

# Behind the opinions

A user's guide to the commentary pages of *The Dallas Morning News*

## Editorial Page

Editorials represent the institutional opinion of the newspaper. That opinion is shaped by the editorial board on behalf of the newspaper's owners. The editorial board is advisory to Vice President and Editorial Page Editor Keven Ann Willey, who is advisory to the newspaper's editor and publisher. In early 2003, the editorial board developed this statement of philosophy to guide its thinking:

*"As the soul of the newspaper and the conscience of the community, the editorial pages provoke, inspire and challenge readers. We believe in a progressive conservatism that advocates civil rights, fiscal responsibility, environmental stewardship, effective local governments, public accountability and an internationalist foreign policy."*

How editorial opinions are developed: Editorial board members offer topic ideas during regular staff meetings. The topic, message and tone of the proposed editorial are often hotly debated. The editor listens carefully to the debate, selects a course of action and asks for a volunteer writer. Often the editorial writer whose arguments have carried the day volunteers. Editorials are unsigned because they represent the institution's view, rather than the view of the individual writer.

The best editorials are persuasive, compelling, relevant to readers, passionate, constructive, timely and provocative. They are well-researched and smartly written. They are, by definition, opinionated.

Sometimes, the most powerful editorial is a photo with a single sentence. Other times, it's a 1,000-word treatise. The power is in the topic selection, the logic employed and the rhythm of the writing. In shaping the content of daily and weekly commentary pages, the editors keep the department's five aspirations top of mind: Provide strong community leadership, provide a forum for informed debate, get new voices/viewpoints on the pages, actively engage readers and increase readership of these pages and the newspaper as a whole.

**KEVEN ANN WILLEY**  
Vice president and editorial page editor, 50



At *The Dallas Morning News* since late 2002, Keven developed her interest in politics early. When her family lived in Washington, D.C., her

mother used to take Keven as a baby in her bassinet to the U.S. Senate gallery to watch the likes of Everett Dirksen and Estes Kefauver debate the issues of the day. Three decades later, Keven was a political columnist for *The Arizona Republic* in a state that for most of the '80s and '90s was best known for impeaching, indicting or otherwise politically impaling its governors. Her editorial pages in Texas and Arizona have three times been finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. Keven studied briefly in Europe and Mexico before graduating magna cum laude from Northern Arizona University and starting (but never finishing) a master's program in Spanish literature. She is a member of The Pulitzer Prize board, enjoys hiking and biking, and lives with her chef husband in downtown Dallas.

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### MASTHEAD

This tells you the paper's top news executives and past publishers.

Additional executives are listed on 2A.

### The Dallas Morning News

Established October 1, 1885

#### Publishers

Man Dealey 1885-1940  
Dealey 1940-1960  
Dealey 1960-1980  
Moroney Jr. 1980-1985  
Moroney Jr. 1985-1986  
Burt Osborne 1986-2001

James M. Moroney III  
Publisher and Chief Executive Officer

John C. McKeon  
President and General Manager

Robert W. Mong Jr.  
Editor

George Rodriguez  
Vice President, Managing Editor

Keven Ann Willey  
Vice President, Editorial Page Editor

Saturday, September 6, 2008

### EDITORIALS

## Coming to America

Congress should pass bill to promote foreign tourism

America has an image problem. Ever since the 9/11 attacks, our reputation around the world has changed from vacation paradise to unwelcoming land of visa hassles, strip searches and suspicious eyes. The United States has declined 8 percent in global travel. Americans might feel safer knowing we're staying away. But when we return, we're where else to spend their money? According to the U.S. Travel Association, the decline since 2001 is \$137 billion in visitor spending and \$2 billion in tax receipts and

bill pending on Capitol Hill that could boost international tourism and business travel here inject billions of dollars in foreign money back into the U.S. economy without costing taxpayers a dime.

The Travel Promotion Act, which has bipartisan House and Senate support, would establish a nonprofit company to raise America's profile in 27 European and western Pacific countries whose citizens are exempt from obtaining short-term visas. It is designed to overcome fears about security procedures and to play up the advantages of U.S. travel, such as the added purchasing power resulting from a weak dollar.

The program would be funded through a \$10 fee charged to visa-exempt travelers. It might seem strange to lure visitors by charging them a fee, but American travelers often pay such fees when traveling abroad. Voluntary private sector contributions would help supplement the corporation's financing.

No one is portraying this as a magic pill to cure the travel industry's economic woes, but the Travel Promotion Act is a sensible first step toward putting the welcome mat back on America's doorstep.

### EDITORIALS

Here we offer the newspaper's institutional opinion.

With Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston serving as two of the nation's top international hubs, this is a matter worth our legislators' attention. According to the governor's office, international travelers accounted for more than \$4 billion in travel-related spending in Texas in 2006 and contributed hundreds of millions of dollars in state, local and federal taxes.

That's why Congress needs to advance a

## Hits and Misses

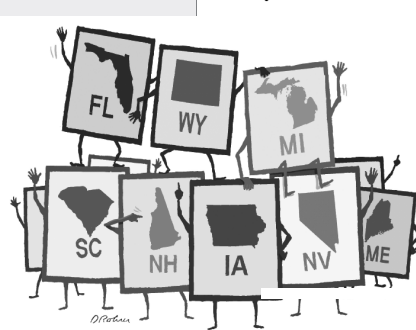
### Returning Anbar to Iraqi control

Less than two years ago, U.S. military leaders used words like dire and dim to describe the political and military setbacks they faced in Anbar province. On Labor Day, the moment many thought might never come became a reality. U.S. forces turned over primary security responsibility in the province to Iraqi troops, a significant milestone in the conflict. Progress had been slow but is now steady and, we hope, lasting.

### HITS AND MISSES

This quick, witty Saturday staple offers a venue for comment-in-short on a wide variety of developments.

### ts: Mostly chaotic



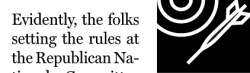
Obviously, the folks setting the rules at the Republican National Committee didn't see the same bunched-up primaries the rest of us saw this year. Otherwise, they would have done the rational thing and created a rotating set of regional primaries for 2012. Alas, that didn't happen. Republican rules-makers decided to stick with the current method, which means Republican primaries probably will get bunched up early again in 2012. Who knows, maybe they can get all 50 primaries in by Jan. 31. Seriously, what's so wrong with rotating primaries from region to region on a monthly basis? More voters would have more time to examine the candidates.

### Fort Worth smells a rat

It's bad enough that Fort Worth residents have to tolerate the Big Cheese Rodent Factory, which breeds up to 600,000 mice and rats a month, but now it wants to expand. The facility was allowed to open four years ago despite violating a zoning ordinance and has been cited as an odor nuisance and other related violations. Neighbors complain that the rodents are stinking up the area so badly that they're driving away business. Now, Big Cheese is seeking permission to expand its facility because of heavy demand from snake breeders and falconers, among others. There's a proper place for this kind of business, and neighbors have a right to raise a stink.

### Stealing from rescuers is a really low blow

You have to be especially cold to steal handheld radios from Dallas Fire-Rescue stations. The culprits, who did their handiwork in August, are now suspected of using at least five stolen radios to disrupt communications with emergency responders. In other circumstances, it might be easy to dismiss this as the work of some merry pranksters taking advantage of the stations' open doors and unguarded facilities. But considering that it affects responders' ability to save lives and property, this is a bad joke of potentially horrific consequences.



### CARTOON

We subscribe to more than a dozen cartoonists nationwide and cull through drawings daily to pick the best.

Political cartoons on the editorial page are generally consistent with the newspaper's views on issues.

Cartoons on the Viewpoints page reflect a variety of perspectives.

### LETTERS

#### Let's restrict the reckless

Re: "Older drivers could face more restrictions — Accidents involving elderly fall in year since statute took effect," Monday news story.

How nice that the state law restricting drivers 70 and over is working. In two years I will be in that class. Hopefully, thinning out the ranks of the older drivers on our roads will protect those who drive drunk, those who have no regard for others' safety and weave in and out of traffic at great speed, those who tailgate because they feel insulted you are in front and the sizeable percentage of the above with no auto insurance.

Bill Cox, Dallas

#### Health care too complex

John McCain wants seniors to negotiate their own health plan. As an 86-year-old, my brain is in relatively good condition, but I am certainly not capable of negotiating my way through the complications that would be involved in understanding a variety of plans. I sometimes have problems standing my phone bill.

Anyone over the age of 80 who having partial senility is lying.

Robert McDowell, Highland

#### Family values ring hollow

The response among Republican surprise announcement concern pregnancy of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin highlights the huge hypocrisy of the Republican Party. As a gay man, Republicans would limit my constitutional rights and make me a second-class citizen under the banner of family values. I am a single parent of two children. I am a teen pregnancy outside of marriage threat to the traditional family? Who self-righteous moral outrage? Give me a break.

Mark Cargy

#### Obama's not JFK, he's better

Re: "Obama is no Jack Kennedy," Mendez, Tuesday Letters.

While both Barack Obama and Jesus many of the same characteristics: mega charisma, high intellect, disarming smiles, athletic looks, relaxed body language and remarkable oratory skills. Mr. Obama was not born into a family of political connections like JFK. I wish that Mr. Obama is a remarkable leader like Martin Luther King Jr. and Jack Ruby who made it to the top on his own merit. The Republicans had a candidate with those assets, they would be speechless.

Gary Kaposta, St.

#### Black vote hit road bump

Re: "Waiting our turn is hard," by Laurie Walsh, Sunday Letters.

I would never diminish the brave of the suffragists who struggled and won for women's right to vote. It is time to get on with it. Ms. Walsh's story that African-American men could 1870. Yes, the 14th Amendment guaranteed

### OUT

Even though John McCain's runoff was announced more than a week ago, writers are still buzzing about Sarah Palin's rise to the top, and the fact that most completely unknown only added to our readers' frenzy. The mother of a self-proclaimed "hockey mom" had a conservative letter writer snipe her sharp oratory and well-delivered message for some, her inexperience is a concern. Palin's family hasn't escaped our letterers' examination, with several pointing the irony of her teenage daughter's presence

### LETTER:

We value reader submissions. We receive far more than we can publish. Representative samples are 200 words, with not more than one published. Viewpoints columns should not exceed 600 words. Letters should include your name, address, city, state and zip code and daytime phone number. Send to: Letters, P.O. Box 10888, Dallas, TX 75210. Letters become property of The News.

### LETTERS

There is no shortage of online forums where people can anonymously call others names, make up facts and throw bombs. But in our published letters to the editor, people sign their names and publicly stand behind their opinions. Letter writers are thrilled when their missives are chosen from more than 800 submissions each week for publication on our pages.

We love focused letters that make a point with humor, irony or precision. We place a priority on letters that disagree with our editorial positions. (For tips, see [dallasnews.com/letters](http://dallasnews.com/letters))

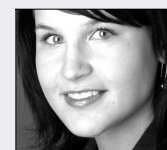
This year, we launched a new online presentation of letters ([dallasnews.com/letters](http://dallasnews.com/letters)). They are easier to find, sort and share — and, of course, you can leave comments and even engage the writer in a debate.

Write to [letterstoeditor@dallasnews.com](mailto:letterstoeditor@dallasnews.com); Letters From Readers, TDMN, P.O. Box 655237, Dallas, Texas 75265; or, via fax, to 972-263-0456.

Always give us your name, street address, city/state, ZIP code and a daytime phone number to verify your authorship.

### JOANNA ENGLAND

Letters coordinator, 26



Joanna loves knitting; yoga; golf; her husband, Dave; and their menagerie. She graduated from Texas A&M University in 2005. As letters coordinator, Joanna selects letters to the editor for publication.

### BONNIE BISHOP

Assistant to the editor, 49



Bonnie is most likely your first contact when you call the Editorial Department. She joined us this past September. She's curious about life, spirituality and people, how we all connect and live out our mission. She is the proud parent of two curious young adults.

### The Editorial Board

#### ROD DREHER

Editorial columnist, 41



A National Review alumnus, Rod has a seat on the editorial board's right wing. But as the author of *Crunchy Cons*, a

book about neo-traditionalist conservatives with countercultural sensibilities, Rod finds his "faith, family and community" style of conservatism sometimes clashes with the mainstream. He joined *The News* in 2003 and lives in Dallas with his wife and three kids. His column appears Sunday and his editorials throughout the week. He also has the lead on producing the new Web version of our Opinion front page.

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#### MIKE HASHIMOTO

Assistant editorial page editor, 50



Everything and nothing about Mike's first 20 years at *The News* prepared him for life on the opinion pages.

In 20 years with SportsDay and the city desk, he had grown used to being the only right-wing nut — with staunch Democratic parents and sisters and typical college (UT-Arlington) and newsroom experiences — so the editorial board offers him a little company. Today, he writes editorials, manages columnists William McKenzie and Rod Dreher, assists Rod on the new Web version of our Opinion page and supervises selected projects.

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#### RODGER JONES

Editorial writer, 58



Texification. That's a process Rodger has enjoyed since arriving from Ohio 23 years ago, just in time for Texas'

sesquicentennial. He joined the editorial board in 2004 after a decade as state editor and some years on the Metro desk. A Richardson resident, he focuses on state and local issues. He also looks for the chance to comment on what he calls "life's strange and overlooked byproducts." He'll editorialize in whatever form works best for readers, such as the world's first singing Internet editorial he wrote and performed a couple of years ago.

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#### MICHAEL LANDAUER

Assistant editorial page editor, 34



Michael oversees the Letters team, and he works with teachers, students and community columnists through

the popular Voices program. He and his team take regular folks and transform them into prolific and powerful pundits. He started Voices and the weekly Sounding Off feature on the Community Opinions pages with six people in 2002. Now more than 1,500 people are raising their voices on the local pages through the two programs. A graduate of Texas A&M, Michael and his wife, Holly, and their dog, Parker, live near White Rock Lake in Dallas.

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#### COLLEEN MCCAIN NELSON

Editorial writer, 34



Politics is a passion for Colleen, who covered local, state and national campaigns before joining the editorial

board in 2006. She crisscrossed the country with John Kerry and George W. Bush in 2004 and spent a few years at Dallas City Hall. She's still writing about politics and has added air quality to her areas of expertise. She also has plenty to say about pop culture and sports. A graduate of the University of Kansas, Colleen is crazed about KU basketball. She and her husband are raising a dog named Phog and are perpetually training for their next marathon.

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