

Viewpoint

The Jasper Newsboy

Established in 1865

Texas Oldest Weekly Newspaper, Continuously Published Under the Same Name

702 S. Wheeler, Jasper, Texas 75951

USPS 273-140 • ISSN 0764-2824

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Our Viewpoint Editorials

Highway provides options

This week, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has approved a feasibility study for a super highway corridor that would follow the route of U.S. Highway 190 through Jasper County.

The highway would allow further access to the ports in Beaumont and Houston as well as access to Fort Polk, Fort Bliss, Fort Hood, Fort Benning and Fort Gordon.

If the highway becomes a reality, it could bring strong economic growth to Jasper County in the form of a steady stream of traffic on this major east-west highway.

While some are heralding the highway, others believe it would stifle the low-key

lifestyle that is prevalent in the Texas Forest Country.

Economic growth is needed for the survival of any county in the state of Texas. This highway would make Jasper County a more viable option to an industry relocating here.

Growth, at a reasonable rate, will only make Jasper County stronger in the long run.

Roses go to....

▼ Mennonite Disaster Service, who have come down to Newton County to work on homes damaged by Hurricane Rita.

▼ To all the contestants in the first annual Winter Bash for learning valuable showing lessons.

In Jasper County

East Texas trophy hunting...



Newsboy photo/ Sharon Kerr

PATROL CAPTAIN TERRY LEE, now of the Jasper County Sheriff's Office, bagged this buck with a brand-new patrol car when he lived in Montgomery County.

Guest Commentary One person's viewpoint

Our eighth president

The new Washington dollar coin (which replaces the rather nice Sacajawea dollar, which replaced the scares-small-children Susan B. Anthony dollar) is another too-much-like-a-quarter coin, and will end its days gnawing its own wooden teeth in the backs of dresser drawers everywhere.

Fling it over the Delaware River? Maybe over Cow Creek.

The coin is not unattractive, in a shiny, carnival-prize way, but like

all contemporary American coinage it is of base metal and is intrinsically worthless. The relief on the obverse of our eighth president is very poorly done, with the Marvel Comics monster eyes looking as if they were about to emit death rays, the misshapen jaws swollen from perhaps a really bad toothache, and the wig badly in need of a little hair-gel in the back.

Poor George — he didn't deserve this.

The coin tells us that George Washington was our first president, which is what I was taught in school. But G. W. was our eighth president, not our first, succeeding the seven presidents who served the nation from 1781 to 1789 under our post-revolutionary plan of government, the Articles of Confederation.

This first scheme was based on the premise that each former colony was, as the Declaration of Independence stated, an independent state, a nation. But these little countries were so poor and under populated that they were not viable, and a more centralized government was necessary for survival. The result was the Constitutional Convention and the new plan in 1789.



Mack Hall

Until that point, there were seven presidents, and to deny their existence is perhaps to deny the validity of the United States.

The first President, John Hanson (1781-1782), certainly deserves his own coin, one that is more valuable than a Mardi Gras throwaway. As the first President of the United States he faced a military coup by the army, which had not been paid during the war.

Congress, being Congress, ran away (perhaps after passing a non-binding resolution), leaving President Hanson alone to deal with a divided country with rebellious soldiers and no budget.

Had President Hanson failed, the American experience might have anticipated the Mexican one, two hundred years of military coups and instability. If John Hanson had been the first president of the newly independent Mexico, perhaps Americans would be crossing the deserts and the Rio Grande in search of stability.

Hanson wisely ordered all foreign soldiers, including the once-helpful French, out of America and banned the flying of foreign flags. He resolved the army's problems, established the foreign service, the war department (now renamed, in an Orwellian fashion, The Department of Defense), and the Treasury. He also designed the Great Seal of the United States, still in use. Not bad for a full, one-year term!

There are those who say that President Hanson doesn't matter, that all this is but

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Your Viewpoint Letters to the Editor

Road belongs to Jasper or Newton?

By BILLY STEPHENS
Jasper

I have been living on a county road off of Huff Creek Road for 10 years give or take a few, in what I thought was Jasper County. I have been paying my taxes to the Jasper County Courthouse since I moved to this location.

The Jasper/Newton county line does run down the middle of my road, but I live on the Jasper County side. This is quite obvious since I have been dutifully paying my taxes to Jasper for quite some time.

Due to the recent rains, like many other roads in our area, the road to my home is in terrible shape. It is so bad, in fact, that it is not drivable.

I have to leave my truck on Huff Creek Road and either walk or ride my four-wheeler to my house. I contacted our recently elected County Commissioner Roy Parker to see about getting some rock put on my road so that I can at least get to my house.

He came to look at the damage and informed me that I do not live in Jasper County, so there is nothing he can do. I'm curious to know how he justifies a taxpayer paying taxes to a county that, according to him, doesn't even live in.

And if he can't justify that situation, how does he plan on explaining his lack of enthusiasm for his elected position?

I am not asking for pavement or anything of that extremity. All I want is to be able to

drive down my road and park in my own driveway.

Letters to editor criteria outlined

Letters to the editor of *The Jasper Newsboy* must meet the following criteria:

- Should be of general or specific interest to the readership of *The Jasper Newsboy*
- Should be limited to about 300 words
- Must contain a valid signature, a valid mailing address and valid day and evening telephone numbers where the writer may be reached
- Names of persons writing letters will not be withheld
- Unsigned letters will not be published
- Letters endorsing or opposing political candidates are considered political advertising and should be taken to the advertising department
- Letters containing personal attacks on individuals, public figures or elected officials will be edited or sent back to the writer. Criticism of how a public figure or elected official votes or on actions taken with regard to performance of his/her job are acceptable as long as the comments are not personally derisive
- Letters of complaint about private businesses will be forwarded to the business in question and will not be published
- Thank you letters with long lists of names are considered advertising and

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Capital Highlights A summary of the week's significant events in Austin

Lawmakers put property tax cut on fast track

AUSTIN - The Texas Senate on Feb. 14 passed a resolution to break the state's constitutional spending cap.

This was done in order to move a step closer to delivering school property tax relief required by legislation passed a year ago in the third called session of the 79th Texas Legislature.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 20 by Sen. Steve Ogden, R-College Station, establishes that the existing need for lower school district property taxes constitutes an emergency for the people of Texas.

The resolution also makes it so state tax revenues not dedicated by the Texas Constitution for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 may be in an amount not to exceed \$14.2 billion more than authorized.

On a simple majority vote and with none of the usual

floor debate that regular legislative bills receive, the resolution quickly moves property tax relief ahead of other items on the agenda.

Once passed by the full Senate, SCR 20 shifted over to the House for consideration.

The House Appropriations Committee approved it too. Next, the resolution is subject to a vote of the full House on Feb. 20. It is predicted to pass on a Republican party line vote, or something close to it.

\$14 billion surfaces over and over
Fourteen billion dollars keeps popping up here and there in the world of state finance.

As previously mentioned, via SCR 20, the Legislature is close to giving itself permission to spend \$14 billion more in the next budget cycle.

In early January, newly installed state Comptroller

Susan Combs pegged the state budget surplus at more than \$14 billion.

The third reference to \$14 billion: Gov. Rick Perry says financial experts put a conservative estimate of the sale price of the Texas Lottery at \$14 billion.

If sold for \$14 billion, Perry said, the money may generate about \$1.3 billion annual interest based on an average return of 9 percent, or \$300 million more than the Lottery currently returns, per year.

Perry said he would use the annual interest to create trust funds for cancer research, public education and an assistance program for Texans with no health insurance.

Senate to consider



Ed Sterling
Texas Press Association

Jessica's Law

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst on Feb. 14 announced the filing of Senate Bill 5, the Texas version of Jessica's Law, part of his Texas Children First plan.

SB 5, sponsored by Sen. Bob Deuell, R-Greenville, who also is a medical doctor, would do the following:

▼ Require mandatory 25 years to life sentences for a first-time violent sexual offense against a child under age 14;

▼ Require lifetime GPS monitoring for child sex offenders;

▼ Allow prosecutors to seek the death penalty for a second sexually violent offense against a child under age 14; and

▼ Double the statute of limitations on sexual crimes against children from 10 to

20 years.

Jessica's Law is named for 9-year-old Floridian Jessica Lunsford. In March 2005, she was abducted from her Florida home, raped and murdered by a convicted sex offender. Since then, more than two dozen states have enacted toughened sex offender laws in memory of Jessica.

Texas Tomorrow Fund update

A new report commissioned by state Comptroller Susan Combs recommends that the Texas Tomorrow Fund remain closed to enrollment.

The prepaid college tuition program begun under then-Comptroller John Sharp in 1996 has been closed to enrollment since 2003.

The size of the fund will be \$3 billion short of the demand on it in 20 years, and with today's leaping tuition costs, a much greater

shortfall is possible.

Combs said funds contributed by the 158,000 families who are already enrolled are safe.

Lawmaker addresses high tuition

In the wake of Comptroller Combs' report, state Rep. Garnet Coleman, D-Houston, called for an end to tuition deregulation.

Coleman said that since tuition deregulation was enacted by the Legislature in 2003, tuition has gone up an average of 37 percent at Texas' 35 public colleges and universities.

He said unless something is done, families that already have invested in the fund cannot be guaranteed the money will be there when their kids need it.

The full report is available online at window.state.tx.us. Ed Sterling is director of member services for the Texas Press Association in Austin.