

OPINION

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First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

AS WE SEE IT

This could be the end

This could be one of the last issues of the Carter County Times you get to hold in your hands. House Bill 368, a measure that would strip newspapers of their public notice advertising from local governments, could be voted on as early as today. If House Bill 368 passes, we will no longer be able to afford to keep this paper in business. It will have that kind of impact on our already thin advertising budgets. And our rack sales and subscriptions alone – much as we love our readers and subscribers – don’t generate enough revenue for us to keep the presses running.

Now, we can debate whether or not a newspaper should be so dependent on this particular revenue stream, and it’s a conversation worth having – but it doesn’t change the fact that the Carter County Times, and countless other small, independent newspapers do count on those advertising funds to keep our newspapers from slipping into the red.

But putting aside the loss of revenue for us, let’s look at what would be lost for you if HB 368 passes.

For one, transparency. And not just the transparency you’d lose when the newspaper quit covering local government meetings. HB 368 would allow local governments to publish everything they are currently required to make part of the public record on their local websites alone. This means that you would need internet access to view these records and notices – which include everything from the wording of new ordinances to contracts for goods and services the city is required to put out for bid. It would require folks to navigate websites that are already poorly maintained – the Olive Hill and Grayson websites, for instance, both still include the names of council members who are not on council and don’t include the names of all current council members.

It would also potentially allow cities and counties to go back in and make changes to bids, ordinances, or other content without maintaining a clear history of those changes. That is the benefit of print. Once it is set and printed, you cannot go back in and change the content to suit changing preferences or ideas. There is a physical record to hold elected officials to what they’d initially agreed to.

This is important, not because our local governments are necessarily corrupt, but because any large organization – like a city or a county – needs safeguards to protect from the development of corruption, or the appearance of it.

Another issue, as noted, is that it requires internet access. This puts public notices out of reach of the poor, who might read the local newspaper at the public library. It puts them out of the reach of the elderly and others who might not be as comfortable navigating the technology required to access these documents. And it puts them out of reach of those who live in the remote and rural areas of our county where we have trouble accessing steady and reliable internet connections.

But, if the loss of advertising revenue leads to the closure of this newspaper, readers will be losing so much more.

This newspaper provided coverage of public expenditures that enabled journalists associated with NBC to ask serious questions about the use of opioid funds for things like skating rinks. We did this without taking any editorial stance for or against the usage of these funds. We just told you how your elected officials voted.

We’ve provided coverage of the embezzlement of funds from the county tourism group, and efforts to recover those funds. We have every intention, if we can continue to publish, to continue providing coverage of that process as the former treasurer enters her expected change of plea.

We’ve gone to bat for citizens of the county and cities, to make sure their government is operating with transparency, so they know what they are voting on and when they are voting on it.

We’ve covered officer involved shootings in both Grayson and Olive Hill.

We’ve covered complaints against, and praise for, elected officials across the board and on both sides of the political aisle.

But if HB 368 passes, you will lose all of that.

We could continue to publish for a while without those revenues, but not for very long. Not without a significant increase in retail and other advertising to make up the difference. If we continued to publish, we’d risk running out of funds to print, and to reimburse our long time advertisers and subscribers for undelivered product – and that’s something we’re just not willing to do.

We’re not here to get rich. We’re not here to tell you what

See *THE END* on A-8

Carter County Times

Members of the Editorial Board

Nicole Wells, publisher

Jeremy Wells, editor Keith Kappes, columnist



Lessons in planned obsolescence

Today I learned that Microsoft hates the idea of its customers repairing hardware so much, they tied the disc drives to the motherboards in their Xbox360s. This means that if your disc drive goes bad (as mine did) and you get on eBay and purchase a working disc drive from someone (as I did), you can’t just swap them out.

If you do, your Xbox thinks the game disc you insert is a DVD instead of a game disc. Whether this is by accident or design (and it’s presumably the latter) the end result is it prevents self-repair to tie the disc drive to the motherboard. Or at least complicates it.

I learned this after spending a slightly frustrating afternoon breaking into my 360 slim, and replacing the drive so we could breathe some life back into it. Once I finished that, I was really disappointed that I couldn’t fire up some of those old games.

A quick scroll through Reddit gave me an answer though, and I rushed to the garbage to grab the discarded components. My hope is that I can swap the control boards on the disc drives, and this will be enough for me to get everything working the way it should.

It is going to require some light soldering, but

shouldn’t be too far outside my ability.

I’m trying to be Zen about it, and look at it as a learning experience. I mean, if I’m really being honest, I enjoy getting these things working almost as much as I enjoy playing with them after they are up and running again.

But it’s also got me thinking about the rights of consumers to repair the items they own, and how difficult companies make it for us to do so. Whether it’s a battery with chips that prevent the use of generics,

or components like disc drives that can’t be easily swapped out, it almost seems like engineers design these things to be difficult to repair, without improving the performance or functionality of the machines in any way. It’s just another way that corporate America squeezes us for a buck, encouraging us to just toss something out and replace it instead of repairing it.

Planned obsolescence at its finest.



Jeremy D. Wells
Editor
Carter County Times

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A correspondence from the Culture Wars

When I was a kid growing up on the south side of Chicago, information wasn’t as available as it is today. We didn’t pull a magic machine out of our pockets that could tell us anything we wanted to know. We relied on people who knew things, what adults could say to us, and what piece of information we might glean from the news on the television, or a headline splashed atop the newspaper. Public discourse taught lies, opinions, and half-truths—what others perceived as reality, not what’s actually true.

Take Malcolm X, for example. I thought he was a black dude who hated white dudes. When in reality, he was someone who wanted equality for all people. The way he spoke against rampant racism, which had a cruel thumb in the eye of America, wasn’t something to fear. But when you hear people giving their opinion on character, message, and the status quo from the barstool, you don’t know any better. The letter “X” itself became a warning sign—Malcolm X was painted as a villain, someone to fear. But through his evolution, he marked the change of a man and his viewpoint: "I am not a racist... In the past I permitted myself to be used... to make sweeping indictments of all white people... Because of the spiritual enlightenment which I was blessed to receive as the result of my recent pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca, I no longer subscribe to sweeping indictments of any one race." And then someone killed him.

The same goes for The Black Panthers. I grew up

thinking they hated white people. They were a militant group of black dudes who wanted to kill white people.



Robert Dean
Guest Columnist
Carter County Times

That was the narrative of the media who feared them, who mislabeled the group that created a complimentary breakfast program for any child to eat before school, opened free healthcare clinics in poor neighborhoods, drove old people around, delivered their groceries, and also gave clothes to community members in need. As I became politically literate, I understood how deeply our perceptions are shaped—and how they

can be unlearned through education. The system wasn’t scared of old people making it to their appointment; they were scared of the mobilization of armed, educated black folks who wanted better for their communities. Fred Hampton was murdered in his sleep at 21 years old by Chicago police and the FBI.

As I grew older, I sought out more books, documentaries, and newspapers, determined to unlearn the lies I’d been taught. This journey led me to New Orleans, a city rich in culture and history. When I moved there in my 20s, I made friends who opened my eyes to figures like Marcus Garvey, James Baldwin, jazz musicians, and the real shake, rattle, and roll of the Harlem Renaissance. You can always be "invited to the cookout" because those are some of the most welcoming functions I’ve ever been allowed to share space.

But as the wagon of idiocy continues to roll

See *CULTURE* on A-8

Policies

General

Advertisers should check their ad the first time it runs. The Times shall not be liable for any typographical errors or for failure to publish an ad or errors in publication except to the extent of the cost of the ad for the first insertion. Adjustment for errors is limited to the portion of the ad wherein the error occurred. The Times reserves the right to reject any advertisement and submitted editorial copy, and reserves the right to edit any copy submitted for publication. Corrections will be made at the discretion of the editor.

Circulation

A one-year in-county subscription costs \$26.00 plus tax. Due to additional mailing fees, any subscriptions mailed out of county will cost \$52.00 plus tax.

Letters & Opinion

The Times welcomes all letters to the editor.

Letters should be limited to 300 words or less. Letters should focus on issues that affect the community as a whole, and not personal or business disputes. Letters must include a verifiable address, along with the phone number and signature of the writer. Letters submitted via e-mail need only include a phone number in lieu of a signature.

Letters, columns and cartoons do not necessarily reflect the views of the Times or EK Newsgroup, LLC.

General interest guest columns are welcome. For details email editor@cartercountytimes.com.

Deadlines

The deadline for news copy and letters to the editor is noon on Monday prior to publication. The deadline for display and classified advertising is 5 p.m. on Monday prior to publication.