

from our viewpoint...

State tax on porn remains stupid idea

We are rerunning this editorial, which first appeared in November 2004. It won first place in the Editorial Writing division of the National Newspaper Association's Better Newspapers Contest. This was the second year that editor Steve Haynes has won this award in the contest for weekly newspapers under 3,000 circulation. The bill failed, by the way.

Of all the dumb ideas. The same people who have been trying to get grand juries to investigate porno shops down along I-70 now want the state to have a 15 or 25 percent tax on pornography.

Excuse us. Wouldn't the state wind up having a vested interest in pornography, even as it has bought into gambling, liquor and other once-forbidden vices?

And once hooked on the revenue, wouldn't the state then have to protect and promote its porn industry to keep the schools open?

Get real. There have got to be better ways to raise money for the state of Kansas.

Pornography supporting our schools? Wouldn't we have a hard time telling kids not to buy the stuff if it was good enough to pay their teachers?

You have to wonder what kind of world we live in when people come up with that kind of stuff.

We don't have much porn up here, and it's probably just as well. In the cities, and along I-70, though, it's a flourishing trade.

Why porn shops appeal to interstate travelers is a mystery, but the highways in other states are loaded with them. Kansas has but a few. That's enough to offend some people around Abilene, who have been pushing county attorneys to investigate, call a grand jury or just prosecute the stores.

The Supreme Court has made it pretty difficult to prosecute porno dealers, though, and even grand juries are having a tough time finding any traction.

Discouraged, perhaps, by the legal morass, the anti-porn forces came up with the tax scheme. It's similar to the way the anti-saloon movement gave up and proposed a stiff tax on liquor.

You can't have it both ways, though. You're either against pornography, or you think it's a good revenue source. If the state taxes the stuff, it in effect becomes a partner with the makers.

So Kansas winds up in bed with the porno industry? That's a funny place for the state to be.

The state doesn't need money that badly. Let the porno shops alone. Keep them out on the freeways and out of towns, away from schools and churches.

If people want to buy that stuff, in a free society, who are we to say no?

But should the state have a vested interest in the porn business?

No. It's not exactly clean money, is it? And Kansas has bigger fish to fry. — Steve Haynes



Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 10/22/06



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Compassionate torturer

I always tremble like a hamster duct-taped to a rototiller when George Bush struts into the spotlight on the world stage, as he did recently when addressing the U.N.

It's the same feeling I get when San Francisco Giants closer Armando Benitez takes the mound in a save situation. It's a cover-your-eyes and peek-through-your-fingers sort of thing. A breath-holding, whispered-prayers kind of time. Exciting, but not in what you call your good way. In a sweaty way.

Especially now, after six years of being a reluctant part of the studio-audience laugh track for his sitcom, we've seen his work, we know too much.

So many things could screw up. What if the teleprompter goes awry and he tries to exercise his ad lib skills? Could he drag us into a war by mistake? Again? Suppose the first ADHD POTUS succumbs to the urge to wander around the General Assembly and begins to apply unrequested back rubs to female heads of state? Can a country be prosecuted for sexual harassment?

What if a second Red Bull encourages him to attempt to pronounce Iranian President Ahmadinejad's name? In front of people? And what about his safety — aren't we exposing him to unnecessary risk? Say he gets the



will durst

● raging moderate

munchies, pops some pretzels and starts choking. Again.

Might not the U.N. EMTs remember previously forgotten appointments once they discover the identity of their prone, blue patient?

Or, god forbid, he'll start to lecture the international community on the subtle intricacies of the "moral high ground," which apparently means speaking from the taller pile of dead enemy bodies. Or even worse, fleshes out his "compassionate torture" concept. Explain how America would never torture people. We just don't want to rule it out. How what we utilize is properly called "enhanced interrogation techniques." So having those car battery cables attached to that man's nipples... isn't torture, just "portable energy amplification."

I'm sure getting branded "the devil" by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in New York was easy duty compared to a week of being branded "torture king" by renegade conservatives in D.C. Besides, we all know the presi-

dent isn't the devil. Cheney is. The president is one of his eager little helpers. Like Renfield to Dracula. Kevin J. O'Connor in "The Mummy." The Nazi-helping monkey in "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

Its obvious the president assumed his retroactive, military tribunal reform bill was going to be a slam dunk from a stepladder, but was confronted, not by obstructionist Democrats who regularly quiver in their frilly underwear when not sitting down to pee, but by three Republican senators who claim that if this bill passes, hold for it... our troops will be endangered.

You got to love the irony of the president having that phrase batted back into his face. And waving the oversized racquet is John McCain himself, whose graduate degree in the subject trumps the president's skimming of the course description in the syllabus. We're talking about someone who's whose lived through torture. And no, I'm not talking about the 2000 Republican primary in South Carolina.

Mister President, please leave the torture business to people with some experience in it — Karl Rove, Howie Mandel and the U.N. translators of Hugo Chavez's speech.

Will Durst is a political comedian who has performed around the world. E-mail Will at durst@willdurst.com.

A little straight talk wouldn't hurt

Listening to the Democrats complain about the administration's handling of the nation's security had me thinking. If, as they charge, the president is using it as a political issue, I really hope he is.

I also thought that President Bush needs to stop preaching to the choir — to his rock-hard supporters — and begin to speak to all the American people about just what's at stake in the war on terror.

He needs to tell Americans flat out exactly where the Democrats stand on national security. They oppose the wiretaps of al-Qaida terrorists communicating with agents and sympathizers in the U.S., they are opposed to the tracking of the movement of terrorist funds across the globe, they opposed the Patriot Act — all programs that are designed to protect the American people.

He needs to pound home again and again that these programs have kept America safe from other 9/11s for five long years since the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

And he needs to remind the people that should the Democrats win control of the Congress, all of these vital programs will be gutted and al-Qaida's determination to strike at the U.S. homeland will be reinvigorated.

When he speaks about national security, the president limits the scope of his audience by addressing his Republican base, which does not need to hear what he has to say about national security. They already know what the score is there.

He needs to aim at all of the American people, Democrats and Republicans and those in between. He has to take the gloves off and punch away, showing how the Democrats' glaring weaknesses on the issue of national security will put the nation in danger.

For too long now the Democrats have been allowed to peddle the fiction that the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism are two different struggles, when even al-Qaida's top leaders such as Osama bin Laden, clearly state the opposite. Even if Harry Reid, Howard Dean and the pitiful Nancy Pelosi can't recognize that both are part of the same struggle — the war on terrorism — bin Laden and his fellow thugs know that the opposite is true.

The president needs to stress that one reason why America has been spared more 9/11s is that al-Qaida had been forced to concentrate



michael reagan

● making sense

its resources on the insurgency in Iraq. They simply don't have the resources to fight a two-front war.

Yet the Democrats would like nothing better than to cut and run in Iraq and turn that hapless country into an Islamofascist headquarters for the jihad. Iraq in the hands of al-Qaida would create chaos throughout the Middle East.

Of course, they won't admit that their policy is to abandon the people of Iraq to the mercies of al-Qaida by withdrawing our troops by a date certain. They won't call their policy a planned withdrawal — they call it a redeployment, suggesting that our troops would be redeployed to another part of the Middle East close by Iraq from where they could re-enter that country if the need arose.

They ignore the fact that not one of the neigh-

boring countries wants U.S. troops within their borders. Rep. John Murtha, however, let the cat out of the bag when he suggested redeployment to Formosa, which is just a tad too far away from Iraq, like about 7,000 miles too far. To Democrats, it appears as if that's just a hop, skip and a jump.

The president needs to take the fight to the Democrats. They are not his friends, no matter how much he wishes they were. They are his enemies and he must remind the public exactly where the Democratic party stands and just how much more vulnerable their politically driven policies would make this nation.

Americans need to ask themselves just who they think the President of Iran, Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, the leadership of Hezbollah and Hamas would vote for in Congressional elections on Nov. 7. If you think the answer is all of the above, you better vote for the party they want to lose.

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