

## Patriot Act sounds good, but name hides bad ideas

Most Americans say they support the so-called Patriot Act, but the truth is, most people don't have a clue what the act involves.

The name sounds nice, and that's good enough for 64 percent of us, a University of Connecticut poll shows.

Of course, only 42 percent could identify the main purpose of the law as enhancing surveillance powers for federal law enforcement agencies.

The poll also shows that, the more people understand this law, the less they like it.

Most of us, 81 percent, are OK with the provision that allows federal agencies to use information gathered from foreign intelligence activities in domestic criminal investigations. To most people, that only makes sense, though it's long been illegal.

It means, if the CIA overhears terrorists plotting a bombing in the U.S., the FBI can move in and use the information to make a case against the bombers.

A two-thirds majority agrees with a provision allowing the government to collect names and addresses from Internet communications in criminal investigations.

A section which allows federal agents to tap any phone a subject uses, rather than having to name each number in a court order, also draws wide support, 62 percent. It just makes sense to get one warrant for one bad guy.

When it comes to allowing agents to get people's library records without telling them, though, only 53 percent say it's OK.

We suppose there is some legitimate reason to check out the "Radical's Guide to Bomb Making," but we can't say right now what it is.

Still, will we get on an FBI watch list if we read the Koran?

Just 43 percent support requiring banks to turn over records without a court order.

Why not get a court order? It's not that hard. Searching American homes without telling the occupants doesn't draw much support, just 23 percent. Common sense has not left the American people.

Still, there is some scary stuff here.

A vast majority of Americans say they support this law with the patriotic name, though few of us know what it really means.

Few understand that it means your librarian or banker may be spying on you, turning your information over to some federal agency.

When people know about this law, though, many parts don't sound so nice.

The Patriot Act — high sounding, but not so high in purpose. Many provisions have to be reauthorized by Congress, and some of them ought not to be.

When the law was passed, the Sept. 11 attacks were fresh in everyone's minds. Few asked questions.

Now, though, people have a better grip on the law, and many Americans know which parts ought to be scrapped. Congress needs to listen to them.

— Steve Haynes

## Who could prepare for this?

There will be many heroic stories from New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, but the rap is that help came too late.

There is a lot of finger-pointing, a lot of complaints. The recrimination will go on for years, obscuring a very real problem.

Let's face it: no nation is prepared for a disaster of this size.

Katrina may be the worst natural disaster in our history, certainly the most overwhelming since the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, which may have killed around 2,500 and spawned a fire which leveled the city.

Yet the fire moved slowly, and most citizens were able to get out of the way. In New Orleans, those who stayed behind were stuck: no communications, no power, no water, no sewers, no food.

There will be a report. There will be a death count, probably in the thousands, easily surpassing San Francisco and New York on Sept. 11, 2002.

Who's to blame?

An act of God, you might say, a hurricane bigger and stronger than most, aimed square at the most vulnerable city in the nation. Thousands fled during the evacuation, taking with them what they could. Too many stayed behind.

Like San Francisco, New Orleans withstood the initial shock. The next day, when two levees collapsed, floodwater inundated most of the central city.

Was help too slow in arriving? Even the president says so.



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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Was it George Bush's fault? Is it true, as one black entertainer said on national television, that the president "doesn't care about black people?"

Come on. Arrival of National Guard and Army convoys three days after the levy broke is not that bad, maybe a day later than it could have been.

The most vociferous finger-pointing comes from the mayor and other city officials, whose job it was to be prepared for an emergency. The federal government is just supposed to come in and help.

But New Orleans was overwhelmed. The police force, fire department, emergency services, despite years of warnings, all were unprepared. All collapsed. And maybe, faced with a disaster of the same magnitude, that would have happened in any city.

In most cities, if there is a flood, the bulk of the town stays dry. You can base support and rescue efforts where the infrastructure remains.

Not in New Orleans.

That's the difference.

Could we face another such disaster? Would we be any more prepared? Sure.

Imagine a terrorist attack with a "weapon of mass destruction" on New York, Washington or any other major city.

Imagine trying to evacuate New York. Or stop an unstoppable plague.

Imagine a massive earthquake along the New Madrid fault in Missouri, leveling both St. Louis and Memphis.

Would there be enough troops to pour in and help?

No, we have a lot to learn about disasters, man-made and natural. We could do a lot more to be ready.

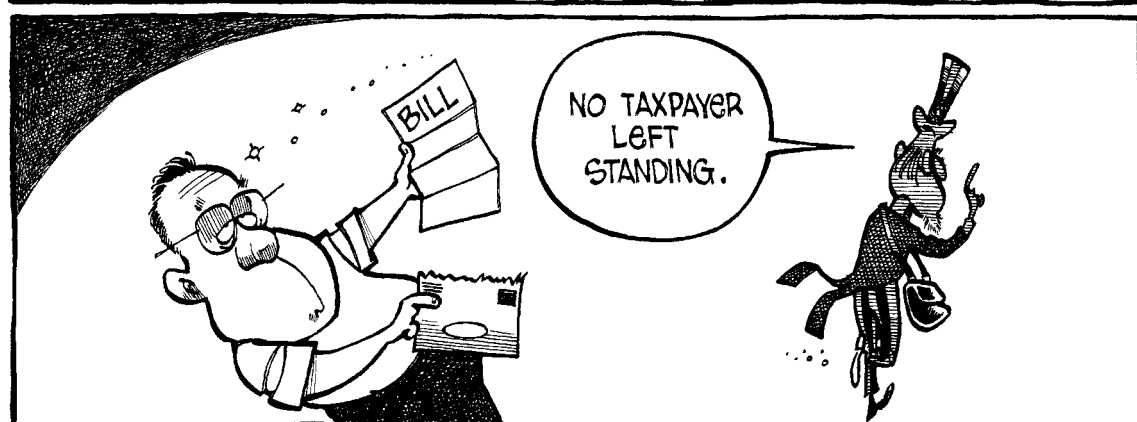
The real answers, though, lie in planning and streamlining the bureaucracy, not in spending a lot of money preparing for what might happen.

We can't know what the next massive disaster will be, or when, or where.

But we can learn from this one.

And as the bodies stack up in those temporary morgues, God have mercy on their souls, we need to stop arguing and whining and start learning.

Even a day's improvement in the response would have meant a lot. And it will the next time.



## It feels good to check stuff off list

A weekend at home is such a luxury for us.

It seems we're always gone, and things here just pile up.

Steve bought a bookcase in February and still hasn't had a spare hour or two to put his books in it.

This was to be the weekend to fill the bookcase, put together the miniature ox cart I got in Costa Rica, sweep the garage, weed the garden, water seal the deck furniture, fold all the clothes that have been sitting in baskets for the last two weeks and pick out pictures for a Rotary program.

Then there were the minor chores, like balance the checkbook, send stuff to the kids, slice the watermelon that's been in the fridge for a week, medicate the cats, and clean off the dining room table.

At the office, my list included entering a bunch of stuff into the business computer, doing payroll, sending out several letters, checking the mail, writing sports stories and my weekly column, checking on football, volleyball and cross country pictures and feeding the cat.

I also put nap, walk and fix breakfast, lunch and supper, and go to church on my list. I like it to be complete, and I always want to be able to mark something off.



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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I was looking forward to a nice long holiday weekend.

And I got it. I even got some of the stuff on my list done.

Steve did not get his bookcase filled. On the other hand, we did get the deck furniture water sealed, several flower beds weeded, all the clothing folded and the ox cart put together.

I didn't get the garage swept, although I started, and got about a dozen broom strokes done before it was time to stop and make lunch. I never got back to that project.

I got the most important things done. I got a nap every day and a walk two out of three. We would have made it three out of three, but it rained, and we weren't complaining about that.

We got three meals a day and the watermelon got cut and devoured,

along with hamburgers to celebrate Labor Day.

Steve got the checkbook balanced and we both got some work done at the office. The house cats got their monthly flea and tick medicine, and the office cat got fed.

We cleaned off the dining room table but covered it again as we started our weekly writing and editing chores. We both have desks, but prefer to sit at the table while working. At mealtimes we push the laptop computers aside to make room for plates and silverware.

It was a long, lovely weekend. I loved every minute of it, but where did it go?

One minute I was sitting down and making lists of what I was going to do, and the next it seems that it's time to start another work week.

Well, anyway, thank you, Lord, for long holiday weekend at home.

## Finger pointing does nothing

I guess it's human nature to want to blame someone. But right now, in the middle of the greatest natural disaster this country has ever seen, finger-pointing seems like a poor use of time and energy.

I can't imagine the enormity of the situation in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. The devastation goes on for miles and miles. Then throw in the factors of looters and loss of all communications, and the mess just gets worse.

Oh, and don't forget the nuts who were shooting at the very people who were trying to rescue them. You didn't see anyone taking potshots at rescue workers in Indonesia after the tsunami, did you?

Experts are saying work to fortify the levees should have been done 20 years ago, which doesn't help anyone now.

Local officials say "somebody" should have got to them sooner. How could they?

Honestly, this was a situation there was no contingency for. I heard a weather forecaster say, in regards to New Orleans, that Katrina was a 500-year storm. Is it too soon to start preparing for the next one that might not happen for another 500 hundred years?

I did manage to get a call through to the sister of an old friend of mine who lives in Houma, La., about 60



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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miles southwest of New Orleans. They are all fine, suffered only minor damages plus the inconvenience of no phone or electricity for three days.

After watching the horror of hurricane Katrina, I think we Kansans will gladly take a good ol' tornado any day. We usually know they're coming; we can get down low enough to ride them out; and we probably aren't going to drown when it's over.

—ob—

In greeting a friend, I asked how she was.

"Just peachy," was her answer.

Hey, that should be my line. I'm the one who's been making peach pies and peach jam for a week now. Just finished the last batch this morning.

But, I couldn't leave well enough alone. Someone brought two bags of elderberries to the office and offered them to anyone who wanted them. I

guess I must have been the only one with my hand up, because now I have a sink full of elderberries. I had no idea how teeny, tiny elderberries are or how long it takes to de-stem them.

They had better make good jelly, or I'm going to demand my money back. Wait a minute — I got them free.

Guess I better just shut up and say, "Thank you."

### From the Bible

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it . . .

Isaiah 44: 22, 23a

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## Businesses went out of way to help

To the Editor:  
While on an urgent overnight trip to Oberlin, I incurred a vehicle failure.

Early on a Sunday morning, upon inquiring of the Sinclair station proprietor as to the availability of fan belts, he phoned the proprietor of the NAPA parts store to ask if he could help me. He came to the store, provided the needed belt. I stayed a few

### Letter to the Editor

minutes in case the belt didn't fit, and came by the breakdown at the motel to be assured the repair was successful, before resuming his day of rest.

How could anyone not want to

patronize establishments with folks like these?

Thanks again — or, as a Kansan might say — much obliged.

Milo Flaska

San Diego

## Congressman continues to listen

To the Editor:  
I recently completed my ninth annual Big First Listening Tour, holding town hall meetings in each of the 69 counties in the 1st Congressional District.

I appreciated meeting with all those in Decatur County who took time out of their day to share their ideas and concerns with me. As your representative, it's key for me to understand what issues Kansans want their congressman to focus on.

### Letter to the Editor

While our economy has showed signs of improvement, the costs of doing business and raising a family continues to grow. I will continue my efforts to ease these burdens for the people of Kansas.

If there are any issues that we did not get to discuss, or if you were

unable to attend, contact me at: [www.house.gov/moranks01/](http://www.house.gov/moranks01/).

It is a tremendous privilege to represent Kansas in Congress. I pledge to work for you, and with you, to make good things happen.

Jerry Moran

Haynes