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Letters to the Editor

Delegation Addresses Constituent Concerns

THERE HAS been a lot of criticism of our representatives' calls to David Iglesias. But I have to ask what's unethical about elected representatives following up on constituent complaints? People call their representatives about all sorts of complaints.

What makes any U.S. attorney exempt from complaints and due concern about those complaints? I have to commend Rep. Heather Wilson and Sen. Pete Domenici for following up with calls to the U.S. attorney on receiving complaints from across the Land of Enchantment. They were doing their jobs, even during this season of political mudslinging.

Frankly, it's good to know they are willing to do their jobs on behalf of constituents rather than delaying investigations for political reasons. On the other hand, the grandstanding by Iglesias only points to his unfitness to continue serving in an office demanding public trust. His failure to resign voluntarily after failing to get the job done with successful prosecutions of corruption is evidence of his inability to perform up to par.

PAUL BURNETT

Los Lunas

Iglesias Deaf To Defendant's Pleas

REGARDING THE case of U.S. Attorney David Iglesias' firing for not pursuing cases against Democrats, I have to confess to having called Iglesias more than a year ago, hoping to intervene on a case for a friend of mine.

My friend, a Taos Indian, was being prosecuted by Iglesias' office for a family fight. He had been held for almost a year awaiting trial. I appealed to Iglesias, attesting to my friend's extraordinary work ethic and examples of his personal honor.

I pointed out that the brother was on record admitting he started the fight and didn't want him prosecuted. I also cited statistics that Indian incarceration had increased by 29 percent, while federal incarceration for others had fallen steadily. I repeated a public defender's observation that had the brothers not fought on the reservation, my friend would be facing a misdemeanor and that had he not been Indian, he'd never be facing federal prison.

While polite, Iglesias prosecuted anyway. U.S. District Judge John Conway wasn't sympathetic either and sentenced my friend to the two-year maximum sentence, while lamenting there not being enough incarceration facilities. With time served, my friend will have lost three years in prison, about the same as former state Treasurer Robert Vigil's sentence.

Justifiable cynicism in a federal justice system is reinforced anew. We suffer a system driven, not by what is right, but by partisan politics, class, race and money. My friend,

who is still in prison, has a much more simple observation about Iglesias— "whatever goes around, comes around."

JOSE ARMAS

Albuquerque

Road to Hell Paved With U.S. Firings

IF THE PREVAILING wind from the GOP blows straight to hell, I would expect nothing less from Heather Wilson than to hoist the sail of her constituent boat and send everybody that way. There is no joy, however, no vindication— nothing but despair that the late, great Pete Domenici has sailed with the armada.

That our nation should be consumed in the destruction of itself, that it has become our national agenda to oust (even Republican) attorney generals who did not goose-step at the right pace, is a national disgrace the poison of which seeps up to our very doorstep.

No external enemy need bother tearing our nation apart when our representatives use the power of their office to do that work for them.

JEFF TUTTLE

Albuquerque

U.S. Attorney Victim Of Media Hatchet Job

I REALLY have to compliment the Journal on its hatchet job on U.S. Attorney David Iglesias. Two ambitious Republican attorneys and a sheriff complained he wasn't doing the job to their satisfaction.

The Bush administration thought he shouldn't have had mixed results in the Robert Vigil case, and Iglesias' name wasn't placed on a White House hit list immediately after Sen. Pete Domenici's and Rep. Heather Wilson's heavy-handed calls?

Sure sounds like his firing was justified. But wait, don't I recall that Iglesias had excellent performance reviews? And isn't it the case that any overtly political call by a member of Congress to a U.S. attorney is extraordinarily unethical? And wasn't Iglesias the dutiful soldier about the firing until the Justice Department ham-handedly smeared his good name?

And isn't it the job of the U.S. attorney to do the people's work, not the party's?

MARK CLEVELAND

Albuquerque

It Takes Evidence To Prosecute Crime

THE JOURNAL reports that Mickey Barnett, an Albuquerque lawyer and former Republican national committeeman, e-mailed U.S. Attorney David Iglesias to complain that, instead of bringing charges, Iglesias had merely appointed a task force to investigate claims of voter fraud. Barnett is reported to have said, "Most of us think a task force is a joke."

Wonder if Barnett has bothered to e-mail President Bush to express his opinion about what a joke task forces are in light of the new task force Bush just appointed to investigate this administration's mistreatment of soldiers injured in Iraq?

Barnett apparently wanted Iglesias to bring charges even though evidence of voter fraud in New Mexico and elsewhere is minuscule, unlike the evidence of election fraud— smarmy election machines and election officials— which is enormous.

But what really shocked me was that Barnett, and Pat Rodgers, another Republican Party operative, both apparently thought it perfectly appropriate to try to influence the

U.S. attorney in New Mexico to file specific criminal charges, presumably against specific Democratic individuals, and when that didn't work, to try to influence the Justice Department in Washington D.C. to take action against Iglesias.

Excuse me? ...

ANNE KASS

Albuquerque

Take Politics Out Of Appointments

PRESS COVERAGE of the U.S. attorney issue may benefit the public because of the unprecedented exposure of how the system works. Any public servant who is engaged in the judicial process should not only be immune from even a hint of high-level pressure, but he or she should be seen as being immune from such pressure.

There is a need to modify the process of selecting U.S. attorneys so that the initial appointment is totally non-partisan. It is the public that needs to be served, not the president. If the administration of justice is really supposed to be blind then all, at least on the federal prosecution side, should be seen as serving all the public, not their Washington masters.

In the case of David Iglesias, it is immaterial that he was a poor manager of his office—a poor official rating should take care of such problems. Nor can one just look at Iglesias to find meaning in this issue without looking at the whole process and observing that U.S. attorneys in other jurisdictions were also removed from office. Publications such as the Journal seem determined to give the impression that this is nothing more than a local issue. It is far from local. It is a pattern that reveals only the tip of the iceberg. ...

JAMES STEEVES

Albuquerque

Iglesias Just Didn't Perform for GOP

THANK GOODNESS the controversy surrounding the firing of U.S. Attorney David Iglesias has been resolved.

New Mexico Republican Party chairman Allen Weh has now admitted that he urged President Bush's political adviser, Karl Rove, to have Iglesias removed because of "dissatisfaction in part with his failure to indict Democrats in a voter fraud investigation in the battleground election state." Rove's reply was "He's gone." So obviously politics played no part whatsoever.

Of course Iglesias' firing was performance-related rather than political. If he had performed more vigorous prosecution of Democratic evil-doers he would still have his job. And then Republican Sen. Pete Domenici and Republican Rep. Heather Wilson would not have been forced to seemingly surrender their ethics by personally phoning Republican Iglesias right before a close election to "motivate" him to better perform his job.

Case closed.

NICHOLAS GIACONA

Santa Fe

Gov. Stands Up for What's Right

I APPLAUD Gov. Bill Richardson for signing the medical marijuana bill. People with such terrible diseases should get whatever they want to ease their suffering.

I appreciate our governor's courage in doing what is right, rather than listening to the

kind of heartless hysteria spewed by outfits like the Fraternal Order of Police. Richardson's actions have convinced me that he is a man who will do what he thinks is right rather than what the polls indicate. That is so rare in modern politicians. ...

Although I don't think it will be, if medical marijuana is the first step toward legalization of marijuana, it can't come too soon. The drug carries about the same risk as a cup of tea, and if we didn't spend billions chasing people around and throwing them in jail needlessly, we could concentrate on the more serious drugs out there, some of which may pose as much risk as— dare I say it— alcohol and tobacco.

CHARLES A. HARWOOD

Las Cruces

Choices Come Home To Roost

AS A RESIDENT of Maine, I cannot vote in New Mexico, but it is not only New Mexico that will decide who the next presidential candidate will be on the Democrat side. And what shall I say about Gov. Bill Richardson, when after having spent a year in New Mexico, I return to Maine this summer?

Shall I tell how he outlawed the use of a legal product, tobacco, while bringing within the law the illegal product of marijuana? Shall I tell how he outlawed fighting between two chickens, while not lifting a finger to help the baby trapped in the womb?

Richardson making marijuana legal while making it illegal for a business owner to smoke in his own business is not going to fly well in Maine. Making it illegal to let two chickens fight while doing nothing to limit abortion will not go over very well, either.

REV. BOB CELESTE

Harrison, Maine

Sight's Too Valuable To Risk

HAVING JUST recently gone through the ordeal of a torn retina, I feel qualified to give an opinion on the recent action in the Legislature to give optometrists the legal authority to perform eye surgery.

I tore a retina in a fluke accident. I was seen immediately by an ophthalmologist, 30 minutes after I called for an appointment. He knew my symptoms could not wait. As I understand it, a torn retina that goes untreated can result in the loss of sight in a matter of days.

He referred me to a retina specialist, Dr. Ana Huaman, who saw me that afternoon and did laser surgery to repair the retina the next day.

As I sat in the chair having the laser surgery, I kept thinking how serious the situation was and praying that my ophthalmologist would save my sight. She did.

There is no conceivable way that I would ever have an untrained practitioner perform surgery on my eye. My sight is too valuable to run that risk.

JEFFREY B. PAUL

Albuquerque

Don't Buy and Abandon Bunnies

OVER THE next few weeks, thousands of local adults will be tempted to buy an Easter rabbit for a beloved child, godchild, grandchild, niece or nephew. And a few months from now, the animal shelters will be, as they are every year, inundated by a flood of cast-off bunnies.

Those not taken to shelters will be set loose outdoors to fend for themselves. Being a domestic prey animal, they will not survive. Before buying a rabbit think about some important facts:

- Rabbits should be indoor pets; they live eight to 10 years or more and should be spayed and/or neutered to make them good pets.
- Rabbits can make wonderful pets, but they are naturally fragile and timid. An active child who expects a cuddly pet can easily terrify or even unintentionally injure a rabbit. Rabbits are not ideal pets for children.
- Rabbits require just as much love, attention and veterinary care as a dog or cat. If you want to make a child's Easter happy, don't give a live rabbit unless you know for certain that it will be loved and cared for throughout its natural life.
- Parents must be willing to assume care when the child loses interest. If that commitment can be made, consider adopting a rabbit from a shelter or rescue organization instead of buying one at a pet store. They are usually already spayed/neutered and litter-box trained.

If there is any doubt, please consider having a chocolate Easter bunny instead!

KERRIE BUSHWAY

Rio Rancho

Bring Home, Care for Our Troops

RE: "WWII VET recalls bombing missions over Europe" article

The article touched my heart as I grew up with a similar vet— my father. He was a B-17 pilot and flew 50 bombing missions over Germany and would be about the same age as Edwin Lease. His plane was nicknamed something like the "Flying Mickey" and had a decal of Mickey Mouse in a cowboy hat riding a bomb instead of a horse. This was cuter than calling it "The Widowmaker," but there was nothing cute about that so-called "good war."

He did not get physically wounded, but was emotionally wounded. He did not recover and died at the age of 40. When he came home from that war he turned to the bottle like so many of our soldiers do. He had flashbacks about that war, and then he would drink. He had been told when he went in that they would be bombing troop trains and supply dumps, but that is not all that they bombed.

He never forgot things like the fire bombing of Dresden when he purposely targeted the center of cities and regretted that he had killed a lot of civilians— until 1960 when in the midst of one of his episodes he committed suicide. I will never forget that day as I was a young teenager and found his body.

There are no good wars. I now have a young grandson who just returned from Iraq and also did not get wounded physically, but seems to be emotionally hurting. He went to that war believing in what he was doing, got over there and saw the reality of what war is and questioned it and now regrets it.

The military health-care system is in total disarray, and I do not trust them to give him the help he needs. We are not only getting our soldiers killed but will have to deal with

emotional consequences for years. Is this worth it? That war will never be won.

Let's bring them home now and cut funding so they can't keep this up. ... Please don't keep our troops in a civil war fought for nefarious purposes by continuing to fund this abomination. Then we can spend our money to improve the health-care system so they can recover.

MITZI KRAFT

Albuquerque

Rewriting History Can't Change It

SOME PEOPLE seem to have a selective memory when it comes to American history. To suggest that the liberals in Congress and the American press have undermined the resolve to win this war, I would suggest that was done a long time ago by this administration and its repeated half-truths about why this war was waged in the first place.

It is also important to note that one of the biggest so-called liberals, Lyndon B. Johnson, actually escalated the war in Vietnam and it was his Republican predecessor who finally got us out of a war we should not have been involved in anyway.

As a nation, we have to face facts. Ours is a unique kind of democracy that is by no means perfect but allows us opportunities to air our differences in a mostly civilized manner. To imply that we can make the same kind of difference in a region that has been having these types of conflicts for thousands of years is the epitome of American arrogance.

John Wayne and the cavalry cannot always ride in to save the day, particularly in an area where influences of the West are not appreciated. I heard a supporter of the war describe our 3,200 casualties as "light." Try telling that to the families that have lost serviceman and women in this needless conflict, not to mention the tens of thousands that have been maimed due to loss of limbs. ...

Americans do not have a problem in banding together in time of war if they feel the cause is a noble one. They also know when they are being lied to and will not stand for that, either.

In American history there have been great conservatives, liberals and moderates. That's what makes our country great. Let us hope that the people attempting to re-write American history to fit their own narrow-minded view will remember that.

ED NUNEZ

Albuquerque

Did 9/11 Mastermind Kill JFK?

KHALID SHEIKH MOHAMMED also confessed to causing the Johnstown Flood, sinking the Titanic, kidnapping Judge Joseph Crater, blowing up the Hindenburg and dynamiting the levees at New Orleans.

He will soon confess to causing global warming, and the FBI thinks he is really Richard Jewell. Any more crimes that need solving?

HENRY WIRTH

Los Lunas

Halliburton Pulls a Fast One

WHAT'S WITH our government, Republican and Democrat alike, permitting the CEO

of Halliburton, who pulled off the biggest heist in world history, to relocate his business and residence to Dubai, where he will not be subject to accountability in American courts?

E.G. OSBORNE

Rio Rancho

Just Do What's Best for the States

I ENJOYED reading Ned Farquhar's commentary outlining why he believes the Republican Party is losing the West, but many of his facts are simply wrong and in other cases he ascribes trend status to mere political fluctuations.

His focus on Colorado is particularly telling. He argues that Republicans "painted themselves into an ideological corner" and cites that state's spending limit known as the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights. What he fails to mention is that voters, not Republicans or Democrats, adopted the law in 1992.

And, while voters did suspend part of the law for five years starting in 2005, Colorado voters— unlike New Mexicans— have the final say on any and all tax increases at both the state and local level.

Specifically regarding the politics of the situation, his subsequent mention of then-Gov. Bill Owens, a Republican, is interesting. Owens actually led the campaign on behalf of the referendum that ultimately suspended a portion of Colorado's spending limit. The Republicans did indeed lose Colorado, but it was hardly the result of their supposedly rigid ideology.

Ultimately, elected officials should try to put political calculations aside to do what is best for their states. Cutting taxes and restraining government have been shown to work everywhere they've been tried. Western politicians have historically heeded this, and that is why our states are among the fastest-growing in the nation.

PAUL GESSING

President, Rio Grande Foundation, Albuquerque

Reader Fueled Racial Stereotype

IN RESPONSE to the "DWI Incidents Fuel Stereotype" letter, the writer missed the point. The fact that the mother who was caught driving her two children around while intoxicated was Hispanic was only implied through the mention of her surname.

In writing his letter he only helped to perpetuate such stereotypes by making connections to her race that were no way implied otherwise. Furthermore, the letter demonstrates that, to some, being politically correct is more important than addressing the true factors of DWI problems that plague New Mexico.

If there was anything in the article to be outraged about it was the caption under the mother's picture: "If convicted, could face jail time." Even with the weak stance New Mexico usually has in punishing multi-DWI offenders, shouldn't this be an easy open-and-shut case without the chance of this woman getting yet another pass?

JOSH SANDERS

Albuquerque

Will 28 DWIs Be the Charm?

ABOUT THE MAN's 28th DWI arrest, since he was arrested at a driveway on Tokay

Street, maybe the judge will see a problem this time?

DALE L. MORRIS

Rio Rancho

Tapia a Patient, Not a Criminal

JOHNNY TAPIA is one of the warmest, nicest human beings one could ever hope to meet. He is according to reports bipolar—that is a mental illness we used to call manic depression.

It is a sad and hereditary disease, and like a lot of people with mental illness, the victims often medicate themselves with drugs and alcohol. It is an illness, and he ought to be treated with compassion as a patient and not a criminal.

REV. JAMES R. ANDERSON

Albuquerque

Tapia Must Stop Being a Victim

JOHNNY TAPIA was in critical condition recently because he chose to "party"—to use his words. Where he is today is a direct result of the poor choices he has made in his life. Yes, he has had a rough life. But how much of it is a result of choices he made voluntarily?

No one forced him to lash out and assault people, partake in whatever drugs he did in fact use, and everything he did to attract negative attention to himself.

He claims to be "dedicated to his family" and to the memory of his mother, but did he really consider them before he engaged in any of those activities? Family, faith and counseling are all areas where he could have turned in a moment of weakness instead of drugs, alcohol or violence.

How many of us accept the role of "victim" in life? It's a lot easier than accepting responsibility for our actions, learning and growing into a better person. ... We can choose to be a victim or a victor. Let's pray that Tapia has at least one more victory in him.

JASON LANGE

Albuquerque

Utilities Can Cut Poor a Break

THE RECENT opinion pieces by Ona Porter and by Carla Sonntag highlight the severe home energy affordability gap in our state as well as the difference of opinions in what solutions to adopt.

Sonntag states that "utility rates should cover utility costs, expenses and a decent rate of return period." She fails to mention that regulated electric and gas companies differ from almost all other companies in that they are given a monopoly franchise by the state to provide service in a particular geographic area.

In exchange for being given this franchise, utility companies have the obligation to serve customers at a reasonable rate. Nationwide regulators have exercised their power to ensure that rates are reasonable in a number of ways, again making utility companies somewhat unique in the marketplace.

Discounting the rates that low-income households have to pay to obtain essential supplies of gas and electricity is well within the power of the Public Regulation Commission. People should not be forced to live without utility service simply because they have poverty level income. Discount rates still require customers to make

payments— but payments that are more affordable.

Energy costs are forecast to continue to rise. It is time to adopt more comprehensive and effective responses to the home energy affordability gap that include discount rates, conservation and energy efficiency measures. ...

KATHRYN TURNIPSEED

Community Action New Mexico, Albuquerque

Shareholders, Ratepayers Differ

I WAS AMAZED to read the commentary by Carla Sonntag, executive director of the New Mexico Utility Shareholders Alliance, who railed against the idea of discount utility rates for low-income residents in the name of protecting ratepayers.

Excuse me, but the Shareholders Alliance is not an objective source of information about ratepayer protection. They may contain some New Mexico ratepayers, but their purpose is to represent the interest of shareholders who profit from high utility profits. It's a huge conflict of interest for them to pretend to represent ratepayers. Sonntag also promotes the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as the solution.

But LIHEAP funding is nowhere near what is needed to fully protect low-income residents. Other states are offering discount rates to help low-income residents. New Mexico should do the same, along with strong weatherization and efficiency programs.

BEN LUCE

Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy, Santa Fe

Hickum Galles' Legacy Lives On

H.L. (HICKUM) GALLES Jr. was a key contributor to Albuquerque's successful progress. During his 75 years in the automotive industry, he quietly provided important support to the people and projects that fostered the city's dynamic growth.

He left an extraordinary legacy as a civic leader, businessman, aviator and philanthropist who cared deeply for his community.

His graciousness and humility easily won friends. His intelligence, ingenuity, perseverance and charisma enabled him to lead civic initiatives that continue to enrich Albuquerque today, ranging from founding the Lobo Booster Club, chairing the committee that persuaded voters to build Albuquerque Sports Stadium and supporting outstanding candidates for elective office.

The grace of Hickum's good works will benefit many generations to come.

CHARLES WOOD

Tallahassee, Fla.

End Stigma of 'Epileptic'

I WAS HAPPY to see the story about Aiden and his seizure dog. Educating people about epilepsy is how we remove the stigma of the condition. There are still many people who fear those with epilepsy because they do not understand the condition and how it is treated. Many people live perfectly normal lives with epilepsy.

I would like to correct how the Journal referenced to Aiden and his condition. The second paragraph stated, "... dog that Adam and Alison Giron got for their epileptic son ..." The correct reference should have been, "...dog that Adam and Alison Giron got for their son Aiden, who has epilepsy."

As stated by the Epilepsy Foundation, one should refer to Aiden and others with the same condition as people who have epilepsy, not as epileptics, because epilepsy is

something you have, not something that you are. Again this comes with educating people about this condition and removing the stigma and stereotypes that come with it.

YVONNE CARTEE

Albuquerque

Wolves Can't Rationalize

I LAUGHED when I read the article reporting a wolf had been shot by federal authorities. The Journal states that Albuquerque-based wolf recovery program coordinator John Morgart said wildlife officials hope killing the wolf will discourage other members of the pack from preying on livestock.

If it weren't so frightening to me this would be one of the funniest things I've ever read. Imagining that members of a wolf pack would associate the killing of one of the pack because that member had killed livestock is ludicrous. Any public money spent on wolf re-introduction is a waste and in my mind borders on criminal misuse of funds and power.

There is nothing in our Constitution that supports this kind of public expenditure, and the fact we employ people with such idiotic ideas about the cognitive powers of wolves scares the hell out of me.

JOHN FARNER

Corrales

Reverend's View Divisive

I WAS ENJOYING the article on the Rev. Jeffrey Whorton who wishes to become a Catholic priest until I got to the section that explained why Whorton was moving away from the Episcopal church. I am sorry that Whorton finds the ordination of gays and women as "disturbing" and "scary."

I'm also sorry that the Journal finds it commendable, as it must given the fact that Whorton's story was on the front page. I wish Whorton well in his search and hope that he will someday abandon his divisive view of the divine and come to believe what Jesus really taught— that we are all God's children.

NANCY ROOPE

Placitas

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