

# commentary

from other pens...

## Dems need South win after midterm elections

Democrats' hopes of making a strong comeback in the South after decades of declining fortunes took a beating on Election Day.

The party lost incumbent governors in Alabama and South Carolina, not to mention an incumbent governor and senator in Georgia.

Now they're closely watching the Senate race in Louisiana, where Democratic incumbent Sen. Mary Landrieu is trying to stem the tide of losses for Southern Democrats. A runoff election between Landrieu and Republican Suzanne Haik Terrell is being held Dec. 7.

"A December win in the South would certainly bolster the spirits of Democrats nationally," said Michael Meehan, a senior adviser to the Democratic National Committee.

The party's national chairman, Terry McAuliffe, boasted earlier this year that people could drive from the banks of the Mississippi River to the banks of the Chesapeake Bay while driving only through states with Democratic governors — Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia.

They can still do that, but their route will have to shift north through Tennessee, which elected Democrat Phil Bredesen as governor this year.

When Democrats won the governorships of Alabama and South Carolina in 1998, it was less a sign of the party's resurgence in the South than a sign of unusual factors in those states — vulnerable GOP incumbents and trendy Democratic issues with voter appeal, like lotteries.

Democrats Jim Hodges of South Carolina and Don Siegelman of Alabama followed the lead of one-time Democratic Georgia Gov. Zell Miller, who started a lottery with proceeds going solely for education. Both Hodges and Siegelman won in states that lean strongly Republican.

"Democrats have put a lot of eggs in the lottery scholarship basket," said Ralph Reed, state Republican chairman in Georgia. "Every governor tried to make the election about the lottery and scholarships, but that idea ran out of steam."

Democrats had encouragement in the South, with the victories of Mark Pryor as Arkansas senator and Bredesen as governor of Tennessee.

But the Nov. 5 defeats of Hodges, Siegelman and Georgia's Gov. Roy Barnes and Sen. Max Cleland were dispiriting for Democrats, who saw much of the progress they'd made in a tough region vanish in one day.

Merle Black, an Emory University political scientist and co-author of "The Rise of Southern Republicans," said the region remains competitive despite the Republicans' good year.

"Each party is capable of having a good year," Black said. "But the Republicans do have a tremendous asset in President George W. Bush, who is incredibly popular across the South."

Reed, a key figure in Republican victories in Georgia, said Republicans were helped by strong candidates who were first elected to Congress in the mid-1990s. Those GOP candidates are getting better at offering a positive message that appeals to moderate swing voters, he said.

Don Fowler, a former national chairman of the Democratic Party from South Carolina, said Republicans have an edge in the 11 states of the old Confederacy, but in other Southern states Democrats remain competitive.

In Georgia, Louisiana and North Carolina, Democrats can muster the support to win statewide more easily than in Alabama and South Carolina.

In Louisiana, Landrieu has one of the storied names in state politics, a moderate voting record and some powerful allies, but she's having to work to rally strong support from black voters.

Republicans, trying to paint Landrieu as too liberal for the state, are throwing their resources behind Terrell and are hoping Bush will rally voters before the runoff. Republicans have 51 seats after the November elections, even without a victory in Louisiana.

Landrieu, a freshman senator, won 46 percent of the vote Nov. 5, but three Republicans combined to get 51 percent of the vote in Louisiana's unique open primary. While Landrieu had a lead in a recent poll, Republicans are confident they can rally a majority with the president's help.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Will Lester covers politics and polling for *The Associated Press*.



## Don't let Thanksgiving get squeezed out

I don't know about you, but Thanksgiving is becoming my favorite holiday.

It becomes more dear to me every year — as it is squeezed out by Halloween and Christmas commercialism.

Sadly, I heard my first Christmas carol this year on October 20th, even before I noticed Christmas displays in the stores.

I urge you all to take some time to think about your Thanksgiving list. I'm certainly going to this year as I get to travel to see children and grandchildren. Stand firm for Thanksgiving; don't lose it in the crush of football, ghosts, goblins, and Christmas tinsel.

Here are some Thanksgiving thoughts to help your meditation and gratitude:

"The words 'Happy Thanksgiving' conjure up more than a wish for a gala affair; they call us to be thankful for God's abounding love. This love is supremely expressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As we celebrate this blessed day and



**lorna gt**

• commentary

all that it means, let us remember that it is God who richly gives us all good things to enjoy." — Robert B. Gardner

"The message of stewardship comes through Mr. Gardner's words - 'It is God who richly gives.' Nothing we have, are, or hope to be comes from us, our family, our friends, or any place or anybody but God. Gratitude is an attitude." — Doug Jones

For what are you thankful this year? I hope you remember that all you have come to you as gifts from God. They are yours to love and enjoy for a time. Don't put off being grateful for them. Don't assume you have tomorrow to tell

those you love how much they mean to you. Life itself is a gift that can end at any moment.

Don't waste time on anger and self-righteousness. The God of past history and future possibilities asks you to celebrate the right now with God and with those around you. Don't limit your gratitude and celebration to just your near and dear. Stretch your hearts to include and invite those who aren't as fortunate to share in your riches.

"I give thanks to my God for all my memories of you, happy at all times in all the prayers I offer for all of you. And this is my prayer for you: May your love grow richer and richer yet, in the fullness of its knowledge and the depth of its perception, so that you may learn to prize what is of value. May nothing cloud your conscience or hinder your progress. May you reap, through Jesus Christ, the full harvest...to God's honor and praise." Paraphrase of Philippians 1:3, 9-11 by unknown author.

Happy Thanksgiving to you all!

## Not sold in any store!



**jim mullen**

• the village idiot

First there was the dumbbell, then the ThighMaster, followed by the Stepper and the Exerstick — all based on the scientific principle that there's nothing so silly that it can't be sold as overpriced exercise equipment on television. With that in mind, it gives us great pleasure to introduce the most exciting development in personal exercisers since the Abdominizer — The Chair!

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Ted T., a cable news executive says, "I learned how to use it in less than 15 minutes."

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## The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association  
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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions call to: [gdnadv@nwkansas.com](mailto:gdnadv@nwkansas.com)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$25; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$79. Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. By mail daily in Kansas, Colorado: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

Incorporating: **The Sherman County Herald**  
THE **STAR**  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
1935-1989 1994-2001

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## Could you vote to impose the death penalty?

Could you sit on a jury and vote to take a murderer's life?

Could any of us?

Who's to say, unless and until we get the opportunity to make that decision. Most of us will never be asked.

In a way, though, we are all part of the jury. Our society sanctions the death penalty, and we all have a stake in what happens.

There's no evidence, for instance, that the threat of the death penalty ever persuaded anyone from murder.

People who kill either think they won't be caught, or they don't care.

You have to be crazy to go around killing other people, at least to some extent, but that doesn't mean that every murderer is legally insane — or shouldn't get the death penalty. In fact, you can argue that anyone so inhumane deserves to be eliminated.

Perhaps the most persuasive evidence against the death penalty is the number of mistakes the system has made, probably innocent people who wind up on death row. Blame it on the imperfect science of police work, on incompetent or over-eager prosecution, whatever you will. When a man spends 10 or 20 years on death row, only to be conclusively shown to be innocent, something is wrong.

Yet I can't escape the idea that there are times when the death penalty is more than appropriate.



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

Take, for instance, the prison inmate in Colorado who killed a guard a couple of months ago. He told investigators he thought it was the quickest way to get a transfer to another prison. He just killed the first guard he could get his hands on.

Are we supposed to grant this guy's wish, or maybe just get rid of him before he kills another guard?

Then there are the Carr brothers down in Wichita, convicted of killing four people after forcing them to commit sex acts, raping and robbing them, shooting them and leaving them for dead in a field. One woman survived, ran for help and later identified them.

Is there any reason to give them another chance, no matter how slim, to entertain themselves?

Oh, the defense claims they had a bad childhood. I'd guess those people out in that field thought so.

How about John Robinson, the "barrel-body" killer, who lured women to Kansas City to have sex, killed and robbed them, then stashed their bodies in his storage unit?

Does a man who'd do that deserve to walk the face

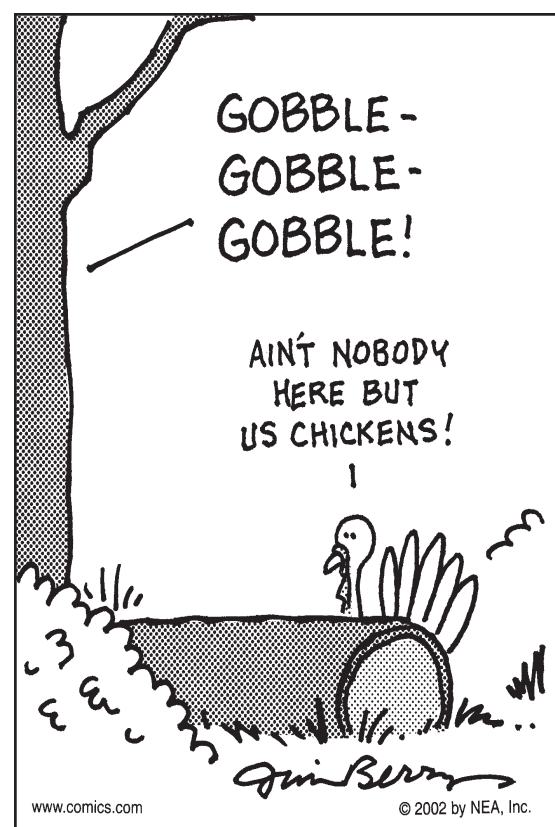
of the earth, even in prison?

I don't know. I think I could vote to kill these guys. Not every murderer, but the worst, the cruel, the vicious, the unfeeling and uncaring.

I don't want to ever have that job. I'd have to hear the evidence and know the law and be sure it was the right thing.

But I think I could do it. I think I might. And, sometimes at least, I think we should.

### berry's world



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