

THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL represents the view of The Joplin Globe's editorial board. Members of the editorial board are: **Andy Ostmeyer**, editor, aostmeyer@joplinglobe.com; **Emily Younker**, managing editor, eyounker@joplinglobe.com; and **Jerry Willis**, design editor, jwillis@joplinglobe.com.

OUR VIEW



Peck Ranch was one of the early purchases of the Missouri Department of Conservation and used to help restore the state's turkey and deer population. COURTESY | MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

History lesson needed in Jeff City

A spoonful of history would be good medicine for the sour stomachs in Jefferson City.

A number of proposals are being debated and voted on that would make it harder for residents to use our own initiative petition and referendum power. We urge lawmakers to get to know the history; they might think twice then about their continued meddling.

Do you like roads?

Missouri's initiative petition process is the reason the state began building highways a century ago, with voter support in 1924 and again in 1928 for bond issues for road construction.

Do you like hunting or seeing deer and turkeys, or trees, or native prairies exploding with spring wildflowers, or hiking on Missouri Department of Conservation land or attending their programs?

It's the reason we have an independent and science-based approach to conservation in the state, as opposed to politicized conservation commissions like other states that are at the whim and whip of lawmakers. The initiative petition was also used to create the dedicated sales tax that supports conservation.

In 1980, it also was the mechanism used for the Hancock Amendment, which limited state and local taxation; that passed, by the way, with only 55% of the vote, and would not have passed under some of the proposals being considered in Jefferson City.

In fact, Missouri's initiative petition and referendum process, which has been around since 1908, has worked well.

The Missouri Law Review in 1983 laid out arguments that were made in favor it.

"The most widely accepted argument in favor of the initiative and referendum reasons that while the public may not always trust elected and appointed officials, it will always trust itself. Proponents maintain that all political decisions should strive for legitimacy, and the highest degree of legitimacy is achieved when decisions are made directly by the people.

"... The initiative and referendum check special interest control of legislative groups. The turn of the (20th) century Progressive movement, inspired largely by disillusionment over big business's manipulation of the political process, favored the initiative as a way to circumvent political organizations. The forces behind the movement hoped that individual voters would be able to overpower grasping corporations, greedy special interest groups, boss-ridden political machines, and weakened, corrupt legislatures."

Disillusionment? Grasping corporations? Greedy special interests? All too familiar a century later.

The article notes there are counterarguments.

"Opponents maintain that the general public cannot intelligently decide complicated issues and that the limited membership of the Legislature is more easily assembled and educated."

And that "voters are more likely than elected representatives to support discriminatory laws because legislators are more susceptible to criticism."

But in 115 years, neither of those fears has been borne out. Decades ago, it was the Democrats who tried to weaken the initiative petition process in Missouri, but their efforts were blocked by former Republican Gov. John Ashcroft, who argued that this power belonged to the residents of Missouri.

"It is through the initiative process that those who have no influence with elective representatives may take their cause directly to the people. The General Assembly should be reluctant, therefore, to enact legislation which places any impediments on the initiative power which are inconsistent with the reservation found in the constitution."

Wise words from history!

Verse

'And The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest.'

Matthew 21:9

Photo credit - Nicole Hester



Bring order back to Missouri House

Missouri's House took an unusual step this year in an effort to bring more order to the legislative process.

The House adopted a rule that limits a member next year from sponsoring more than 20 bills in a session, with a few exceptions such as the House Budget chair who sponsors all the governor's budget bills.

If implemented, it might bring more order to a legislative process I have found to become increasingly chaotic and less conducive to a more deliberative and thoughtful discussion because of the growing number of bills sponsored by legislators.

This year, more bills were introduced into the Legislature than at any time in the past 37 years.

This flood of bills swamps legislative staff who must prepare descriptions for each bill and fiscal notes estimating the impact of each bill on state finances.

It also creates a burden on state agency staff who provide information for the fiscal notes.

Among legislators themselves, I have little doubt that this growing legislative tidal wave makes thoughtful deliberation more difficult.

I suspect it makes it more difficult for legislative leaders and committee chairs to set priorities with so many legislators filing so many bills taking up committee time and attention.

I understand the pressure because it's similar to the struggle journalists face setting priorities for attention to bills that could have a real impact and a chance in the legislative process.

Over the decades, there have been several efforts to address the



PHILL BROOKS

Columnist

growing deluge of bills, but with limited success.

With Missouri having one of the largest state lower chambers in the country, an early proposal was to reduce the number of House members. But that idea went nowhere.

While some House members were concerned about losing their seats in consolidated districts, I heard compelling arguments that House districts with smaller populations are more conducive to personal interaction between a House member and the member's constituents.

That argument continues to be demonstrated by the number of bills and amendments prompted by constituent problems and complaints about government.

There also have been efforts to limit the number of bills committees could report to the full chamber for debate. But those efforts have had limited impact.

Legislative term limits are a factor in this legislative tidal wave.

With just eight years in a legislative chamber, there is greater pressure for a member to establish a legislative record of success to seek higher office.

Success can be claimed by bragging rights about the number of bills sponsored to appeal to voters and special interests. In fact, over the years some legislators seeking higher office have been among the most prolific bill sponsors.

Also, a few lobbyists have confessed that they can claim success just by getting legislation intro-

duced sought by a client, even if the bill goes nowhere.

One solution might be to return to the practice of extended committee hearings and deliberations before the formal legislative session begins.

Without the pressure of near daily chamber sessions and a mountain of introduced bills awaiting committee hearings, interim committee sessions provided more time for deeper exploration of the major issues of statewide importance. It helped set priorities and provided a greater opportunity to reach compromises for the regular session.

Maybe the new House rule will help this process return to a better focus on what are achievable objectives in a relative short legislative session. But I have doubts.

The House rule does not govern the Senate. And in both chambers, members are free to offer as many floor amendments as they desire that take up staff time and legislative attention.

Beyond that, this year only eight of the 163 House members have introduced more than 20 bills, but one of those eight is the House Budget chair whose only bills involve budget matters.

If every House member introduced 20 measures, it would total 3,260 proposals — far more than the 2,224 introduced into the House this year. One Statehouse reporter suggested that the 20-measure limit actually could be a challenge to match by some legislators.

PHILL BROOKS has been a Missouri Statehouse reporter since 1970. He is the Statehouse correspondent for KMOX Radio, director of MDN and an emeritus faculty member of the Missouri School of Journalism.

We decided not to join CAPS program because of better fit for Joplin students

I did not plan on commenting on the Missouri Southern State University CAPS program that the Joplin Board of Education decided not to join last year; however it seems to be the focus of some candidates, board members, and former board members (Globe, March 31).

There are a lot of details that have not been addressed in recent postings.

First, I want to share about my personal connections to the program. I personally do not have any concerns about the education provided by MSSU. As a matter of fact, three of my children have college credits from MSSU.

Second, I do not (nor do any of my family) work for Joplin Schools, Franklin Technical Center, MSSU or any other competing school.

Finally, my allegiances are to our students, teachers, staff and taxpayers of the district.

The CAPS program is an excellent way to connect students, business partners and the community in a meaningful way to help prepare students for future employment. There are nearly 100 of these programs in high schools across the country.

MSSU's is the first to be hosted away from a high school.

There are three reasons why the MSSU CAPS program is not right for Joplin students.

First, the cost to the Joplin School District was to be \$2,400.59 students or \$141,600 per year. An average cost to Joplin Schools of a



JEFF KOCH

Columnist

class is only \$1,162 per year.

Second, Joplin Schools would have been required to pay this amount regardless of how many students actually attended. A former board member offered to find ways to cover the cost of some seats not filled (\$2,400), but never included the cost of the program itself.

Third, Joplin has its own vocational technical program housed at Franklin Technology Center on the Joplin High School campus. The director of the FTC said this program would be harmful to the FTC programs. The incoming director of the FTC has already announced plans that include similar educational content.

Finally, there are a number of practical concerns that exist with an off-campus program. Students would miss three classes at JHS and get credit for two at MSSU. There is no transportation available to MSSU, so students would need to find their own or not be able to attend. A number of risks exist when allowing students to leave the campus, including private transportation, attendance and lack of supervision. The FTC bell schedule is aligned with JHS so for two hours of a program it would take two hours

of regular classes. There would be no need for additional transportation. Additional seats could be filled by FTC's sending schools (Carl Junction, College Heights, McAuley, Sarcoux and Webb City).

The Joplin School District has four dual-credit programs already available to our students at JHS with overlap of this CAPS concept (MSSU, Crowder College, Ozark Technical College and Missouri S&T). Joplin Schools students have the widest variety of options in the region. Adding another program to the Joplin schools offering will likely cannibalize the other programs offered while not bringing added value while costing nearly twice as much. By FTC creating connections directly between business partners instead of through MSSU, Joplin Schools will have the opportunity to help more than just the 59 students in the program with real world employment opportunities.

The decision of the board to not join the CAPS program was not because the MSSU program was a bad program, it was because Joplin schools have choices that are a better fit for their students. There is also an additional cost factor that the board decided was not in the best interest of the district.

JEFF KOCH is president of the Joplin Board of Education, and a candidate in Tuesday's election. He was elected to the board in 2015, lost in 2018, and was voted back on the board in 2020.

Elect school board members who support CAPS

Public education is what brings our community together. The common trend that all communities have that are growing and thriving is that they have strong support for their public education system. If you find yourself at Junge Stadium on a Friday night cheering on the Eagles, we know that we are one community.

This upcoming Tuesday, I am very excited that there are multiple candidates who are running for a seat on our school board. In years past, we have had limited participation to create a wide variety of candidates for the Joplin Board of Education.

I would argue that this excitement is a testament to our community's strength. We have quality people who want to become involved in a concerted way in our schools to continue the great work that our administration, teachers and staff are doing each day.

In the past two years, our school district, like many others in the country, has overcome significant obstacles. After the pandemic, the Joplin School District has been fortunate enough to continue making



MICHAEL JOSEPH

Guest columnist

um also has significant upgrades to the press box and a video board to showcase our student athletes. All of these, along with the countless hours spent in the classroom and with students, have been part of the recipe for Eagle Excellence that Joplin Schools has experienced in the past few years.

However, in the midst of these successes, there was one significant obstacle that current members of our board of education — Jeff Koch, Derek Gander, Brent Jordan, and John Hird — created by denying opportunities to our students to participate in the Missouri Southern

Center for Advanced Professional Studies. The CAPS program, which has been embraced by the Webb City and Carl Junction school districts, is actively providing students with a variety of opportunities to participate and work alongside over 50 industry partners in a field of study of their choice.

For example, there are students who are working alongside physicians at local hospitals, detectives at the Joplin Police Department, and in classrooms for those who wish to become future educators.

All of these experiences allow students to gain an early start in their professional career. Students will go to college and change their major multiple times and potentially delay their graduation and entrance into the workforce.

Students who participate in CAPS and work in our community are afforded an opportunity to gain knowledge while earning college credit, anchoring them in Joplin for the future before they ever step foot on a university campus. These students are the future employees of our community, and CAPS serves as an excellent conduit be-

tween education and industry.

At the Board of Education forum, hosted March 27, I listened to each candidate speak to their desire to have constant communication with the community and to promise to seek their input when making decisions. Board candidate Derek Gander said: "I think the most important thing is communication. ... We can't serve our district in the best capacity if we don't have input from our parents or stakeholders. Hypothetically, you guys fund everything we do."

I agree with Derek, we must partner with our community and they do provide the funds for everything we do.

In January 2022, CAPS was voted down twice on a 4-3 vote by the board. As a result of this, I chose to go to work and find community partners when the concern was raised from Koch, Gander, Jordan and Hird as to how the district would pay for students to participate in CAPS. I was fortunate enough to fundraise in excess of \$100,000 to guarantee to the board that any unfilled seat would be paid for and not have any financial liabil-

ity to Joplin schools. However, these efforts were in vain. CAPS was voted down a final time on a 4-3 vote, with Koch, Gander, Jordan and Hird voting against the measure. Myself, Sharrock Dermott and Rylee Hartwell voted in favor of CAPS.

I wanted to share this information and story with others to remind them of the importance of local elections. This election will have consequences for the children in our community. All voters need to consider the candidates who choose to vote for and promote those who are actively participating in finding quality solutions to educate our students — and vote against those who choose to make objections based on their own personal biases.

My dream would be that a newly seated board in April would make up for lost time and afford our children the opportunity to participate in the Missouri Southern CAPS program, to ensure the future of our next generation

DR. MICHAEL JOSEPH is a Joplin resident, medical doctor, and member of the Joplin Board of Education.

OUR VIEW

Schools, community need Marda Schroeder on board

Marda Schroeder has earned my vote for Joplin Board of education.

I encourage you to seriously consider doing the same.

I had the first-hand privilege of working with Marda as she assisted two students who were part of a refugee family living in Joplin last year. It was apparent that she has a true heart-of-caring for all students.

Marda is uniquely positioned, not as a teacher or administrator but as a retired school counselor, to understand the challenges facing Joplin Schools. Her perspective regarding the district's need to improve the graduation rate and performance on state assessments would be uniquely informed and understood through her lens of experience. Her voice would represent the needs of our students, delivered with a maturity gained through years of service.

Please vote for Marda Schroeder. Our students, our schools and our community will all benefit.

Sallie Beard
Joplin

Support Mike Landis for Joplin School Board

For the past 50 years and counting, I have been immersed in public education in Joplin.

I can attest to the fact that this upcoming April 4 school board election is very important. The answer for me is clear as to who I am supporting in the election — Mike Landis.

I have known Mike since he was a freshman in high school having served as his soccer coach. In April 2006, Mike and I began a nine-year stint on Joplin Board of Education.

During those nine years of service, we voted together at least 95% of the time. We share a biblical worldview and conservative values when it comes to social, fiscal and educational issues. The fact that we share these foundational principles is the main reason he has my support.

I know that Mike has a moral compass and a strong

foundation of conservative principles. This tells me how he will approach decision making. His involvement and investment in the community, through volunteer service opportunities, includes serving on multiple city of Joplin committees and boards, as well as a 15-year stint on the Joplin Board of Education. This serves as a testament of his love, appreciation and passion for Joplin.

Through the many years of volunteer service, he has consistently advocated for high expectations for Joplin schools and has the courage to hold people accountable in their position. Mike exemplifies the type of community-minded adult that Joplin schools strives to produce.

Jim Kimbrough
Joplin

Retired school employees support Marda Schroeder

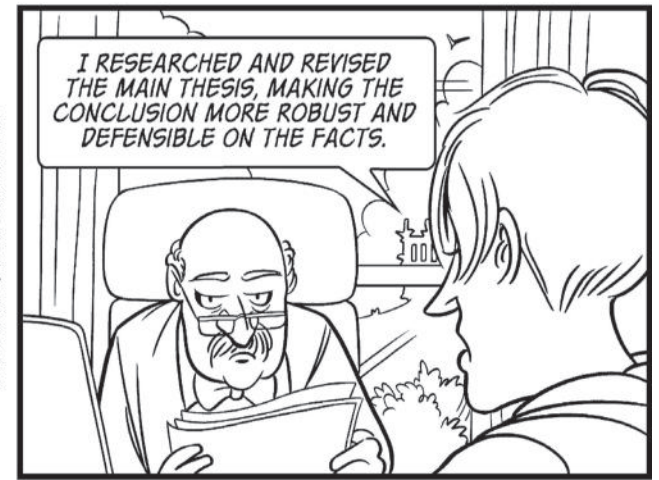
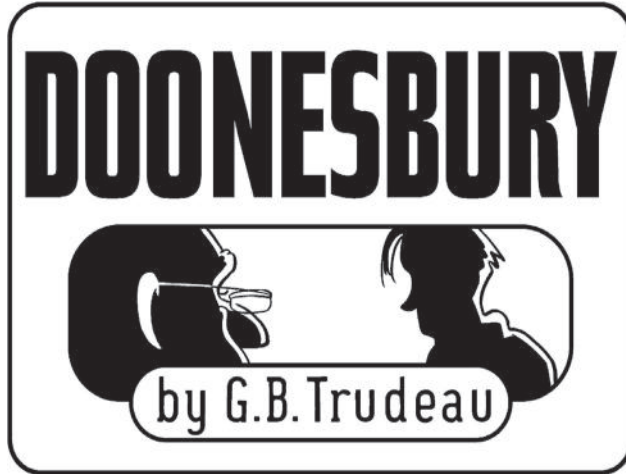
On April 4, the residents of Joplin will elect three individuals to serve on the Joplin Board of Education.

Marda Schroeder is an excellent candidate to serve on this board. Schroeder recently retired from Joplin schools after serving the district for 28 years as a teacher and school counselor. Her years as a professional educator bring invaluable experience to the table. She understands how school works.

Having served on a variety of committees, such as curriculum and professional development, at-risk/persistence to graduation, scholarships and dual credit, just to name a few, Marda is well versed in how best to serve the needs of students and staff. Her work with the high school master schedule taught her a lot about curriculum, staffing requirements, average daily attendance, state core data reporting and about being flexible.

Marda's unique experiences, training and skill set would help the Board of Education and district continue to move in a positive direction. For these reasons, the Retired Employees Association of Joplin Schools endorse Marda Schroeder for the Joplin Board of Education.

Rick Castor, president,
Bonnie Schurman, secretary,
Retired Employees Association of Joplin Schools



America now adrift from foundational values of patriotism, faith

An America without values is an America not worthy:

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

—President John Adams, Oct. 11, 1798, writing to the 1st Brigade of the 3rd Division of the Militia of Massachusetts.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

—Then Republican party candidate for Senate Abraham Lincoln to the delegates of the state convention, Springfield, Ill., June 16, 1858.

"And so my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

—President John F. Kennedy, inaugural address, Jan. 20, 1961.

Three of the most oft referenced quotes of American history as said by three pillars of that history. Each reflecting the times from which they came, each providing guidance and wisdom for generations to come.

Governing in the shadow of George Washington, Adams had his



GEOFF CALDWELL

Globe columnist

the presidency and with it saved the very house of which he spoke.

Kennedy was preparing a new era of Americans for the "contributing to" rather than "taking from" attitude that would be needed if the country was to confront the challenges facing it in the later half of the 20th century.

I freely admit I'm a sap for American history.

Not the high school football coach "read chapters five and six, test on Friday," or the stale adjunct college professor pontificating dates and events just to hear himself speak,

but the living, breathing "this is what it was like" stories of the men and women who created, nurtured and guided this grand experiment into the indispensable nation it is today.

And I don't mean just the glossed-over version in the books of 50 years ago.

I mean all of it — from the good and the greatest to the bad and absolute worst, the history that immerses you with the people, the history that lets you experience it from within rather than lectured from afar, to judge it not by today's standards but by the circumstance that framed it.

Because quite frankly, in this columnist's opinion, no other nation in human history has created more diverse personalities, more gut-wrenching tragedies, more triumphs of good, and made more contributions to the world as a whole, as that which is the American timeline.

Which is why the recent headline from The Wall Street Journal punched me right in the gut: "America Pulls Back From Values That Once

Defined It, WSJ-NORC Poll Finds."

Subhead: "Patriotism, religion and hard work hold less importance."

Looking back to 1998 versus today, the percentage of those polled citing patriotism and their religious faith as "very important" to them dropped from 70% and 62% a quarter century ago to only 38% and 39% respectively today.

To make matters worse, the article noted, "The share of Americans who say that having children, involvement in their community and hard work are very important values has also fallen."

The "God, family, country" that got us here is fast being replaced by the "me, me, me" of now.

While the "ask not" is the most remembered part of Kennedy's speech, the closing sentence deserves its due: "With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

My, how far we've come since that

day — a day that a newly elected president of these United States had not a problem one addressing the nation and the world the importance of God in our lives and our works.

To this day, I cannot recall even one time when I've heard our current president utter the words God bless America. I read daily of people demanding that the government do more.

I watch as the American family faces an all out assault from today's political left.

I wonder just how long this house can survive this assault from within. And I pray. I pray that the God who guided Washington, Adams and so many others then and since has not forsaken us. I pray that he will instill in more of us "wait not for others to do for you tomorrow that which you can do for yourself today."

And I pray that same God, in spite of our recent failures, can somehow manage to still bless this United States of America.

GEOFF CALDWELL lives in Joplin. He can be reached at gc@caldwellscorner.com.