

Viewpoint

The Jasper Newsboy

Established in 1865

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Our Viewpoint Editorials

Forums will give us info for election

This coming month, forums have been scheduled for candidates up for election in the March primary for Jasper County.

The Democrat Club of Jasper County will host two forums in February and March at the District Courtroom and the Buna sub-courtroom. The Kirbyville Lions and the Kirbyville Women's Club have set up another forum with invites going out to all the candidates.

These forums will allow the candidates to reach the public with their views on the offices they seek. It will allow them to inform the public why they should garner their vote over the other candidates in the race.

These forums will also give the general public a chance to see the candidates in action. A chance to hear their platforms, their views on a variety of subjects and see how they handle pressure situations.

It is at these forums that uninformed voters can make their choices for office. They can hear all the candidates and make an informed choice when they visit the voting booths in March.

Traditionally, all the candidates appear at these forums as it gives them an opportunity to reach the voting public in an unbiased forum. The questions are not set one way or the other and the forums are all professionally run to ensure a productive process.

Kudos to the groups hosting the forums. Your contribution to the political season is invaluable. In small counties such as Jasper,

gossip and rumors can easily play a part in political races. Once the rumor mill gets going, there is nothing that can be done to stop it.

These forums can make or break a political career. A strong showing can produce early favorites. Candidates will either move to top of their race or start making plans for the removal of their signs.

We encourage all registered voters to attend one of the forums scheduled in the coming month. All votes count in March but informed voters can truly make a difference.

Roses go to....

▼ All the winners at the Jasper Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and to those who braved the rainy weather to attend this year's event at the Wesley Center.

▼ To all the church choirs who participated in the Sing With One Voice event at St. Michaels's. The annual event is a blessing to this community in many ways as it allows us all to unite and enjoy music.

▼ To all the Jasper High School seniors who took the challenge and entered this year's Bulldog Bark. Good job guys.

Thorns go to....

▼ Houstonians who burglarize. Five visitors from southwest of here gave that town another black eye as they ventured into our county in an attempt to burglarize county pharmacies. Maybe our police have sent the right message to these visitors that their actions will not be tolerated around here.

Your Viewpoint Letters to the Editor

Keep city safe

By JAMES and NELDA COKER Jasper

In regards to Bro. Leroy Kipp's letter we agree with him one hundred percent. We are also parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. We don't want our families to have to deal with the results from the sale of beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages openly in our city.

We pay city taxes because we own property in the city but can't vote on this issue since we live outside the city limits. We do shop and eat there though.

Let's keep our city as safe as we can for our children. I pray there are enough people in our city that will vote against this issue. As Bro. Leroy said there are a lot more important issues here than the "big money," profits the businesses and city is supposed to receive.

We have existed as the beautiful "Jewel of the Forest" without the sale of alcohol for many years. Please keep our city free of the problems that exist from the open sale of alcoholic beverages.

JEDCO board does good work

By NORA WHITE Jasper

I want to applaud the recent actions of the JEDCO board in turning a portion of the sales tax over to repair streets and highways instead of keeping it all for "economic development."

"Economic development" in Jasper has meant giving millions of dollars of loans and grants to disreputable individuals and bogus companies. Can anyone forget Explorer Aircraft or Platinum Silk? Those people skipped town with tons of sales tax money while our streets rotted away.

Now there is a different wave of free loaders. They say "economic development" is funding their personal pet projects which always seem to put money in their pockets. What a surprise.

This is why there has been no "economic development" success in Jasper ever. And we continue to throw sales tax money down a hole by paying DETCOG \$2,700 dollars a month for a JEDCO office. I've been out there twice and nobody was even there. Why can't JEDCO have an office at city hall for free? They used to.

It is past time these same individuals stop

profiting from sales tax under the guise of "economic development." The whole city has to win. Thank goodness we finally have real leaders who will stand up to this. Besides, what could be better for real economic development than modernized streets and highways?

Program grows

By JACK LANE and PASTOR JOHN D HARDIN Mt. Olive Church

Mt. Olive's Men Day Program has been in the spirit of love for 29 years. We started off with no more than two loaves of bread.

Now we have to order our food to serve our friends. We have been blessed and it has grown. We served more than 153 guests the third Sunday in January and are proud.

We have never had as much coverage by Mr. Kerr as was given. The Jasper Newsboy was at Mt. Olive and we say thank you in the most humble way we know how.

I still maintain that Jasper and its community for a job well done. We know how to come together, yes we do. Thank you and let love continue and we look forward to next year.

Letters' criteria

The Jasper Newsboy would like to publish your thoughts and concerns about issues that are important to you.

All Letters to the Editor should be accompanied with the writer's name and daytime telephone number for verification purposes.

Phone numbers will not be published, but the author's name will be. Under no circumstances will the author's name be withheld.

"Thank You" letters will not be published and will be transferred the the advertising department for an advertisement. All letters are subject to editing for newspaper style and clarity, without changing the meaning of the content.

Letters should be limited to 300 words.

Letters endorsing or opposing political candidates are considered political advertising and will be forwarded to the advertising department.

Deadline for letters is 10 a.m. Monday to be published in the following Wednesday's publication.

Mail letters to: The Jasper Newsboy P.O. Box 1419 Jasper, Texas 75951-1419 or e-mail to: jgalvan@jaspernewsboy.com

Guest Commentary One person's viewpoint

Mike Huckabee ate Rocky the Flying Squirrel

Okay, he really didn't, but he did state while campaigning in Las Vegas that when he was in college he cooked squirrels in his popcorn popper.

This naturally leads the American voter to ask two salient questions about why a college student cooked squirrels in a popcorn popper: Was this because of a shortage of popcorn? Or of a shortage of neighborhood cats?

One imagines Senator Edwards ordering squirrel in French - but only so that he can sue it. Or Senator Hillary Rodham dropping a squirrel at thirty feet with only her Glare of Death.

What we are dealing with, my

fellow Americans, is a candidate for the Presidency of the United States who may have struck on a solution for starvation in third-world countries: let them eat squirrel.

President Bill Clinton might interrupt to maintain that he personally saw squirrels bullying union culinary workers during the cauci in Las Vegas.

Both President Bill Clinton and Governor / Reverend Mike Huckabee are from Hope, Arkansas, which may explain much.

Several years ago a friend and I



Mack Hall

spent the night in Hope, and had a sandwich at the local Dairy Queen. There was no squirrel on the electric menu, but I think the culinary workers were humming the theme from Deliverance.

I too have eaten the arboreal rodent; it was one of those experiences my Depression-raised father thought I ought to know about.

Those of us raised in the security of plenty mock such a diet only from our ignorance, for mankind has always lived on the margins of starvation. We who motor along highways lined with

cafes' and grocery stores full of good, inexpensive food almost never think about the harsh reality that our ancestors almost always needed a little more protein for the pot.

And you never, ever joke about food with Depression babies. Once upon a time I pushed away a plate (not squirrel), and my father said "Eat your supper; there are children starving in China who would love to have those beans / peas / potatoes / corn."

Suffering from a pre-adolescent failure to think critically, I said "Well, they can have mine."

The sequel was not pretty, and to this day its memory makes me sit

lightly.

A modern host might ask you of a meal "How did you like the presentation?"

A host raised in the 1950s may ask "Was it good?"

But your Mawmaw and Pawpaw will ask, in genuine concern, "Did you get enough to eat?"

The psychic pain of real hunger and fear of hunger runs deep.

As for me, I am a good hundred pounds away from ever again eating squirrel or broccoli.

And as for the candidates' dietary choices, who gets eaten next - Alvin the Chipmunk?

Mack Hall is a resident of Kirbyville

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

House committee ponders voter I.D. issues

AUSTIN - The state House Committee on Elections met Jan. 25 to talk about allegations that there are some folks who pretend to be someone they aren't when they cast a ballot on election day.

Acting on a legislative interim charge, the committee is seeking to (1) determine if voter fraud exists in Texas, (2) explore ideas on what to do about it if it does exist, and (3) report back to the Legislature in January 2009 when election laws could be amended.

Elections committee chair Leo Berman, R-Tyler, asked if Texas, with its estimated 2 million illegal residents, might be in danger of massive voter fraud.

No testimony seemed to confirm such a danger, but there was testimony indicating that 150,000 or more of Texas' registered voters do not have photo identification.

The idea of a state or federal photo I.D. card that could be used to verify voter eligibility is being tested in Texas and elsewhere.

Voter I.D. legislation failed to

pass in the Texas legislature's 2007 session, but the topic is still hot.

Rep. Joe Farias, D-San Antonio, expressed concern that if voters are expected to produce a state photo I.D., such as a driver's license, some older voters in his district might not have the required photo identification, and could be disqualified at the polls.

Rep. Rafael Anchia, D-Dallas, said there are reliable, published reports concluding that there is little fraud, but what there is of it mainly relates to mail-in ballots.

Kels Farmer, an auditor with the State Auditor's Office, reported a finding that 49,000 registered voters may have been ineligible to vote during the May 12, 2007, special election, because they were felons, duplicates or deceased. Those findings did not show that any of the 49,000 voted.

Jay Dyer of the Secretary of State's Office said half of the



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49,000 voters on the roll mentioned by Farmer were duplicates caused by a computer error.

Dale Stobaugh, with the Forensic Document Section of the Texas Department of Public Safety's crime laboratory, said thumbprints would be one way to curb voter fraud, as handwriting samples can be unreliable.

Travis County Clerk Dana DeBeauvoir said that in serving as elections officer in more than 100 elections over the last 21 years, she was aware of only one case of voter impersonation.

Tarrant County elections administrator Steve Rayburn said he has not seen any voter fraud in nine years.

But Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector Paul Bettencourt said he had proof of 381 cases of voter fraud in his county, including dead people, a jailed felon and non-citizens who

voted.

Anchia contested some of Bettencourt's assertions, but both men agreed that if the federal government would give county administrators access to the U.S. citizenship database, it would be easier to prevent voter fraud.

Justice named in complaint

A citizen action group, Texas Watch, filed a complaint with the Texas Ethics Commission against Texas Supreme Court Justice Paul W. Green, alleging he used political contributions to pay for travel to and from his home in San Antonio on 272 separate occasions, violating state ethics laws.

More phone access for prisoners

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice approved a program to allow more than 100,000 Texas prison inmates regular access to a pay telephone.

Enabling legislation provides for the installation of one pay phone for every 30 eligible inmates. That's about 4,000 phones.

Perry talks about state economy

Gov. Rick Perry spoke at the annual meeting of the Texas Association of Business on Jan. 25. He said the state economy is strong and expanding. But, he said, healthcare, how to pay for it, how much to provide, and how to succeed in business while doing so "is one of the most pressing issues of our times."

Crab trap program needs help

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is calling for volunteers to help in the 7th Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program, Feb. 15-24.

During this 10-day period, all Texas bays will be closed to crabbing with crab traps and any traps left in the bay will be presumed to be abandoned and considered litter under state law, thus allowing volunteers to legally remove any crab traps they find.

Ed Sterling is director of member services for the Texas Press Association in Austin.