

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NARCO FARM

The story on Lexington’s “Narco Farm,” (later the Federal Correctional Institute on Leestown Road) reminded me of a long-ago graduate paper I wrote using Chamber of Commerce files, studying how the “Narco Farm” came to Lexington. Business leaders invested \$30,000 (in 1929 dollars) for a \$5,000,000 physical plant and 245 jobs with an annual payroll of \$340,000. This bold gamble 90 years ago paid off.

The Federal government sought sites for two innovative “Farms” built in separate national locations to treat drug-addicted inmates and to research drug addiction. To Lexington’s Board of Commerce, it was a prime opportunity in tough Depression times. The entrepreneurial-minded board actively set about pursuing the project, engaging in serious competition against over 400 cities to win the race to “land the Narco Farm.”

Faced with a strong bid from Chattanooga, Tenn., Lexington’s business leaders — including board members who personally dug into their pockets — pledged funds and sweetened their offer by providing land at no cost. Their efforts succeeded, and the Narco Farm was dedicated on May 25, 1935, creating jobs and bringing significant federal investment to the city. But without Lexington’s leaders’ determination and strategic thinking this result would not have happened.

Jim Kurz, Lexington

BUDGET BILL

I’m disgusted. U.S. Reps. Andy Barr, Hal Rogers, Brett Guthrie and James Comer, all R-Ky., just sold out their constituents. They voted to take away healthcare from the most vulnerable Kentuckians and food from innocent children, all so Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and their billionaire pals could get a tax cut. No wonder they won’t show up for Town Halls to answer to voters.

Howard Stovall, Lexington

RESIST NOW

I’m dismayed! Everywhere I look, the Trump Administration is upending our institutions, our democracy, and our international relations.

It’s easy to focus on one issue affecting us. For example, President Donald Trump has ordered all federal funding slashed for NPR and PBS. I count on WEKU and KET for objective news coverage as well as entertainment.

But I believe we must focus not just on the bat-

tles but on THE WAR AGAINST DEMOCRACY.

Here’s the war: The Trump Administration ignores judges’ orders to stop deportations, threatens the press, questions due process for immigrants as an unrealistic luxury, and illegally shuts down the U.S. Agency for International Development that assists the world’s most hungry and sick. Drastic, unauthorized cuts have been made in the federal workforce (e.g. medical research, FEMA, and national parks). The Trump regime thinks it’s above the law. And Congress is colluding in destroying our democracy.

The cavalry’s not coming! We are the cavalry! We cannot say “this will pass” or deny the damage being done.

To paraphrase conservative David Brooks, we must resist now. We must be inclusive of Independents, disaffected Republicans and Democrats. It’s time for a comprehensive national civic uprising.

What will YOU do?

Jeanette Coufal, Lexington

REPUBLICAN POODLES

One unfortunate and curious development in our country has been the weird persistent worship of the filthy rich. The rich have been elevated to a God-like status, yet they can be uneducated, silly, clownish, buffoonish, incoherent, and completely without language skills or the ability to distinguish right from wrong, as long as they are rich.

It begs the question that if Grandma left her massive fortune to her beloved French poodle, would the Republican party be desperately courting the said curly haired bone-chewer to be their next candidate in an upcoming congressional election? I once had a Republican dog who I know was Republican because it hoarded all the food and hoarded all the bones. So, it’s not outside the realm of possibilities.

However, Grandma’s French poodle would morally be a giant improvement over those greed worshipping, Republicans in Washington.

Angela Arnett-Garner, Waynesburg

WHERE ARE THE REPAIRS?

I have written several letters about the condition of the City of Lexington’s infrastructure, including the roads and sidewalks. Spring is here, but I have yet to see any road paving being done in virtually any part of the city. As an example, the road at Third Street at Elm Tree going

east is like a rollercoaster.

The sidewalks are no exception. There is a crack about an inch and a half wide on the city’s sidewalk at Summit and Cooper – a serious risk to anyone walking in that area. The crack has now been sprayed with orange paint along with an orange cone. It has been nearly two months, but it has still not been fixed.

What is wrong with this city administration that contracts cannot be let for road paving and other infrastructure repairs that endanger our citizens? This is a serious failure on the part of this city administration.

Richard A. Getty, Lexington

POLITICAL CHAOS

My decision on whom to support in the upcoming elections will be based on which candidates pledge to end the current chaotic political environment. There appears to be ample evidence chaos has replaced any level of civility in the political arena.

I understand disagreement is a part of making and implementing policy. However, I am weary of leaders who choose turmoil as a strategy for action and have no use for compromise. It may well be the chaos we are experiencing is a result of allowing politicians to run amok without fear of not being re-elected.

We must all accept some tension between our own self-interests and the best interests of our communities as a whole. Compromise is a price we pay for living in a democracy. I refuse to support candidates who continue to use the tools of chaos and a lack of accountability for their political benefit.

I sincerely hope there are others who are also concerned that we continue to elect individuals who benefit from a constant state of chaos in our political system. And I hope they are determined to support candidates who wish to restore civility to political discussion, and to govern for the benefit all.

Charles Myers, Lexington

NOT SO GREAT

Is American “great” yet? It seems to be taking a curious and circuitous route. Congressional Republicans have certainly bowed, bent, sold their souls, and abdicated their responsibilities about as much as possible. Law firms, colleges and universities, longtime allies, black and brown people and judges have been intimidated, name-called and threatened publicly to toe the mark or suffer vengeance. And while the President Almighty works

his magic, we peons are cautioned frequently that what we see and hear is normal and necessary. Progress Trump-style is being made.

We hear a lot about wealth being synonymous with greatness. It appears that Trump is getting richer by the day, what with the White House being for sale (not on sale). And since he is officially above the laws that govern the rest of us, per the Supreme Court, pardons and access are selling like hotcakes to all the light-skinned, beautiful criminals with big checkbooks who demonstrate proper fealty. I wonder what bottom line figure is required to declare greatness accomplished? How rich does he have to be for America to be considered truly great?I can’t speak for you, but I miss the America where people mattered more than cryptocurrency.

Janice Russell, Lexington

SCREEN TIME

If a physical virus ran through the community and made our children visibly sick with obvious, dangerously worsening symptoms and the public schools were found to be a contributing factor in their distress, how long would it take for an army of warriors to come to their rescue?

Not long. The National Library of Medicine’s PubMed database shows 661 scientific studies published in just the last twelve months in response to a search of “adolescent screen time.” Their findings are overwhelming and the devastation is shocking for anyone who bothers to look. Taking the laptop computers given to our schoolchildren in classrooms each day and burning them in one big pile would be a more efficient use of our resources and would better serve our kids than current practice does. David Adams, Nicholasville

FAYETTE SCHOOLS’ TAX

Well Fayette County what did you expect from the Fayette County School Board vote on raising taxes. Nothing will change until you vote against these tax and spend liberal democrats out of office. Liggins and Murphy need to be removed immediately from office. Their tax and spend policies will only get worse. Liggins’ lavish so-called training trips need to be stopped. Also he has spent thousands of dollars on lunches and meals for meetings with school principals. There are so many ways this school board can save money. But nothing will change if Liggins and Mur-

phy are not removed from office. Fayette County please stand up and vote this school board out of office and replace Liggins immediately.

James Jeffrey Coleman, Lexington

ANDY BARR FOR SENATE — NOT!

Andy Barr has proclaimed and demonstrated that he is another Trump lap dog, in lock step with Trump’s agenda which includes, among other things:

- using Trump’s top campaign donor, the richest man on earth with billions in US. government contracts, to eviscerate the country’s administrative agencies, even those that regulate his private business interests, firing their employees without any justification on merit, under the thin veil of cutting waste and inefficiency;
- kidnapping people, citizens or not, locking them up and shipping them off to prisons in foreign countries for an undetermined time, without judicial review and, then, defying federal court orders to return them;
- cavalierly driving the economy and the stock market into the tank against the advice of virtually every economist and financial analyst of note;
- usurping the power of the Congress to raise taxes and create agencies to provide for the common good; and failing to deliver on his boastful “day one” promises to bring down the price of goods and bring peace to Ukraine.

If that still sounds good to you, nominate the man.

D. Craig Dance, Lexington

NOT SO BEAUTIFUL BILL

Andy Barr has done it again. He only needed to vote Present and the One Big Beautiful Bill would have been one big awful memory. But instead he provided the one single vote by which this bill was passed in the dead of night. I only hope the Senate is able to kill this bill. Too much harm to too many citizens is going to come from this bill if it goes to Trump’s desk. Bob Crovo, Lexington

BLUE PARTY CREDO

The Blue Party nonsense spoken by Blue party speakers, even the educator and lawyerly type, is overexcited. For example, one local lawyer finds the foreign policy of the current U.S. president to be a threat to economic stability and world peace.

That is an awkward world view to hold today when during Blue Party leadership the world witnessed the invasion of

Crimea by Putin, a second invasion of Ukraine by Putin, and the baffling Blue Party reversal of Trump era economic sanctions against Iran that had rendered that terrorist state ineffective in funding terrorism. In the real world, the Blue Party program supporting Iran has rewarded the world with the Hamas invasion of Israel and the current ongoing war in Gaza.

Blue Party pundits do not acquaint themselves with logic when ranting on any issue. For example, Blue Party thinkers sermonize that the reform and reduction of a government agency’s overhead must reduce the volume and quality of needed services provided by that agency, when the expectation of reform is to redirect available funding to improve the usefulness of that agency. Concerning Tariffs, the elimination of the U.S. penny is confirmation of the analytical brilliance of Donald Trump’s executive talent.

Gary Ward, Lexington

FOREIGN AID

As pastor of Grace Christian Church in Georgetown, I’ve seen firsthand how U.S. foreign assistance changes lives through our partnerships with Kairos International and Watoto in Uganda. These programs bring trauma healing, mental health support, job training, and a future to vulnerable children and families. But recent budget cuts have halted life-giving work and left dedicated workers without jobs.

We must learn to tell a fuller story. Africa is not defined by need—it is rich in resilience, creativity, and promise. A rising generation of African leaders is launching businesses, rebuilding communities, and shaping the future. The U.S. has a vital role to play—not as saviors, but as partners.U.S. support for programs like PEPFAR and Gavi has saved millions of lives, but it also boosts global stability, strengthens economies, and safeguards American interests. For example: every \$1 invested in vaccines yields \$54 in global long-term benefits. These are not handouts—they are strategic investments in a healthier, more secure, and more prosperous world for everyone, including us.

Scripture calls us to love our neighbors and not grow weary in doing good. I urge Kentucky’s lawmakers to restore and protect foreign assistance that serves our shared future.

Daniel Jackson, Georgetown

Edited by Liz Carey

Did Fayette County Schools follow law on payroll tax vote?

BY LINDA BLACKFORD
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Fayette County school board member Penny Christian was right when she argued Tuesday night that an increased payroll tax for the district would continue its upward momentum in providing a better education for our students.

“We have to do right by these kids,” she said during an acrimonious exchange between board members. “This is not theater, this matters.”

Her seatmate, Monica Mundy, was also right when she voted against the tax because it was slipped onto the agenda over Memorial Day without ever having been discussed with board members, much less the general public.

“It just looks so bad,” she said. “It’s is very frus-

trating. I don’t feel like I can make a decision when I don’t have all the pieces and I don’t have all the information.

Who did have all the information? Top district officials and Commerce Lex, because apparently it was more important to run this decision by the local Chamber of Commerce than school board members.

Deputy Superintendent Houston Barber admitted Tuesday night they had consulted the chamber “two or three weeks ago.”

And here we are yet again. They kept it a secret, then stuck it on the agenda over a long weekend so that it could make it onto the June 5 agenda of the next Fayette Fiscal Court meeting.

The district faces a crisis of confidence because of a lack of basic honesty about what it was doing when.

Even in service of a good cause such as investing in our kids.

The board passed the resolution 3-2 to approve the .25 percent increase in the payroll tax to the Fayette Fiscal Court, but big questions remains about whether this move was even legal.

KRS 160.603 states very clearly that “No school district board of education shall levy any of the school taxes ... until after compliance with the following: notice shall be given by causing to be published, at least one (1) time in a newspaper of general circulation published in the county or by posting at the courthouse door if there be no such newspaper, the fact that such levy is being proposed.”

The law also says: “The advertisement shall state that the district board of education will meet at a

place and on a day fixed in the advertisement, not earlier than one (1) week and not later than two (2) weeks from the date of the advertisement, for the purpose of hearing comments and complaints regarding the proposed increase and explaining the reasons for such proposal.”

Given that at least two board members said they were unaware of the proposed tax until Saturday, and we did not publish any notices in Sunday’s paper, I would say the district has some ‘splaining to do.

But spokeswoman Dia Davidson said early Wednesday afternoon this law “only applies when a school board itself imposes certain taxes, like the property tax or utility tax. That’s not what’s happening here.

“Instead, the Board of Education has adopted a resolution informing the Fayette County Fiscal Court of its desire to implement a countywide occupational license tax to support public education. Once approved, this would

replace the current school district occupational tax. Because this is a county-level tax, it follows a different legal process and is not subject to the requirements of KRS 160.603.”

I suspect lawyers will be getting involved. It’s kind of hard to believe statute would not require an entirely new tax to get public notice. Also, even if this interpretation is correct, it seems like informing the public about an entirely new tax would be the right thing for a public agency to do.

County Attorney Angela Evans said she is researching all these questions.

Parent Matthew Vied said he’s already preparing a recall petition.

It’s understandable that some taxpayers are miffed. Our property tax assessments keep going up, and the school board gets more and more money. This new tax will bring in about \$16 million in the next fiscal year on top of the \$57 million they already get from payroll taxes. By the year after, that would rise to

about \$30 million.

Barber says the district is in good financial shape overall, and the \$16 million is basically the result of inflation, higher salaries and new buildings, all of which we want. But then why couldn’t they fix it and why should we trust them with more millions?

It’s exhausting. I’m sure school officials are exhausted after sitting through yet another meeting of snippy comments and accusations.

But once again, the district’s ham-handed handling of a sensitive topic has poisoned the entire topic. Whether you like taxes or hate them, this process — secrecy leading up to a big surprise — makes all of us dislike the process. That means we’re less likely to accept the idea on its own merits.

It would be so great if school district officials and board members could figure that out.

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