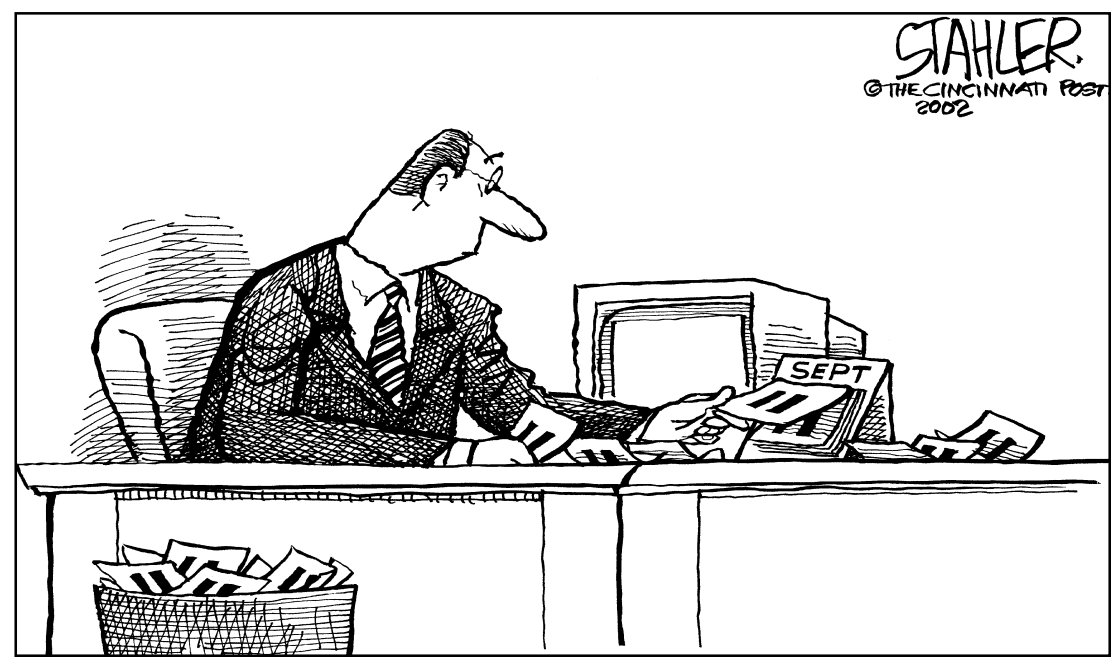
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