

from our viewpoint...

Why not change county meetings?

One of the strongest traditions in American government is the daytime county commission meeting.

No one seems to know why, but custom has a life of its own despite the fact that most voters have to work and can't take time to attend these important public meetings.

Across most of the country, commissioners meet during the day to talk with department heads, decide public business and hear requests from taxpayers. Nearly all these meetings start in the morning, and in some counties, they last all day. In a few, the commissioners meet more than one day a week.

Compare that to city councils and school board, both of which normally meet at night, doing what a county commission does in several days in just one or two sessions a month.

There are other differences. County commissioners usually are paid for their services and expected to put in more time than members of city and school boards. Few counties have a paid manager, while most cities and nearly all school districts have one.

Daytime meetings not only exclude voters interested in attending, they also keep many people from running for commissioner, since the daytime commitment conflicts with most work schedules.

Other than "we've always done it that way," is there any reason to perpetuate this system?

Or would taxpayers be better served by having county meetings in the evening, when more people could attend?

A small but growing movement is pushing counties to larger boards — three is the traditional number — night meetings and more professional administrators. Most change has come in larger counties, but everyone might benefit from some change.

Why have meetings during the day?

For one thing, it's easier for county employees and department heads to attend during working hours, when they are on the clock. School and city employees have to attend night board meetings, however, and county workers could do the same.

County commissioners, as paid officials of the county, usually have more administrative responsibilities than city or school boards, it's true, but counties could have paid administrators. Many do already.

Some people commissioners meet with — salesmen and dealers, state officials, business people — might prefer daytime meetings. The same people, if they want to do business with the school district, will show up for an evening board meeting, however.

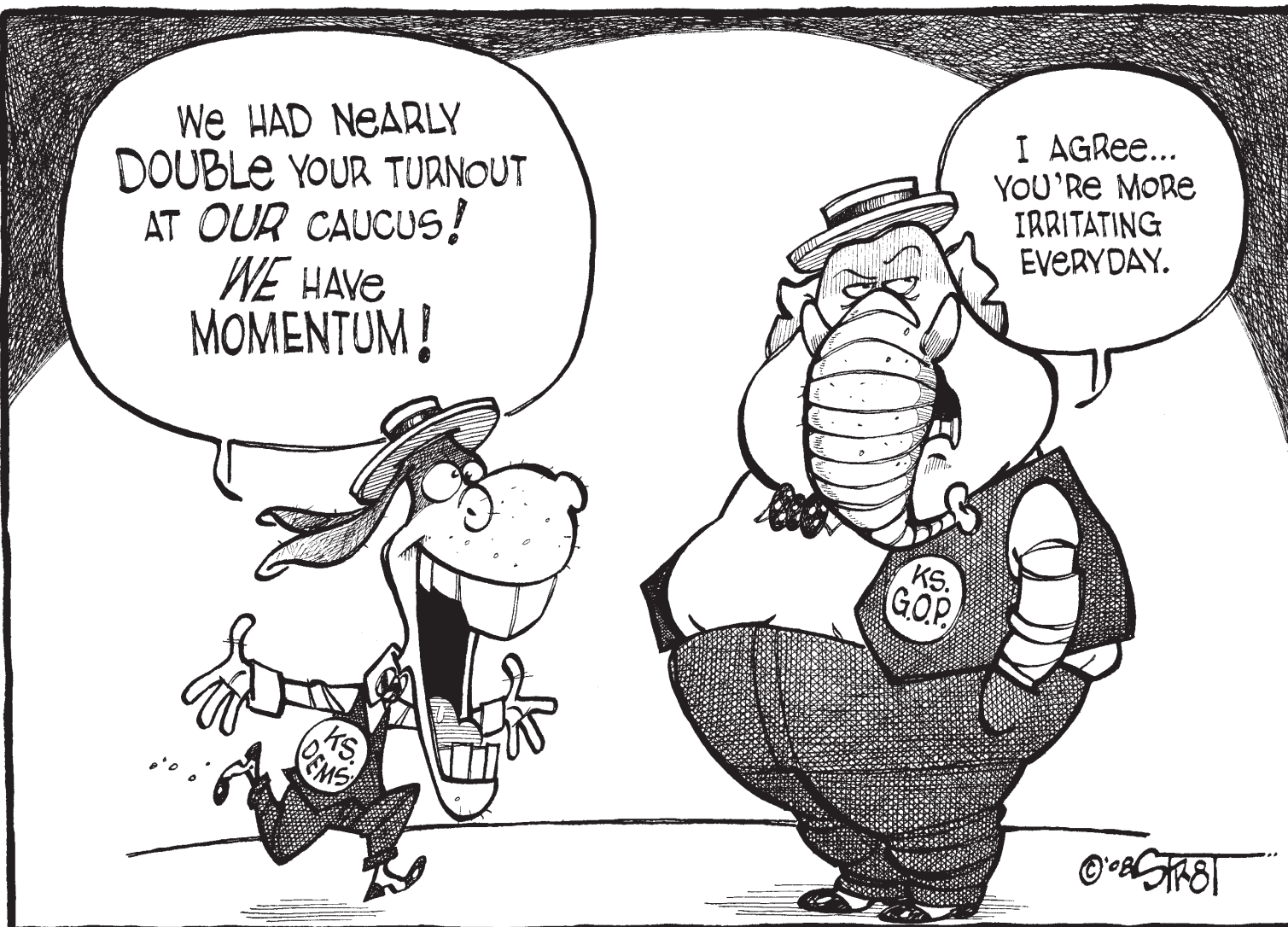
Against that possible advantage — and a century of tradition — put the fact that the taxpayers and voters — the people who hire commissioners and pay the bills — usually find it a lot easier to attend night meetings.

Spectators, while common at city and school meetings, are rare at county sessions. Commissioners work through their agenda mostly with county department heads and sometimes a reporter in attendance.

The cause of democracy might just be served by changing the county schedule, but we won't know until more counties try night meetings.

It's not that a lot of people would attend — people avoid government meetings like the plague unless they're upset — but then they could when something comes up they care about.

That's the advantage. The reason not to change is harder to see. — Steve Haynes



Bill Clinton: Threat or menace?

It's desperation time in Hillaryville. They're putting out fires faster than a Rocky Mountain ranger station during a lightning storm in the middle of an August drought. Due to the fact that a certain inevitability has proven to be highly evitable.

And watching the nomination slip through their fingers has to be going down as easy as a deep-fried fork. Causing several revisions to what was previously a dead-solid game plan. Corrections that include, but are not limited to banishment of key staffers to "integral" precincts on the outskirts of West Texas. Further attempts to wring blood out of contributors who insist on impersonating dried turnips.

And the most difficult fix: figuring out how to get the candidate's husband to shut the hell up.

Yeah. Right. Good luck. You'd have a better shot at using a plastic butter knife to spay a pit pull on meth than try to muzzle this old dog. I suggest a wolf snare or tranquilizer gun as the best means to render the 42nd President of the United States docile enough to throw a choke chain around his neck.

Interesting how quickly the game changes. It wasn't that long ago, rival campaigns were complaining Hillary had an unfair advantage being married to a former president. "But he gets so much press." And now it's Hillary's



will durst

• raging moderate

staff doing the complaining. "But he gets so much press."

What was once a secret weapon is now an albatross tied by a frayed rope, swinging wildly from the neck of the former first lady. And because of his unique stature as biggest hound in the pound, Bubba isn't just a loose cannon, he's a loose aircraft carrier in high seas.

Rampaging down the campaign trail in the manner of a Japanese movie monster stomping through downtown Tokyo, using his heat vision to blast opponents and batting around members of the media like pastel bunnies off an Easter display shelf in a Hallmark Card shop.

He must see himself as a guard dog protecting the hen house, no pun intended. Barack's camp accuses him of being the junkyard dog.

And we can't have that. Because everybody knows that if Mr. Obama gets the nomination, the Republicans won't be mean. They'll roll over on their backs, begging to have their bellies scratched.

Worst-case scenario, they try to bruise him by throwing rubber bones at his head. Hah. I laugh. Hah. I laugh again.

You want to see negative campaigning? You wait until the junior senator from Illinois gets the nomination, because you're going to see negative campaigning that will make what they did to Michael Dukakis look like pranks played during recess at a Catholic girl's school.

Bill Clinton nuzzles and he growls. He's a boon and a bane. A southern-fried Jekyll and Hyde. Smoother than a puppy's fur, and more divisive than a flea-ridden German Shepherd at a Bat Mitzvah.

One problem is everybody continues to introduce him as "Mr. President," like he's still in charge. That kind of thing can have an effect on a guy. If Hillary were smart, she'd sponsor a bill in Congress that would mandate all former chief executives be referred to as "Mr. Ex-President."

Kill two dogs with one stone. One dog being a certain George W. Bush, whom a lot of us can't wait to call... Mr. Ex-President.

Political comic Will Durst is convinced that Mr. C. has a slight case of rabies.

Will Durst is a political comedian who has performed around the world. E-mail Will at durst@caglecartoons.com.

Thanks for wonderful salute to Guardsmen

To the Editor:

I would like this opportunity to thank all who helped me with the homecoming of the National Guard members and the send-off for Larissa Coon.

Thanks to Sharon Gregory, high school principal, and Shelly Angelos, Goodland school superintendent. Without them, I could not have had this event work out successfully.

To The Goodland Star-News for the wonderful stories about the homecoming and the send off.

To Curtis Duncan and Andrew Melia of KLOE/KKCI and KWGB radio for getting the word out. I know it helped. There was a big turnout that night.

To Devin Mangus for singing the National Anthem. You did a great job.



from our readers

• to the editor

To Danny Mangus for singing "God Bless The USA." That song meant a lot to Larissa and to me.

To Dale Schields, voice of Max Jones Field House. I couldn't have asked for a better person to do the introduction of the National Guard members who came back from Iraq, and for Coon, who will be going to Iraq. You did a great job.

To Sgt. Mark Reasoner for the color guard and getting the National Guard members there that night. I know there are more soldiers who

had been in Iraq, but could not make it that night.

It sure felt good to see the large crowd, and to see them stand up and clapping when the National Guardsmen and Maj. Coon came out on the basketball court. They will never forget that night.

Coon will be leaving for Iraq in March. She will be gone for more than a year.

I will be looking forward to the Goodland High School homecoming parade in 2009, when she can march with me and carry the American Legion banner again.

Support Our Troops, and God Bless America.

Ken Baum
service officer, past commander
Goodland American Legion Post

Ronald Reagan would back McCain

In 1976 the Ford vs. Reagan campaign for the Republican presidential nomination got so heated it looked as if my father and Jerry Ford would never again talk to one another.

When it was over and Ford had won, what did Ronald Reagan do? He simply went all-out to help Ford win his re-election, as did I and as did my sister Maureen. My dad simply followed his rule of backing the Republican candidate no matter who he was.

Assuming that John McCain will be the Republican nominee, you can bet my father would be itching to get out on the campaign trail working to elect him even if he disagreed with him on a number of issues.

Unlike my father, a lot of conservatives stayed home in 1976, and we got four years of Jimmy Carter, whose main legacy was to drive the Shah of Iran from power and create the Islamic Republic of Iran with a bunch of wild-eyed mullahs running the show. He also gave us 20 percent inflation and long, long lines at the gas pumps. And don't forget 440 days of Americans held hostage by the mullahs.

By staying home those conservatives made possible the future election of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

We are still suffering from the legacy of James Earl Carter, thanks to the conservatives who refused to follow Ronald Reagan's



michael reagan

• making sense

example and instead sulked at home while the nation was being handed over to the worst president in American history.

We were still in the middle of the Cold War in those days, and by staying home conservatives risked losing that war by allowing an incompetent leader to become commander in chief.

Four years later Ronald Reagan took over, the hostages were immediately released, and he went on to win the Cold War. Now we have another world-wide war going on with a hidden enemy sworn to kill us all, and the policy of the Democrats running for the presidency is to throw up their hands and withdraw from the battlefield, leaving it to the enemy — and our fate in the hands of Osama bin Laden.

Is that what the let's-stay-home-on-election-day conservatives want? Do they want the most liberal member of the U.S. Senate, Barack Obama, as their president? Do they want the pseudo-Marist Barack Obama — who reportedly has a photo of the murderous Castroite thug Che Guevara hanging in his

Houston, Texas, campaign headquarters — hanging that photo in the Oval Office?

Do they want Hillary Clinton, the duplicitous former first lady, back in the White House enjoying all those furnishings she and her husband tried to swipe from the mansion?

Do they want a Democrat spending even more money that the government doesn't have on scores of programs right out of Karl Marx's playbook?

That's exactly what they'll get if they sit out the election and stay home on Election Day. That's called biting off your nose to spite your face. Or even more to the point, political suicide.

Let me say this. There has been plenty of battling in the primaries, and I've been in the middle of the battle, but until now haven't committed myself to any candidate, waiting until we had a nominee.

That's over. If John McCain is the nominee of the party, this Reagan will happily campaign with him. The alternative is unthinkable to anyone who loves this nation.

Mike Reagan, the elder 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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