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SUSAN YOUNG
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

GEORGE DANBY
EDITORIAL PAGE ASSISTANT

MATTHEW STONE
OPINION PAGE EDITOR

P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, Maine 04402-1329
Tel. 990-8000, fax 433-1048, email address letters@bangordailynews.com

WARNING STILL RELEVANT RE-EXAMINING WASHINGTON’S FAREWELL

As presidential campaigns continue to unfold and people prepare for July 4 festivities, there’s an old speech worth revisiting. Published in 1796, President George Washington’s “Farewell Address” announced he would not seek a third term. It encouraged unity among the states at a time when political parties, geographical sectionalism and foreign meddling could harm the 9-year-old Constitution and cause major strife in the new country.

The address holds an important reminder for us today: to put aside slight differences in religion, politics and habits and unite over the important values of liberty and independence. We share an excerpt here, but you can read the entire speech at <http://bit.ly/washfarewell>:

“Citizens by birth or choice of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts — of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

“But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the Union of the whole. ...

“The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty

of every individual to obey the established government.

“All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations under whatever plausible character with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction; to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests.

“However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion. ...

“In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish — that they will control the usual current of the passions or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good, that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism — this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare by which they have been dictated. ”

OTHER VOICES

COURT MISSES MARK ON CORRUPTION

In overturning the criminal conviction of former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, the Supreme Court has taken a distressingly narrow view of what constitutes political corruption.

McDonnell, a Republican, opened the doors of state government wide to Jonnie R. Williams Sr., a businessman who admitted he lavished gifts and loans on the governor and his family in hopes of obtaining state support for Anatabloc, a tobacco-based nutritional supplement developed by his company. The largesse, whose total value exceeded \$175,000, included a \$6,500 Rolex watch for McDonnell and \$15,000 in catering expenses for his daughter’s wedding.

For his part, McDonnell sought to arrange meetings for Williams with state officials and hosted a luncheon event for Williams’ company at the governor’s mansion. The governor also talked up the advantages of Anatabloc at a meeting called to discuss the state’s health plan for its employees.

Prosecutors convinced a jury that, in exchange for financial support from Williams, McDonnell had taken “official acts” to benefit the businessman. But, speaking for a unanimous court, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. disagreed.

“Setting up a meeting, talking to another official, or organizing an

event (or agreeing to do so) — without more — does not fit (the) definition of ‘official act,’” Roberts wrote. In the court’s view, such acts “must involve a formal exercise of governmental power.”

That reading is far too forgiving. It’s true that McDonnell didn’t sign a bill or issue an executive order helping Williams’ business. But can there be any doubt that the governor hoped that state employees would be influenced by his efforts on Williams’ behalf?

Roberts worried that accepting the definition of “official acts” presented to the jury might criminalize the routine business of government. He noted that “conscientious public officials arrange meetings for constituents, contact other officials on their behalf and include them in events all the time.”

But most of the time, those conscientious public officials haven’t taken hundreds of thousands of dollars for their own personal use.

We agree with the court that overzealous prosecutors sometimes stretch the language of criminal statutes. But this wasn’t such a case. Williams was not your average constituent, and McDonnell provided much more than routine constituent services. The Supreme Court should have let the jury’s judgment stand.

Los Angeles Times (June 28)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

King’s concern

In his June 23 BDN OpEd about how to fix anti-poverty programs, Sen. Angus King writes that he “administered many of the programs that support low-income Mainers.” But King vetoed at least two increases in the minimum wage, when increasing the minimum wage is by far the single most important thing one could do for low-income Mainers.

King goes on to hail the movement of large numbers of people off welfare rolls, a process he euphemistically calls “reform.” King attributes this wondrous reduction in welfare rolls to the “strong economy and low unemployment of the 1990s.” What he conveniently leaves out is that the reduction also was achieved by limiting welfare to five years, after which impoverished mothers of real live children are simply shoved off the rolls and left to their own devices. So much for King’s deep concern for poor people.

Ralph Grimes
Stockton Springs

Age friendly Maine

In his June 23 BDN article about Maine’s population shedding 20-somethings, Darren Fishell offers an excellent explanation of the effect of the changing structure of our population — and the effect of the double whammy of residents getting older and younger people leaving the state.

But it isn’t all bad news. Older Mainers contribute significantly to the well-being of their family, community and Maine’s economy. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, older adults contribute 52 percent more to consumer spending than their younger peers.

An aging population creates challenges and opportunities for the state and for individual towns and cities. The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities offers technical advice and tools to help local leaders implement age-friendly changes that will make their community an even better place for residents of all ages to work, live and play.

Age-friendly changes do not have to be a drain on municipal budgets. Most communities that have joined the network make low-cost and no-cost changes that have a huge impact on residents of all ages. Some examples have been creating a page on the town website with information about local and regional services of special interest to older people and their families, moving a library book return box from the top of the stairs to street level and partnering with Habitat for Humanity to raise awareness of a program to make the homes of older residents safer and more accessible.

Patricia Oh
Bowdoinham

NRA and gun control

The National Rifle Association contributes lots of money to congressional Republicans, from \$2,500 to Sen. Rand Paul to \$7,740,221 to Sen. John McCain. According to the Center for American Progress Action Fund, the NRA has contributed to 50 Republican senators over the course of their careers more than \$36 million.

And we wonder why no reasonable legislation for effective gun control can be agreed upon. The NRA effectively controls the Senate when it comes to gun control legislation. It’s time for a change. Otherwise, more Americans are going to lose their lives.

Richard Barclay
Holden

WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. **OpEds** may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

LePage junk food ban

I don’t agree with Gov. Paul LePage on many issues, yet I applaud his efforts to stop SNAP beneficiaries from using that program to buy sugar-filled food and food that is not nutritious.

The argument can be made that citizens, regardless of income level, have a right to decide their diet. When we speak of children, however, there is no question that they need some guidance about what they should eat. Such is not an effort at “nanny state” governing, any more than is a ruling not to starve children. It is a perfectly reasonable function of regulations to promote health.

All parents want to make their children happy, and sugary foods are, by their very nature, satisfying; too much sugar, though, causes so many health problems, short term and long term, that parents simply need to be reminded. It might be nice to say SNAP could be used to buy sugary foods for adults who want the choice to screw up their health, not their kids’ health. The program cannot be run that way. Cutting off sugary foods to adults, too, for an added health benefit, is just an extra.

Soda and candy companies and other producers of sugary foods will fight such efforts, and they will lobby the U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture not to allow such moves. They are in the business of making money, not making people healthy. Government must stand up for citizens’ welfare, not only for financial reasons but for the happiness of the population.

Steve Colhoun
Addison

Fulford for Senate

Republican Sen. Mike Thibodeau has come a long way. He no longer speaks out against marriage equality. He no longer advises people to estimate they will work more in order to qualify for an Obamacare subsidy, which could be illegal if it’s a deliberately false estimate. He even voted for a solar energy bill after trying to kill it. Residents of Waldo County can be proud of dragging a reluctant Thibodeau at least part way into the 21st century.

But Waldo County needs a leader like Jonathan Fulford, who has an unwavering commitment to addressing climate change. Someone who thinks proactively about tough questions, like how can we make Maine energy independent and protect the environment while supporting local industries. Someone who favored marriage equality long before it was cool.

And we need a leader who can listen. Fulford listens to more voters than almost any candidate of any party in Maine. If someone lives in Waldo County, chances are he’s knocked on his or her door, because he wants to know what residents want him to do, not what the money in Augusta — and beyond — wants to him do.

The choice is simple: One candidate is dragging his feet, and the other stands as a beacon, pointing the way to the future, for us and for our children.

Greg Bates
Monroe

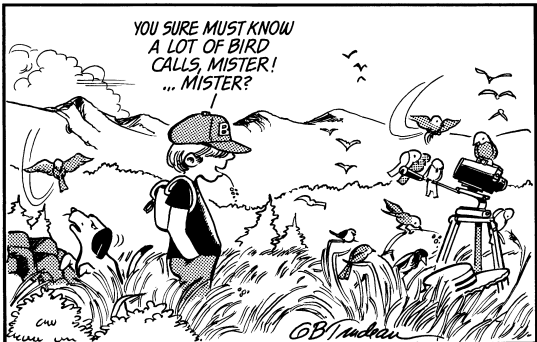
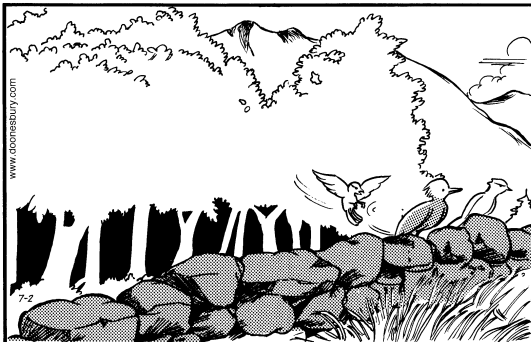
Against people’s will

Why would anyone want Gov. Paul LePage to represent the people of this state at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland? Most of us are ashamed of his antics and raving.

“I’m disappointed that they’re so arrogant that they’re going against the will of people,” LePage told Howie Carr after supporters of Ted Cruz tried to storm the state convention. Why not? LePage goes against the will of the people every day.

Charlotte Lowell
Oakfield

DOONESBURY



GARRY TRUDEAU