

Jenn Oton
Editorial Page Editor
303-684-5295

To Build A Better World, Start In Your Own Community

EDITORIAL

St. Vrain decision on Imagine should be final word

At some point, the St. Vrain Valley School District's decision must stand. If the locally elected board members agree that the Imagine charter school is not right for the district, then only they should have the responsibility — and accountability — for that decision.

Twice, the local board has said no to the charter school proposal. Now, for the second time, the charter school's supporters will appeal the SVVSD board's decision to the State Board of Education.

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While the opportunity to appeal cannot and should not be taken from those who are rejected by the local school board, both Imagine's proponents and the state board should realize that it is the local school board that must answer directly to local constituents.

It is true that the SVVSD board traditionally has been cool toward charter schools, which are a necessary component to educational choice and a challenge to a monopoly in education. But there are already for charter schools in the district.

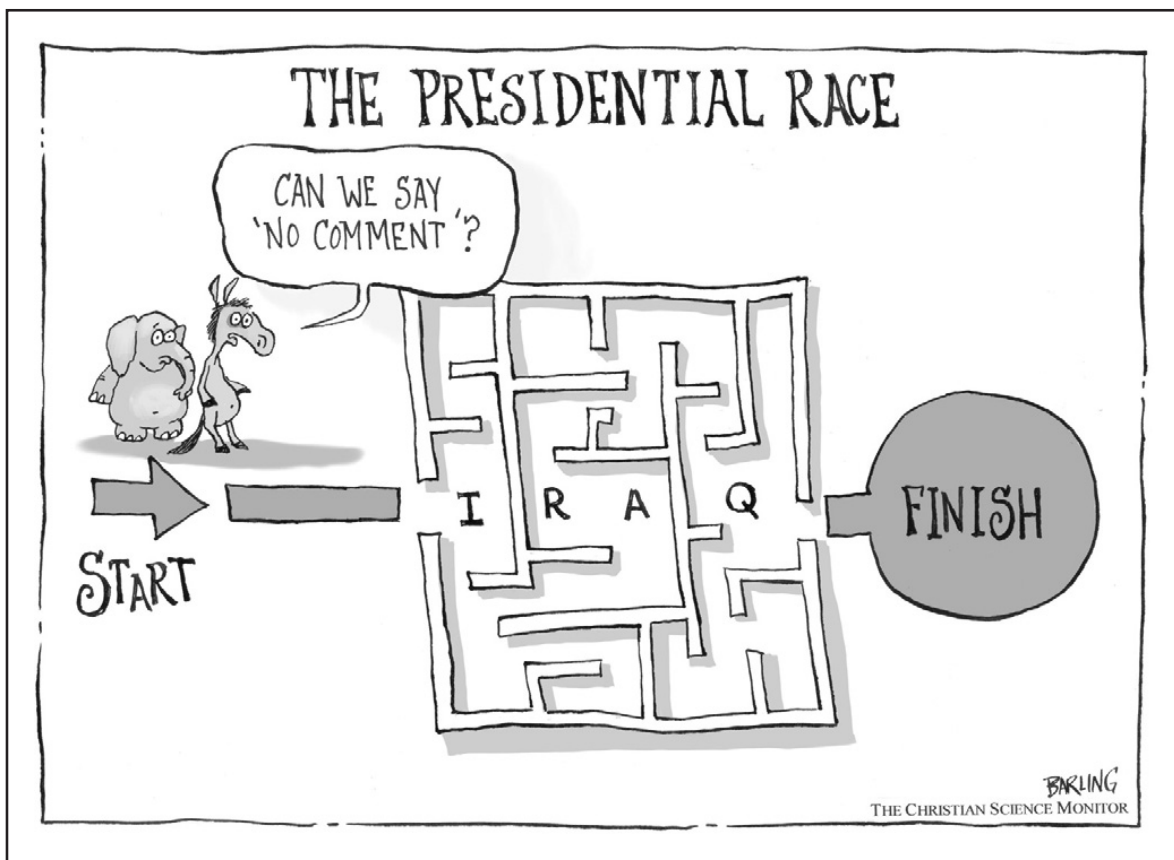
The board has reasonable concerns about this proposal, which would bring to

the Carbon Valley a school operated by a nationwide organization.

The main sticking point is a failure to agree on a plan to recruit a student population that reflects the demographics and the racial diversity of the community.

The state board meets monthly in Denver, and while it is charged with the general supervision of public schools in Colorado, it should not interfere with the reasonable actions of local school boards.

The SVVSD Board of Education is directly answerable to residents of its district. It meets weekly, and residents know its members and how to reach them. If they fail local residents, it is in the hands of local residents to do something about it.



Defying the stereotypes

By Marcia Hensley

Writers on the Range

Thanks to Western movies and popular novels, stereotypes come easily to mind when you think of women of the early West. There's the saint in the sunbonnet, the soiled dove, the schoolmarm and the rancher's daughter. Or maybe you remember dramatic figures like the Lewis and Clark guide Sacajawea, or Calamity Jane of the perfect aim. But there's a group of gutsy women that's seldom acknowledged, let alone recognized: single woman homesteaders.

Historians estimate that about 12 percent of homesteaders in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North and South Dakota, and Utah were single women. Lured by the Homestead Act, which gave any 21-year-old who headed a household the right to homestead federal land, independent women crossed the country to become landowners. By the early 1900s, a woman could load her belongings on a train and in several days make a trip that once took months. When she arrived, a land locator took her by wagon or Model T to find her claim. Revisions in 1909 and 1912 in the Homestead Act also reduced the amount of time needed to "prove up," and they doubled the amount of land that could be claimed.

Florence Blake Smith, a Chicago bookkeeper, writes that she learned about homesteading from a friend just before he set out for Wyoming. Her response: "If he could do it, I could, too." She worked winters back in Chicago to earn enough to support her required seven months on the claim, but never gave up until the land was hers. Her success was typical; research shows that women homesteaders were as apt to succeed as men.

German gets it wrong

Re: "We need cars without the gas," March 19, Open Forum

Aaron German's letter has to be a hoax and a cruel one at that. Are we to believe that this drivel could be written by a high school student?

Let's look at his "facts." Gas prices increasing 37 cents in one day to "\$2.60-plus?" Not in Longmont, at least not by Monday, March 19.

The president's approval rate at 23 percent? Well, it's low, but not that low.

The president has almost put us in a depression? With inflation and unemployment at almost record lows, the gross national product and stock market at record highs, and average annual income increasing, I don't think so.

The president has raised prices on everything? I thought supply and demand has more to do with pricing of goods and services.

I don't know what to think about his views on technology. Maybe he could share his ideas with us. The last "cars" that didn't use fossil fuels either as gasoline or to generate other fuels such as electricity were horse and buggies!

JOHN L. FENSTERMAKER SR.
Longmont

Assessing leadership

Now that we are beginning the fifth year of George W. Bush's big blunder, the Iraq War, it is a good time to assess his leadership as commander-in-chief.

According to four continuous years of his propaganda press conferences, we are winning the war. He has been winning it all along, and he continues to win it on our behalf. Progress is being made. It is

Here's to the women who claimed their West

Another Chicagoan, Nellie Burgess, 31, said she was persuaded by "the call of the outdoors" to give up her reporter's job to file a claim in Idaho near the Snake River. She proved up her claim while also becoming a proficient hunter, gardener and fisherwoman.

Helen Coburn dropped out of college to homestead in Wyoming with a girlfriend. They filed on adjoining land and shared a claim shack that straddled their property line. Helen was Worland's first schoolteacher until Ashby Howell, owner of the town's general store, courted and wed her. But many women relished their single life. Alice Newberry found that out while cooking for a hired hand and teaching in a country school in eastern Colorado. Marriage seemed unattractive, she wrote to her mother, because "cooking three meals a day, 365 days a year for the term of my natural life, is more than I can face." A South Dakota homesteader told a Colliers reporter that her life had seemed empty when she lived in a spacious house. "Now I have my 10x12 house, my yellow land and my freedom, and I think that life contains everything."

Women homesteaders were not necessarily fresh young things. In 1912, 47-year-old divorcee Geraldine Lucas homesteaded 160 acres at the base of the Grand Teton in Wyoming, and incidentally, became the second woman to climb its peak. Widows also saw homesteading as a way to support their families. Elinore Pruitt Stewart is

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always being made since the first missile was fired in 2003. Indeed, four years of his idea of progress has got us exactly where we are now, and more of the same would no doubt leave us twice as well off when we begin the 10th year of his war.

Despite his cunning and cleverness, President Bush would not have made a good commander-in-chief when the Dunkirk decision had to be made. He's not a cut and runner. No sir, he would have been much more in character as the commander who ordered the "Charge of the Light Brigade."

LEE NETZLER
Longmont

Parents can serve

Re: "Imagine charter still just a dream," March 15, Page A1

Some days, I find there are no easy choices and I just have to make a decision. When parental obligations conflict with official duties, I'm especially torn.

This is exactly what occurred for me — an elected school board official — last Wednesday evening. As the Daily Times-Call reported, I missed a portion of a school board meeting and a controversial vote. What wasn't reported was that I was at my 10-year-old's violin recital on his "big day" in the quarterly school performance.

It was a magical moment when, looking down from the stage, my son spotted me in the audience. When our eyes met, I knew I made the right decision.

In the year ahead, several positions on our school board will be up for election. Busy people, including involved moms and dads, will contemplate whether they can possibly make time for public service.

perhaps the best known, because letters she wrote to her former employer in Denver were published in the Atlantic Monthly and then in a book, Letters of a Woman Homesteader.

In the early 20th century, women back East talked earnestly of women's equality. In the West, single women homesteaders demonstrated it. Women showed they could take charge, instead of just following along; women could support themselves, taking risks in an unfamiliar world. It is probably no coincidence that the Western states were the first to grant women the right to vote.

What did single women homesteaders prove by proving up their claims? Like the women honored this year by the National Women's History Project, they saw an opportunity and took it, leading the way for other women to do the same. Take, for instance, 2007 honoree Suzanne Lewis. She moved west from Florida to become the first female superintendent at Glacier National Park in Montana, and she is now the first woman to fill the top job in Yellowstone National Park. Her success in a previously male-dominated profession suggests new possibilities for young women contemplating careers today, just as women homesteaders did for women 100 years ago.

Single women homesteaders remind us what a woman can accomplish with determination and hard work — a good thing to celebrate this March during Women's History Month.

Marcia Hensley is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News in Paonia, Colorado (hcn.org). She writes in Farson, Wyoming, where she's finishing an anthology of writing by single homesteader women.

To those individuals I say, "yes you can." And while it might not be reported in the paper, you'll still have the privilege and obligation of being mom and/or dad first.

Further, when parents model good choices about balancing family and civic obligations, we ensure that members of the next generation step up and accept the dual responsibilities of parenthood and citizenship.

As for my constituency, I ask your understanding; and to my son, I say, you were awesome!

MERRILL BOHANING
St. Vrain Valley
Board of Education
Firestone

Cover the news

An informed public is vital to sustain an effective democracy. Citizens must know what their elected representatives are doing. Longmont residents depend on the Daily Times-Call for information on issues before our City Council.

The Longmont City Council is now conducting in near secrecy momentous negotiations with LifeBridge Christian Church and its attorneys. No details of these negotiations are printed in the Times-Call. Weekly council meetings are a discontinued news feature in the Times-Call. Why is our only local newspaper abandoning important news coverage by its staff reporters? Do our city councilors want their electors poorly informed on their public meetings? Is the Times-Call reverting to tabloid format? Would that serve the public interest?

ROBERT W. ZIMMERER
Longmont

There she goes again

By Tom Fitton

Judicial Watch

You think the Clintons have changed their ethical stripes? You think that a presidential campaign would make Hillary Clinton honest? Judge for yourself.

The Washington Post reported recently that, in her official financial disclosure reports, Hillary Clinton failed to disclose her position as Secretary/Treasurer of the Clinton Family Foundation on five occasions, as required by a federal law called the Ethics in Government Act.

Did Hillary forget she holds a position in her family foundation? Not a chance. She and her husband have used the foundation to write off more than \$5 million from their taxable personal income. Even for the Clintons, who are multi-millionaires, that is an awfully big figure to ignore.

Did Hillary misunderstand the reporting requirements? Of course not. Hillary is a Yale graduate and a lawyer. The plain language of the Ethics in Government Act requires all senators to report this type of affiliation with any organization. This is standard procedure.

Did Hillary think no one would notice the "mistake"? Not likely. Never mind the fact that Hillary and Bill Clinton are two of the most visible politicians on the face of the planet. This is presidential campaign season and Hillary is the front runner for the Democratic nomination. Every move she makes is scrutinized, and she knows it.

Moreover, it was only a little more than one year ago that Hillary's campaign fundraising operation was slapped with a \$35,000 fine by the Federal Election Commission in response for failing to disclose more than \$700,000 in campaign contributions. (Hillary, of course, escaped personal accountability for the scandal, despite evidence from the criminal investigation and trial of her National Finance Director that she had full knowledge of the deception.)

So, if Hillary likely knew she was violating the law, and she knew her every move would be monitored, why would she take the chance of filing false financial disclosure forms over five years? First, because Hillary Clinton believes — and with good reason — that she will never be held accountable to the law, no matter how egregious her offense. Second, because it serves her political interests.

Some of the Clinton Family Foundation expenditures touch upon issues related to foreign policy and other controversial matters. There is even a foundation contribution concerning an individual involved in Hillary's questionable commodities trading in the 1970s. Certainly as she prepared for her presidential run, Hillary had an interest in keeping from the public more questions about cattle futures and the foundation's contributions to Mideast charities.

The Clintons have other ties to foreign governments and interests. The Post, in another story, tells us Bill Clinton raked in a staggering \$40 million in the past six years by making speeches, many of them to foreign entities and corporations with interests in U.S. policy. The bulk of this money seems to have gone directly into the Clintons' personal coffers. (All this special interest cash means a family foundation is useful to the Clintons as a means to gain charitable tax deductions.) This money is also available for her presidential run. Were these foreign and other special interests buying a seat at the table with Senator Clinton by contributing to the Clintons' personal fortune? What do they expect from a Hillary Clinton White House? Perhaps the coffee klatches, trade mission seats, meetings with national security staff, and Lincoln Bedroom overnights used by the Clinton gang to raise cash during their first stay at the White House?

Judicial Watch filed separate complaints with the Senate Ethics Committee and the Justice Department over Hillary's false financial disclosure reports. According to Senate rules, Hillary's failure to comply with disclosure requirements represents "improper conduct that reflects upon the United States Senate." The Justice Department, meanwhile, can bring civil and criminal actions against Hillary Clinton if she willfully violated disclosure laws.

The American people are sick and tired of go-nowhere investigations that too often result in no real accountability. All politicians must be forced to play by the rules or suffer the consequences. Hillary Clinton is no exception.

Tom Fitton is president of Judicial Watch, a non-partisan educational foundation that fights government corruption. Visit www.judicialwatch.org for more information.

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Community Service and Newspapers in Education

350 Terry St.,
Longmont
Colo. 80501

Telephone
303-776-2244
Classified
303-776-7440
Fax
303-678-8615

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Open Forum, P.O. Box 299,
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