

from our viewpoint...

Honors for a lady who kept her seat

Growing up in the '60s, we watched the efforts of the “freedom riders,” as they were called, after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Birmingham, Ala. bus.

Parks' courage in staying where she was seated sparked the imagination of hundreds of people who traveled from across the country to ride the buses in the South in defiance of segregation laws. Parks lived to see the day when much of the hate against blacks has been overcome, but there are people today who continue to preach intolerance and racial or religious prejudice.

After her actions, Parks moved to Michigan to get away from the pressures of living where she had taken a stand for her people's freedom. She won, but not without some personal sacrifice.

Having her lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda is a special honor, and shows the highest regard for the actions she took to break the racial barriers 40 years ago.

As we pay honor to Parks for her courage, it is hard for us not to think of the personal sacrifice of another American woman who has been thwarted in her attempt to take a seat on the United States Supreme Court.

Harrier Miers may not have been everybody's choice to succeed Justice Sandra O'Connor, but her withdrawal Thursday came after attacks on her by the religious right and the extreme right wing of the Republican Party. The attacks centered on the fact that, since she was never a judge, there was no way to predict what she would do as a member of the highest court of the land.

Because of the manner of the attacks, the American people will not have a chance to know any more about her beliefs.

We watched as President Bush had to announce the withdrawal of Miers from consideration. Being a loyal friend, she quietly submitted her request and went back to her job as the White House counsel.

The litmus test used against her is the same one that comes up every time. Chief Justice John Roberts found a way to sidestep the abortion questions in his hearing. The difference is, since he had been a judge for some years, there was rulings people could dissect in an attempt to divine his probable leanings.

The religious right is convinced President Bush must appoint a Supreme Court judge who is anti-abortion to give the court the conservative balance to overthrow Roe vs. Wade, the ruling that allowed women legally to decide whether to have an abortion.

Ever since, the religious right has been pushing to reverse this ruling, and they believe Bush owes them this appointment because they helped him get elected.

Miers was an unknown quantity in many ways because she had not been a judge, but she does have extensive legal experience. It is possible she would have brought a fresh approach to the court.

Bush is expected to quickly pick another nominee to fill the court position, and take the focus off the indictment and resignation of Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis Libby, on charges of obstructing justice and lying to investigators.

Parks should be remembered for the stand she was willing to take and the pressures she faced. Parks will rest in peace knowing she gave it her best, and that the world was changed by her actions.. We will remember Miers as the loyal counsel who almost made judicial history. —Tom Betz

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Why Clinton wouldn't call

Former FBI director Louis Freeh writes movingly of his disappointment that President Bill Clinton did little or nothing to intervene with the Saudi monarchy to let his agents question the perpetrators of the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, but he is at a loss to understand the president's conduct.

In an earlier terror attack, the Saudis cut off the heads of the suspected terrorists before the FBI could question them. To avoid a repeat, Freeh went to the president and emphasized the importance of intervening with the Saudis to allow questioning.

The Saudis, of course, didn't want the FBI interrogating their suspects for fear that the depth of the al Qaida network that had grown in Saudi Arabia might be exposed to American — and world — view. But why did Clinton do nothing in the face of the appeals of his FBI chief?

Freeh implies that lust for donations to his presidential library might have entered into the equation, but the Khobar attack materialized long before Clinton was focused on his retirement. His gaze was, instead, squarely fixed on the next election — and the soaring gas prices that represented a mortal peril to his chances.

Because his 1993 deficit-reduction package (sounds quaint now, doesn't it?) had raised the gas tax a nickel, Clinton was worried that he'd get blamed for any price spike. A nominal increase in car-licensing fees had cost him the



dick morris

- commentary

Arkansas governorship in 1980, and the lesson he drew — don't mess with people's cars — resonated deeply in his political world view.

Originally, Clinton had resisted raising gas prices and tried instead to pass Al Gore's well-nigh-incomprehensible plan to tax energy based on its BTU output. But nobody understood the tax and Congress, reverting to the tried and true, raised gas taxes instead. Ever since, Clinton had watched gas prices intently.

"If gas goes down or stays the same, I'll be OK," he told me. "But if it goes up, I'm cooked."

And in the spring of 1996, as the summer driving season approached, gas prices were spiking. Republicans, eager to tie the prices to the Clinton tax hike, introduced legislation to repeal the nickel increase and forced Clinton to defend it even as prices rose.

Clinton was obsessed with gas prices. We would talk about them all the time. Every poll probed the issue and measured the level of popular animosity over their increase and the extent to which Clinton himself got the blame.

What is Delay's message?

To the Editor:

I try to keep up with the news, but I'm having a problem understanding the message Tom Delay, Republican of Texas, is trying to convey to the general public.

Is the message, Judges don't rule in compliance with the law, they rule according to their politics?

Is that the message?.

Mary Kelling
Kanorado

To the Editor:

There is no control via the ballot box.

Many people have become so discouraged by years of fiscal abuse by elected officials at all levels of government that they no longer vote. Not all, but many elected officials do not have the interests of the people at heart. Instead they are interested in maintaining their power by staying in office, and thus they become easy marks for special interest groups.

The people deserve the right to have control over the amount of money the government takes from them. Slow economic growth means that taxpayers need their money more than ever. Low population numbers means there are less of us to shoulder the load of excess government spending. Those who we elect to office are not interested in less government; they are interested in job security. They have had years to prove a willingness to cut back and it has not happened. It is high time that control of the purse strings is given back to those who have to provide the funds.



from our readers

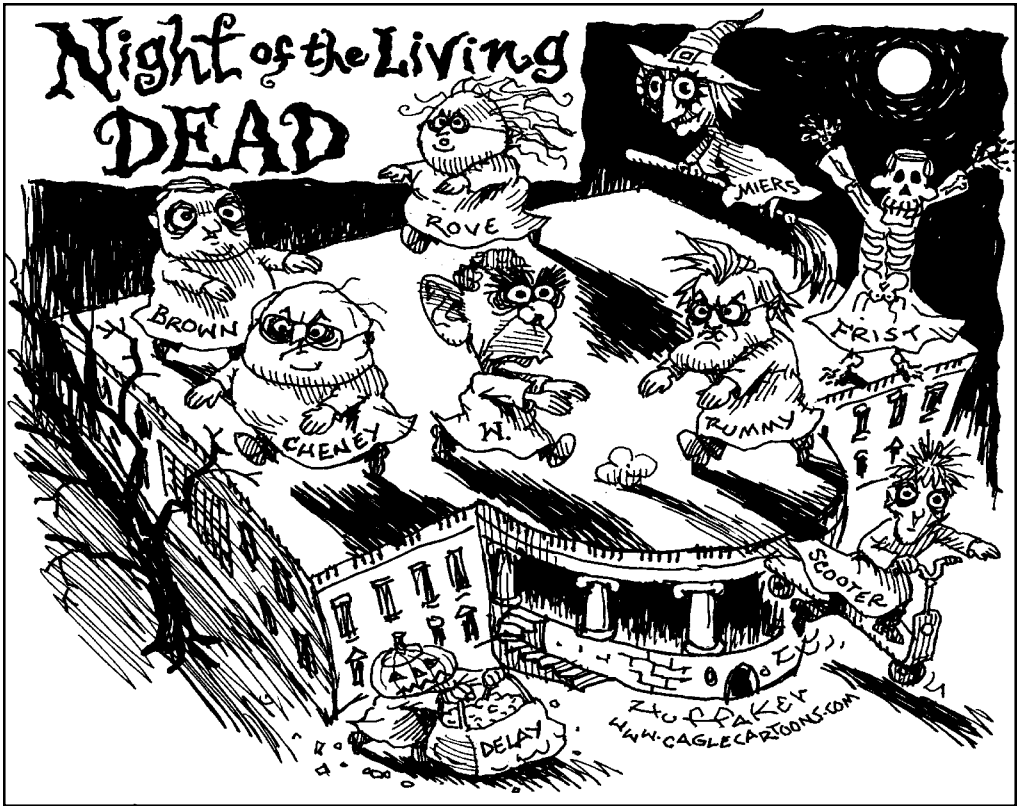
- to the editor

The Taxpayer's Bill of Rights is one instrument that enables taxpayers to have more con-

trol over government spending. All concerned taxpayers should give this bill their consideration.

Harry Bishop
Goodland

PS: Thirty states have some kind of spending limit formula. Kansas is one of 20 that do not.



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