

from our viewpoint...

Inactive draft costs drain our treasury

Raise your hands. How many of you knew the U.S. still has a military draft? No, you're not being called up. The draft is inactive. Real inactive. But the government still spends about \$24 million each year to keep it up. And, apparently, that's not enough.

Nearly 13.5 million men age 18 to 25 are registered with the moribund Selective Service system, though no one has been drafted since the Vietnam War.

To activate the draft, Congress would have to pass a law and the president would have to sign it. Chances of that happening are minimal in this day and age.

Once on duty, the system would have to deliver its first draftees in 193 days, a little less than seven months. No one believes that will or can happen, and no one, apparently, is going to find out.

Last week, the system ditched plans to test the draft machinery for the first time in 10 years. The agency said it lacked the staff or the money to finish the test, which would have included a mock draft and a mock appeals board to handle conscientious objectors.

In its goals for this year, the agency said the test would be "a total mobilization exercise that will be tailored to evaluate the Selective Service System's mandates for a mobilization of any kind. The sheer size and detail of the exercise will take approximately 18 months to produce."

Last week, a spokesman admitted nothing had been done to prepare for the test.

While one official likened the exercise to a fire extinguisher, which has to be tested every so often, even if not used, there appears to be no commitment to test this turkey.

In the nearly 35 years since the end of the old draft, registration was suspended for five years from 1975 to 1980. Then President Jimmy Carter ordered it activated when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Young men are told to register when they turn 18, and find they can't get federal aid for college tuition unless they do.

Oddly enough, in this age of the all-volunteer, coed military, women are not required to register and wouldn't be drafted.

All in all, this draft is a nonstarter, so why are we spending money on it?

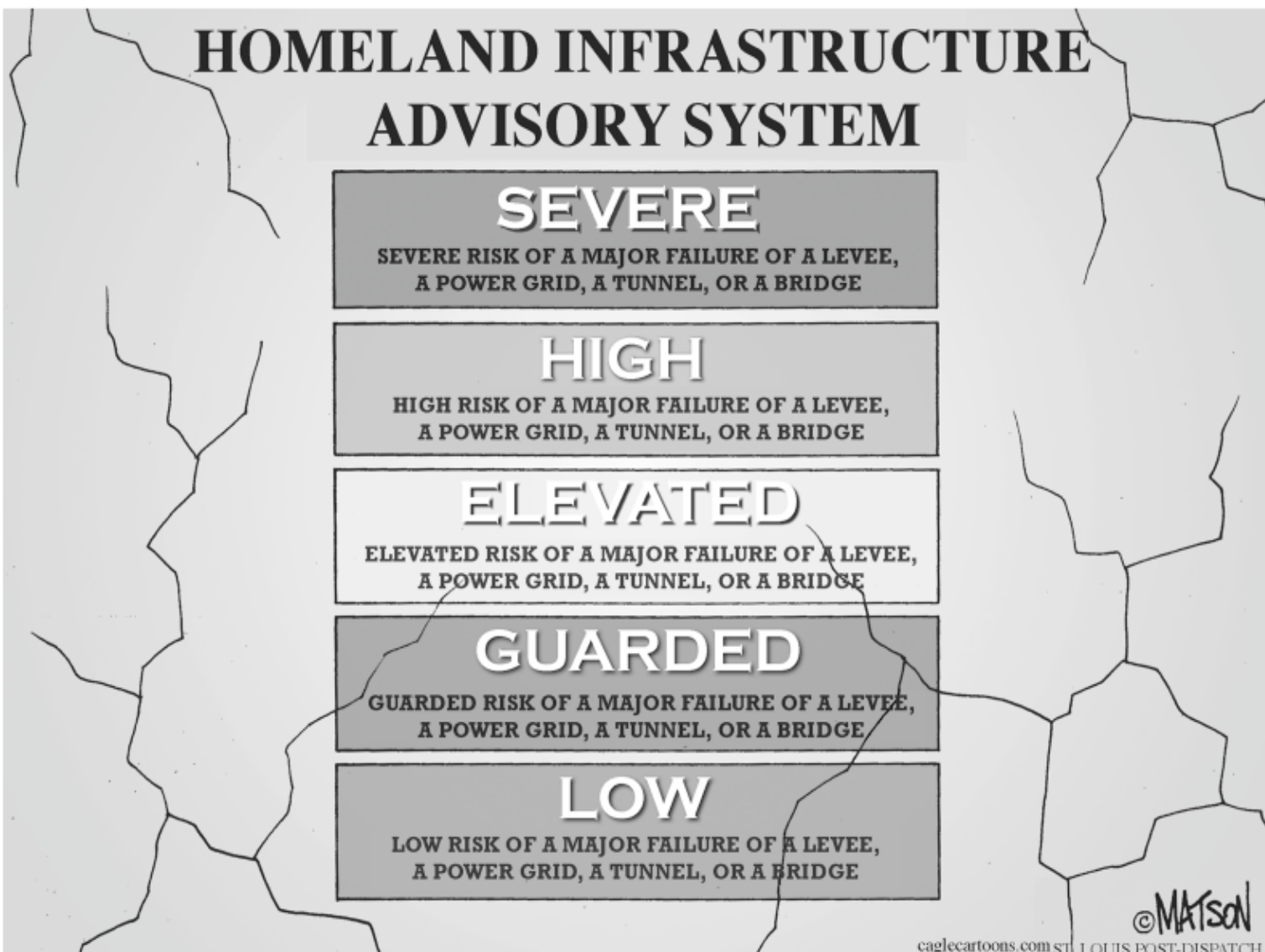
Mostly because some people who think we'll someday need a draft and because the government never really closes any program. Somewhere, deep in some agency of Agriculture or Commerce, there's probably still a subsidy for buggy-whip manufacturers.

But the nation the time has come to cut this one loose.

The nation banished the draft after the last unpopular war and we're unlikely to need it again any time soon. If the nation really needs to mobilize, the will to win should appear and there'll be plenty of time to create a draft — if we need it.

Today's phony preparedness is just a sham. Let's get rid of it.

— Steve Haynes



Scooter skates



will durst

● raging moderate

Who can tell what motivates the president these days? Maybe the commutation of Scooter Libby is meant to demonstrate his latent in-chargity. That he's relevant, dammit! That not only can he be the decider, he also has the skills to be the commuter as well. With an approval rating lower than a drunk IRS agent wearing pinstripes behind the Red Sox dugout at Fenway, he probably wouldn't mind commuting himself, to and from the comfort of Crawford, Texas, four or seven days a week. Could become the First Telecommuting Chief Executive. "I'm looking forward to Friday, that's 'No Pants Day.'" Bet Laura and the twins would prefer that. Dick too, just to clear the decks for some of the trickier bits.

Proving his pertinence required George Bush to set a convicted partisan felon free as the proverbial bird. Though the identity of what kind of bird that phrase is intended to signify has been shrouded by the mists of time; it is safe to say, it sure ain't no jail bird, because due to Dubyah's opportune intervention, Cheney's former chief of staff served less time than a spitballing, junior-high study-hall miscreant sent to honors detention in the cafeteria.

Q. What's the difference between Paris Hilton and Scooter Libby? A. 23 days.

The man whose defense was, "I'm a busy man and can't be expected to keep track of all the lies I tell," didn't sing like a canary either;

as Paulie Walnuts might say, "You did good time, kid." So rest assured he has a bright future ahead of him on the Forbes Magazine "Tired Old Leadership Axioms in Return for the Big Bucks" speaking tour, jointly sponsored by the Homeland Security and the TV Guide Channel, now contemplating a midseason replacement called "Skooter Skates."

If Bush had explained that he wiped away the VP's right hand man's sentence of 30 months for perjury in federal court, because you can't send a man named Scooter to prison, I would have understood. But the excuse used was the sentence was "excessive." And we Americans who are just 19 months shy of serving our full 96-month sentence living under the fear mongering, torture outsourcing and middle-class-eradication efforts of this administration, can totally relate.

"Excessive." That's what he called it. This is the same guy who when running for governor of Texas actually said out loud in front of

people with microphones sticking out of their hands that he wanted to "stiffen the death penalty." Stiffen the death penalty? The hell does that mean? Was he going to apply it twice? Were doctors mandated not to rub alcohol on the point of insertion before lethal injections? Did he empanel a blue ribbon committee to figure out a way of how to dump the electric chair and wire up some bleachers?

But when it came to punishing his string puller's best friend, the president's compassion predictably welled up like a zit the morning of picture day in 8th grade. He did keep intact the other part of Mr. Libby's sentence; the \$250,000 fine, but that didn't seem to pose much of a hardship, as the skeddaddling scofflaw simply wrote a personal check for it. Don't feel too bad for him. I'm sure he'll be reimbursed by the Scooter Libby Defense Fund or as we are used to calling it: Halliburton.

Comic, writer, actor, former radio talk show host and bellman at the Milwaukee Athletic Club, Will Durst, wonders if Mister Libby has an envelope in his safety deposit box with "in the event of my untimely death" scrawled on the outside.

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A culture war of words



michael reagan

● making sense

If anybody doubts America is engaged in a culture war and losing it they need only to take a look at the series of concerts promoting Al Gore's global warming hoax last weekend. They would have learned that the war is being waged in the sewers.

America is facing an army of foul-mouthed, tattooed guttersnipes who have the gall to proclaim they want to save the planet by putting on performances laced with some of the foulest language ever heard from a stage.

As those who made the mistake of watching any of these concerts here or abroad discovered, the enemies of culture are unable to complete a sentence without using the "F" word at least once, along with liberal sprinklings of the "S" word.

And their foul-mouthed rhetoric was not the least of it: the audiences ate it up and the performers knew that when they spewed their obscene filth they were giving their decadent fans exactly what they wanted.

That fact has not escaped the people who run the nation's TV networks; nowadays it's hard to find a TV drama that does not seed the dialogue with "F" words. If you have watched hit series such as "Deadwood" you quickly learned that the "F" word was among the milder epithets. That series introduced terms never before heard outside of men's locker rooms or prison cells.

I went to a lot of concerts years ago. I never heard Frank Sinatra or any other performer use

a single obscenity during their performances. Moreover, if any of them had uttered anything as foul as the "F" word, they would have been driven off the stage.

If you think I'm making too big a thing about the incredible degradation of language, keep in mind it represents the decline in the level of civility since the culture warriors declared war on decency. The widespread use of the "F" word is a symptom of the disease.

The America in which I grew up had standards, and people's public behavior was judged by how well they measured up to those standards. One was expected to toe the line when it came to the way they communicated with one another. We were expected to show our respect to our fellow Americans by avoiding offensive words. Once upon a time one was expected to be a gentlemen or lady, and those terms — now treated with scorn — described people who had the utmost of respect for those around them and showed it in their everyday behavior.

Those who deviated from the accepted standards were told to "keep a civil tongue in your mouth."

That's no longer true. Comedians vie with each other to use the most extreme obscenities and sexual innuendoes. What was once called "street language" is now considered normal discourse. Things once considered sacred are now seen as commonplace. Sex is no longer an expression of love between a man and a woman — today it's seen as recreation, like a game of golf, to be portrayed on stage and screen without restraint.

In any civilization that desires to survive, simple decency and courtesy are crucial elements. In a society headed for the sewer, anything goes. And when anything goes — when the most extreme forms of language and behavior come to be seen as normal — civilization is transformed into barbarism.

That's what's at stake in the culture wars. A society bereft of standards that demand civilized behavior among its people is a society where the individual is deemed worthless as being anything but a consumer for the degraded wares of the smut peddlers and a source of income to pay for the schemes of those who sell Marxist snake oil such as global warming as a means of subjugating the populace.

And the more addicted to slime that populace becomes, the easier it is to subjugate them.

Mike Reagan, the eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally. E-mail comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com.

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