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EDITORIAL

Improve plastic bottle recycling

Attend a community event, county fair or gathering of almost any size, and every other person is likely carrying a drink. Increasingly, thanks to emphasis on healthful living and hydration, that drink is water, served up in a plastic bottle.

Water served in bottles has become so popular that it represents 90 percent of the growth in the beverage industry, according to a column in *The New York Times* recently.

Thirty billion bottles of water will be consumed this year in this country.

And virtually every one of those bottles, manufactured from the same oil stocks that fuel our cars, ends up being tossed away.

In the best of situations, they end up curbside with recyclables and get re-used in some fashion. Unlike glass and aluminum, they'll never hold drinking water again.

Unfortunately, curbside recycling is not a universal method of disposal of waste materials such as plastic bottles, so billions end up in landfills.

The explosive growth in the use of personal, one-use water bottles has begun to fuel calls reminiscent of the 1970s to pass bottle bills that will require payment of deposits on the bottles. The deposits are refunded by grocers and others who sell the original product.

Not every state passed bottle bills during the 1970s; Colorado was among those that did not. But those states that did implement bottle bills applied the language only to bottles that would hold carbonated beverages — soda or beer, typically. Those states also did not index their deposits to inflation, so the nickel per bottle still required for beer bottles now is such a pittance that many consumers don't bother to reclaim their money.

So how do states encourage people who carry around and drink from water or other beverage bottles to dispose of them properly? Too many end up in gutters, along roadways and sidewalks, or in the trash.

Bottle bills are a strategy of the past, which did work for a while. But Americans are well entrenched in a throw-away society where it no longer makes sense to fix televisions or microwaves, let alone bring an empty piece of plastic back to the grocer.

Instead, the effort ought to be directed at making it easy for any consumer to find a place to properly dispose of plastic or glass bottles or aluminum cans. Every waste receptacle ought to have a place for trash and a place for recyclables. This would include receptacles in public and private places.

And governments ought to require that every waste hauler have the means to handle recyclables in an environmentally friendly way. There is money to be made in the waste business.

Economics have changed this issue for good. Now's the time to encourage responsible disposal and new uses for the discarded material — starting with the 30 billion water bottles consumed this year.

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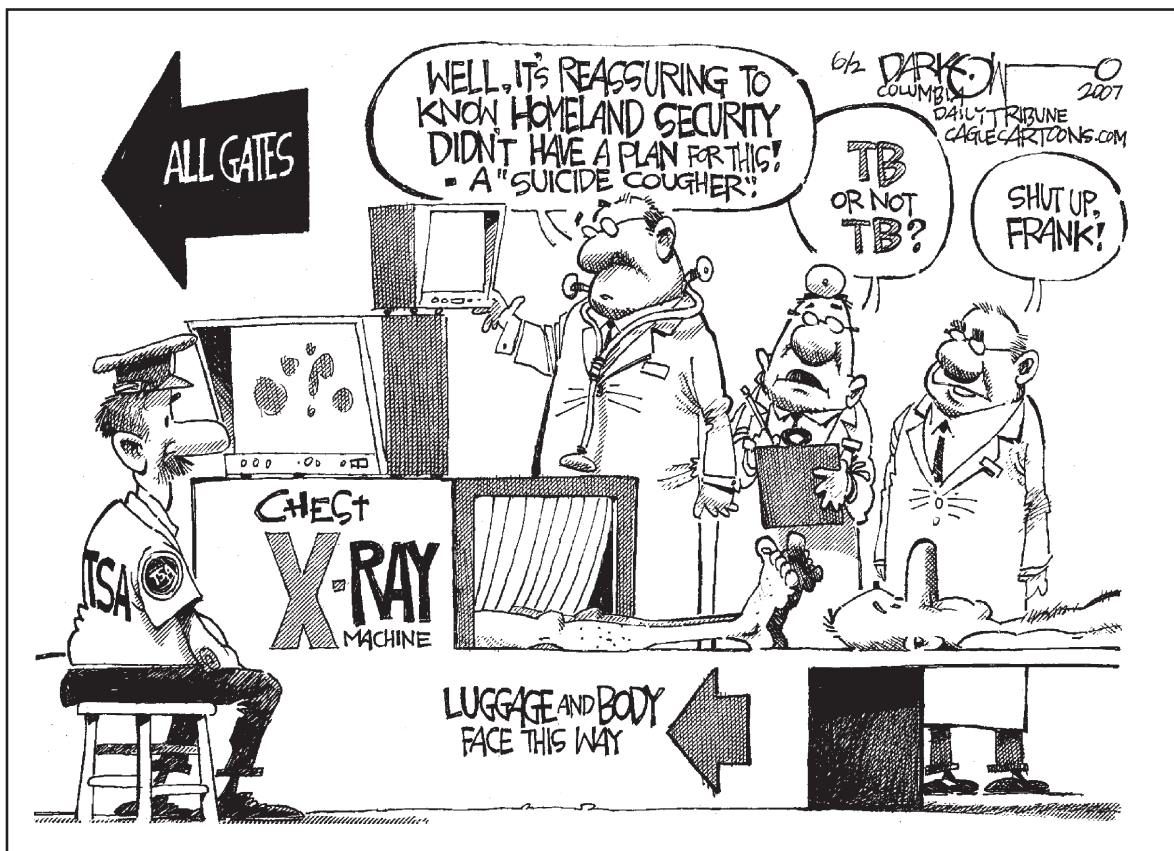
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Sunshine reform on hold

By Charles N. Davis

Society of Professional Journalists

Congress, apparently content to explore ever-new depths in public disapproval, is on the verge of having a single member derail the most meaningful reform in years of the federal Freedom of Information Act.

How, you ask, when overwhelming majorities support the legislation in both the House and Senate?

The secret hold, of course. Ever heard of the secret hold? It's a

beauty — a real relic of the stuffed shirts of yesteryear, smoke-filled rooms and fat cats with stogies guffawing over the latest bamboozle of the taxpaying schmucks. Think country clubs, secret handshakes

and bizarre rituals.

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists, the nation's largest journalism-advocacy organization, used the power of the blogosphere to find out whose legislative bludgeon was buried in the back of open government. We called every senator, one by one, until at last — when it became clear he could hide no longer — Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., came blinking and grimacing into the sunlight and admitted that it was he who placed a secret hold on a bill that addresses secrecy in government.

You can't make this stuff up. This is how it works in Washing-

One senator stalls open-government legislation

ton, kids: Sen. Kyl — this year's Secrecy Champion — has several as-yet-unstated objections to the Freedom of Information Reform Act, a truly wonderful bill that would significantly improve one of the strongest tools Americans have to supervise the inner workings of government and to hold elected officials accountable.

The bill has plenty of bipartisan support. It is the product of tireless work and advocacy by many open-government and press-freedom groups and fine legislative craftsmanship by Senate Judiciary Committee member John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt. The U.S. House of Representatives in March approved a version of the bill, with 80 Republicans joining 228 Democrats for a 308-117 vote.

The Senate Judiciary Committee then unanimously sent the measure forward to the full Senate for a vote.

In your civics book, this would be the moment when our senators hold a public debate on the merits and demerits of the legislation at hand, then vote. The votes are then counted, and if the senators who support the bill outnumber those who oppose it — well, you get the idea.

But no, not when senators, using an archaic parliamentary parlor trick, can stop a bill dead in its tracks merely by telling their party's Senate leader or secretary that they wish to place a hold on the bill.

That's when Sen. Kyl — who routinely charts a brave course on the immigration debate and can often be counted on to reason rather than bloat — slipped in the hold.

The practice of honoring secret holds has no basis in law and has no support in Senate rules. It's a good ol'-boy creation and another of the seemingly endless perks of the Senate, where the rules always seem to benefit the representatives far more than the pesky public.

Oh, I know what's coming: the inevitable blathering about the world's greatest deliberative body and its need for timeless soul-searching and "candor" and how terribly hard legislating can be. We'll hear all about collegiality and efficiency and the grand traditions that make the Senate "special."

Spare me. Tear down the whole argument in favor of secret holds, and it comes down to cowardice: It allows a senator to cower behind anonymity while signaling his dislike for a piece of legislation. More to the point, it takes what would be a single losing vote on the floor of the Senate and converts it, magically, into stoppage of legislation.

That's awesome power with absolutely no accountability.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, who discloses his holds as a matter of practice, introduced an amendment in 2006 to force all senators to identify themselves when placing a hold on a bill. That proposal has gone nowhere fast.

Are you surprised?

Charles N. Davis, a member of SPJ's Freedom of Information Committee, serves as the executive director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Open Forum

Set a good example for teenage drivers

May is National Youth Traffic Safety Month, and for good reason.

Every year, about 300,000 teenagers are injured in car crashes and another 6,000 are killed — making auto accidents the No. 1 killer of teens in the United States.

Unfortunately, parents could be contributing to the problem. A recent survey conducted by The Allstate Foundation found that although parents agree they must play a significant role in preparing their teens to drive, many parents still delay safe-driving conversations with their teens until shortly before licensure, think their teens are immune to the risk of car crashes, allow their teens to drive or ride in dangerous conditions and model unsafe behavior behind the wheel.

To honor National Youth Traffic Safety Month, I encourage Longmont parents to establish family rules of the road with their teen drivers.

Limit the number of passengers to minimize distractions.

Insist that your teen and his or her passengers always use seat belts.

Make sure your teen keeps the cell phone turned off.

Limit or supervise your teen's driving during times of high risk. Most crashes occur after dark and in particular on Fridays and Saturdays.

Set driving area limits. If your teen wants to travel outside your town or city, require that he or she request special permission.

Prohibit driving or riding with

others under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In addition to the possibility of legal consequences, tell your teen you will revoke driving privileges for a given amount of time.

Once you come to an agreement, put it in writing. To help, a sample parent-teen driving contract can be downloaded from www.allstate.com/teens.

Here's to taking action this month, with the ultimate goal of saving the lives of your children and all Longmont teen drivers.

EVE BRUCE
Longmont

Be thankful for Longmont

I feel like people in the Longmont community are criticizing the minor problems in this city, when they should be grateful for where they live. They should instead start focusing on the wonderful improvements being done to this All-America City. I'm sure a lot of cities deal with less than ideal public park conditions or similar issues this community is experiencing. Let's concentrate on the positive efforts being contributed to Longmont, such as the upcoming ArtWalk (which will raise community awareness and support) and the outdoor music festivals, instead of immediately resorting to the negative.

DANA YOST
Longmont

Holy books share similar creation story

One of the beliefs that binds all Christians, Muslims and Jews together in a common bond is their

mutual belief that a divine creator (God, Allah, Yaweh, etc.) was the source of all creation.

In all of their holy books is a very similar account of how God created the world and the rest of the universe. Also, in each of these books, which were revealed and compiled long before modern science evolved, are intricate details on physics, biology, mathematics and many other modern sciences — facts that were to be "discovered" by men in the coming centuries. Additionally, in each of these holy books, God exhorts mankind to use its reason to observe creation and to see in it the divine perfection that permeates everything, from rocks to plants, and especially in man.

Certain people who regularly write to this paper maintain that everything can be explained by science, such as the Big Bang theory of creation.

It irritates them when they hear that there are very intelligent people, even well-renowned scientists, who do not believe that mankind evolved from apes. It irritates them further when they hear that people who do not believe in Darwin's theory (emphasis on "theory") do in fact believe that God himself caused the Big Bang to occur. They maintain that science can verify the occurrence of the Big Bang up until a very tiny fraction of a second before it began. That may be true, but what they'll never admit in their arrogance is that science will never discover what happened to create that ultra-heavy mass from which it sprang, nor indeed what was before it. Any bets?

MICHAEL GRANGER
Longmont

Amnesty will increase illegal crossings

By Tom Fitton

Judicial Watch

Homeland Defense Secretary Michael Chertoff made a startling admission recently. While stumping for an immigration-reform bill that would provide amnesty to illegal aliens, Chertoff contended there was a "fundamental unfairness" in a bill that allows illegal aliens to stay. Chertoff, however, says he is unwilling to call for mass deportations because he and the Bush administration are "bowing to reality."

More like ignoring reality.

As *The Associated Press* reported, this new legislation would "grant legal status to millions of people in the country unlawfully." While some illegals would be required to return to their country of origin first, the bill also creates a new type of visa, called a "Z" visa, enabling certain categories of illegal aliens to remain in the United States permanently without ever having to return home.

The president and his allies in Congress contend this is the best way to fix an illegal immigration system everyone agrees is broken. There is no question in my mind, however, that it will only serve to make matters worse. How do I know? Because we've tried it before, many times.

For example, in 1986, Congress passed a bill providing amnesty to approximately 2.7 million illegal aliens. According to a report released by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now Immigration and Customs Enforcement) in 2000, the program increased illegal immigration as the relatives of the newly "legalized" illegals came to the United States to join their family members and friends. So now, 20 years later, there's talk of legalizing 12 million to 20 million additional illegal aliens.

The fact is if amnesty had worked in 1986, we would not be having this debate. It did not work then. And it will not work now.

William King Jr., who served as Western regional director for the 1986 amnesty program authorized by Congress, recently said in an interview with the *Washington Times*, "I just can't believe they're trying to do this again. ... We seem to be suffering from collective amnesia about why amnesty programs have never and will never work."

Amnesia is no excuse for the Bush administration's insistence on pushing this program.

According to Border Patrol survey results collected by the Bush administration just three years ago, in 2004, and uncovered by Judicial Watch in 2005, President Bush's initial amnesty proposal lured greater numbers of illegal immigrants to cross the border. In fact, according to these surveys, 80 percent crossed in the hopes of obtaining amnesty.

Here are just a few of the responses the Border Patrol received from illegals caught trying to cross the border in response to the question: Did amnesty rumors influence your decision to enter the United States?

"Yes, I am coming for the Bush amnesty program."

"Yes, after hearing it on the news, I thought I could fix my papers."

"Yes, that's why I crossed."

Once news of the survey was leaked to the press, the Bush administration shut it down and ordered Border Patrol agents not to discuss the survey's findings. (Is there any wonder why?)

The Bush administration did not forget the destructive repercussions of amnesty. It chose to ignore and suppress the facts for political reasons. (Hispanics represent a growing voter demographic.)

As is so often the case, there is a major disconnect between elected officials and the American people on the subject of how to address the illegal immigration crisis.

A recent Zogby International poll of likely voters commissioned by Judicial Watch shows that Americans overwhelmingly (66 percent) believe that more emphasis should be placed on law enforcement when addressing the issue of illegal immigration. This supermajority includes 51.6 percent of Hispanics and 56.8 percent of self-described political "liberals." Only 5 percent said the emphasis on law enforcement should be diminished, including 3 percent of Hispanics.

This is a critical point in the debate over how to address the illegal immigration crisis. If we make the wrong decision now, the ramifications of that decision will be felt for generations to come.

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