

from our viewpoint...

Hasty reactions create bad laws

The president and many in Congress are running around worrying that the sky is falling when the only thing falling on their heads are bad ideas.

The president has called for a Constitutional amendment to stop homosexuals — gays and lesbians — from marrying each other.

This is swinging a steam shovel to kill a fly.

A Constitutional amendment is a big deal. In more than 200 years, there have only been 27. They have been for such things as giving the vote to minorities and women, allowing citizens to disagree with the government and giving the states certain rights, though admittedly those seem to be getting fewer and fewer.

A Constitutional amendment is not needed to solve every problem in our society. The “problem” of some states allowing same-sex couples to “marry” is not that big a deal. It’s a point of view; a reason for easily excitable people to get all aflutter.

Excuse us, folks, but this is a non issue. Allow the states to do their thing. It doesn’t make any difference. It’s not skinning our nose at all.

There is no such thing a marriage between two same-sex people. Marriage is the union of a man and woman before God, period.

That said, there is no reason two people who are committed to each other cannot join in a legal union. This isn’t marriage, but a legal contract similar to marriage, the purchase of a business or adoption.

As for insurance benefits and Social Security, it is up to those who administer these programs to decide if they will allow partners in “legal unions” to have benefits under the program.

Disney has long allowed partners of any sex to share in its benefit programs. That is a corporate decision made to attract talented people to the company with benefits they couldn’t get most other places. This is perfectly legal and probably a good decision for Disney.

Social Security does not allow benefits to “legal unions,” whether they be same-sex couples or those of opposite sex, for partners who have never married. This, too, is a legal decision, made to protect the program.

Neither Disney nor Social Security is wrong. They have different aims and both should be allowed to do what is best for itself.

If the federal government would just forget about gays and lesbians marrying, the whole issue would die down. Yes, some couples would still go to California to get “married,” but no one would care except them.

It’s time the federal government got its nose out of others’ business and went back to solving the problems that need a steam shovel — like health care, foreign policy and where will the next parking garage in Washington be. — *Cynthia Haynes*

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Democrats do have a chance



tom betz

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up to 15 people scrambling to seek either the Republican or Democratic nomination. There will be a lot of national attention focused on the race, and both parties will be pushing to put their best candidate on the ballot for November.

We worked for the election of Sen. Campbell many years ago when he first ran for the House as a Democrat, and were disappointed when he deserted those who elected him to switch parties.

He came to Lamar for a visit shortly after making the switch, and we had an opportunity to talk about it. I told him I was disappointed, but he said he felt it was the best way to get some things done for the Western Slope of Colorado. He said he could have a bigger impact by being in the Republican majority.

We disagreed on that point, but during his years in office, I felt he was one of the most honest politicians I had dealt with. I think he will be missed for many reasons.

I have been in Kansas for over seven years, and realize that political party identification is not a big thing in the daily stream of events,

but I will be proud to travel to Colby on Saturday to attend the Democratic caucus. It will give me an opportunity to meet some of the other hidden Dems from this part of the state.

While the primary system appears to have given the Democratic nomination to Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), the remaining states must continue the process to prepare for the state and national conventions.

With Kerry solidly in front, the attention is swinging to the head-to-head battle between him and President George Bush, but it takes a lot of behind-the-scenes organization and legal steps to get all 50 states into the nomination process. In many ways, the process of getting to the nomination is more fun than the grinding campaign stretch to the general election in November.

There are indications this will be as close a race as the one four years ago, and it will be interesting to watch the twists and turns the two sides will take. And it will be interesting — if not disappointing — to see how the candidacy of Ralph Nader affects in the general election. Will he have enough clout to throw the election to Bush by taking votes away from Kerry, or will he be seen as the least evil choice and throw the election into legal turmoil like we watched four year ago?

We have about nine months to unravel the answer. — *Tom Betz*

Drug discount cards will be available this year

Medicare-Approved discount cards will be available this year to help you save on prescription drugs.

Medicare will contract with private companies to offer new drug discount cards until a Medicare prescription drug benefit starts in 2006. A discount card with Medicare’s seal of approval can help you save 10-25 percent on prescriptions.

Please beware you may be approached by what seems to be a reputable company representing Medicare to purchase a prescription plan or card. Watch carefully that any card you accept or purchase has the Medicare seal of approval printed on it. Bogus cards which may be available for purchase offer little if any purchasing power. Are they legal? Yes, because they do offer some sort of a benefit, even if it is presented in a very vague or misleading way.

After prescription drug benefits are added to Medicare in 2006, all people with Medicare will be able to enroll in plans that cover prescription drugs. Plans might vary, but in general, this is how they will work:

- You will choose prescription drug plan and pay a premium of about \$35 a month
- You will pay the first \$250 (called a “deductible”).
- Medicare then will pay 75 percent of costs between \$250 and \$2,250. You will pay only 25 percent of these costs.
- You will pay 100 percent of the drug costs above \$2,250 until you reach \$3,600 in out-of-pocket spending.
- Medicare will pay about 95 percent of the costs after you have spent \$3,600.

Some prescription drug plans may have options to help you pay the out-of-pocket costs.



jim morrison

• capitol review

A few controversial issues yet to be debated, include licensing of abortion providers (not likely to become law), changes in school finance (I don’t expect a new law, only discussion and debate), a constitutional amendment which says beginning on July 1, 2005, the state must have prior voter approval for:

- Any new state tax.
- Any tax rate increase.
- Extension of any expiring tax.
- Any tax policy change which would directly cause a net tax revenue gain.
- Any new bonds issued, except for refinancing existing bonds.

where to write

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