



Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2015-16 Entry Form

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What is the subject/title of the entry? **Dallas' stray-dog crisis**

Date(s) of publication? (in this order: 8/23/15, 9/3/15, 9/15/15, 12/11/15, 3/31/16, 4/27/16)

Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? **Above 50,000**

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

Letter:

The chaos created by neglected and abandoned dogs — whether strays or the property of irresponsible owners — is a heartbreaking reminder of Dallas' great divide. It's a southern Dallas problem that simply wouldn't be tolerated in northern Dallas.

Sharon Grigsby has sounded the alarm about a situation that is pitiful both for southern Dallas residents and the dogs. But it's also a pocketbook issue throughout the city. For Dallas to grow, it needs neighborhoods in the north and the south where people want to put down roots and pay taxes.

Sharon has done extensive reporting and blogging on the issue. Her source list is massive and includes ad hoc street dog rescuers, the often-defensive Dallas Animal Services and its City Hall supervisors, and — most important — the neighbors themselves. Sharon has also invested time in seeing the problem firsthand, particularly in the grim, dog-dumping woods of Dowdy Ferry Road, where dead dogs rot inside garbage bags.

Sharon challenged City Hall to accomplish four key goals: find a way to stop the dog dumpers, enforce the law, get the budget right and lead all the warring dog groups to work together. To prove to skeptical northern residents how pervasive this problem is, Sharon turned to southern residents for help. She asked them to document the packs of dogs roaming the streets and turned the images into a nontraditional “Photos don’t lie” slideshow ([embedded online](#) in the August editorial).

Her work also laid the foundation for the newsroom to follow up with [a major project](#) exploring southern Dallas’ “sea of stray dogs.” She provided the sources, context and news tips to these news-side reporters in a cooperative effort all too rare in traditional newspapers.

When City Hall started paying attention, Sharon’s editorials increased pressure to force solutions from Dallas Animal Services. Each time DAS tried to kick the problem down the road, an editorial encouraged council members to push back. Finally, near year’s end, the city agreed to target four neighborhoods — one per month — while it looked at a larger overhaul. Results from the first of the four tiny “hot spots” illustrate the problem and the city’s prior neglect: Patrolling a 165-acre area two days a week, DAS picked up 55 dogs in November — up from an average of seven. DAS wrote 39 citations, up from an average of 1.5.

Other results: The new head of the city’s advisory Animal Commission is raising money for a comprehensive review. DAS is under intense pressure from the City Council to get its inexplicably large number of open jobs filled. And, most importantly, City Hall in April announced an overhaul of Dallas Animal Services; our editorials have pledged to keep them accountable.

Thanks to Sharon’s tireless work, city officials are determined to hold the Animal Services staff accountable for curbing the loose dog chaos. And the effort has started [gaining attention statewide](#).

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Keven Ann Willey

Vice President, Editorial Page Editor

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

EDITORIALS

BRIDGING DALLAS' NORTH-SOUTH GAP

Not Dogged Enough on Strays

City Hall's latest proposals are falling far short

The City Council, fed up with excuses about southern Dallas' stray dog chaos, called on its staff two weeks ago to come up with a plan of attack.

The city manager's office met the deadline — but not much more in its presentation Monday to the council's Quality of Life Committee. Again, leaders sat through a mind-numbing slideshow that was long on staffing needs and short on metrics and strategies.

Increasingly impatient council members responded with one voice: Go back to work on this breakdown in city services and deliver some real solutions by next month.

A shout-out of thanks is in order for the committee, which is chaired by Sandy Greyson. Northern Dallas council members Philip Kingston, Mark Clayton and Adam McGough stood steadfast alongside southern colleagues Scott Griggs, Tiffinni Young and Carolyn King Arnold.

Anyone watching the briefing was treated to a painful session of elected officials — trying their best to make good on promises to constituents — being stymied by bureaucrats and their oft-confounding government-speak.

City Manager A.C. Gonzalez had promised the outline of a strays plan after a disappointing Sept. 2 briefing to the full council about the loose dog epidemic that has plagued southern Dallas for decades. It's a problem that residents and leaders in this part of the city say has gotten even worse in the last year or so.

Assistant City Manager Joey Zapata, code compliance director Kris Sweckard and Dallas Animal Services director Jody Jones presented the 21-page draft Monday morning. Many, many words filled the pages, but they seemed more to obfuscate than to address the council's straightforward question:

How are you going to fix the problem of stray dogs in southern Dallas?

Zapata and Jones didn't have an answer — at least not one that the committee or this newspaper could make sense of. And the language of their briefing paper didn't help.



File Photo

A stray dog runs from a Dallas Animal Services van in front of Nancy J. Cochran Elementary School in west Oak Cliff.

Consider this item under Outreach and Enforcement: "Vision: Engage Dallas residents so that their concerns are heard."

Southern Dallas residents don't just want to be heard — although they didn't even get that courtesy for far too long. They want loose dogs picked up. They want irresponsible owners ticketed. They want safe neighborhoods.

They want Dallas Animal Services to do its job so they no longer have to serve as ad hoc dog catchers themselves.

Both the people of southern Dallas and the castoff pets that roam the streets are suffering a poor quality of life.

Here's why you should care, regardless of where you live: For Dallas to succeed, we need neighborhoods all over the city where people want to put down roots and pay taxes. So not only are your fellow residents in harm's way, this is also a very real pocket-book issue.

Dallas City Council members are taking pains to hear — and act on — their constituents' loose dog dilemmas. They have signaled they will be dogged on this issue until it's fixed.

City Hall, did you get the message this time?

Screaming Over Ice Cream

Blue Bell hasn't earned its customers' blind loyalty

Blue Bell Creameries has marketed its products for decades by invoking romantic country scenes of cows being led by hand to the milking stool. But the reality is far less idyllic. Lax procedures forced plant shutdowns and a massive product recall earlier this year after at least 13 people were sickened and three people died.

A *Houston Chronicle* report last week detailed the extent to which Blue Bell workers complained repeatedly about hazardous production practices, and how managers disregarded their concerns. The *Chronicle* interviewed 14 employees at Blue Bell's flagship Brenham plant.

The laxity and indifference these workers described make us question why Texans are so quick to herald Blue Bell's return. Though Blue Bell still isn't available in Dallas, stores farther south couldn't restock fast enough to keep up with demand when the brand returned. As if the longing for old-timey flavor and mythical country freshness outweighs the wrongs that forced Blue Bell to close plants in Texas, Alabama and Oklahoma.

Workers described production schedules that were so geared to profit margins that managers didn't leave time for machinery shutdowns so that proper cleaning could be done. In February, potentially deadly listeria pathogens were detected in a machine in Brenham and were flagged by both health officials and company testers. Yet the company didn't change its practices for weeks — and then only after ill consumers were hospitalized in Kansas.

One worker described a cleaning process that required spraying production equipment with scalding-hot water to ensure that surfaces were cleaned of butterfat remnants, which can retain pathogens. The hot water would run out routinely, meaning surfaces remained

Cutting corners

"Instead of you taking care of this problem, you're adding on to make more money."

Edwin Rogers, a former Blue Bell vehicle operator, describing the company's rapid expansion and the shortcuts that might have led to health and safety issues

"If it ran out, it ran out. It became a race for time."

Benjamin Ofori, a production line worker, describing problems with the process of spraying scalding-hot water on equipment to clean it

SOURCE: *Houston Chronicle*

potentially toxic. The equipment was put back into production anyway. Workers said they had complained about this problem for a decade or more, to no avail.

Condensation would drip from pipes and dirty air vents, they said, making its way into food products. An employee described efforts by the company not to correct the problem but to hide it whenever health inspectors arrived for visits.

Company statements appear designed to divert attention from past mistakes and instead focus on production-process upgrades and training enhancements to ensure future safety. An independent microbiology expert is now being retained "for ongoing evaluation of our procedures and facilities."

Thank goodness for that. But customers should be asking: Blue Bell, what took you so long? Establishment of an anonymous hotline would go far to ensure problems that employees see on the production line are fixed quickly and thoroughly.

Loyalty to a time-honored brand has an endearing quality. But blind loyalty can be a dangerous thing. Blue Bell still has work to do to earn back the trust it so badly squandered.



Jeff Koterba/Omaha World-Herald

LETTERS

Stutz's reporting always fair

Re: Retirement of Terrence Stutz.

It is a fairly common thing for people in elected office to feel they are badly treated by the press corps. For the 15 years that I served in the Texas Senate and as lieutenant governor, Terry Stutz covered the Legislature for *The Dallas Morning News*. Our paths crossed daily, and some days hourly, during that time. I can say, without reservation, that never in those 15 years did I ever feel unfairly treated by Terry in his reporting of Capitol activities.

He was the consummate professional in his investigations, in his analyses and in his reporting of state affairs. I know there are other members of the state's Capitol press corps who also conduct themselves with professionalism, but Terry's retirement will leave a void that will be difficult to fill.

Bill Ratliff, Mount Pleasant

Donald Trump's Dallas visit

I'm not sure who is advising Donald Trump or if he just doesn't care. His plans for Dallas coincide with Rosh Hashana — New Year's for the Jewish community and the beginning of the High Holy Days. I guess I shouldn't be surprised — why would he want to honor a major holiday and another belief other than his own? Even Dear Abby has a note in her column each year for her "Jewish Friends/Readers."

Someone in his staff needs to pay attention to holidays that most major corporations honor and not schedule events on these days. I wish a sweet year to all and not to worry Mr. Trump, I wouldn't have been at the event even if it wasn't a holiday so no need to change your plans now for me.

Perri Brackett, Lewisville

9/11 discussions leave out much

In class on Friday, we took time to talk about 9/11. Many teachers across the country hold this duty to our students in high regard. I count myself as one.

So many of our students have had family members become first responders and service members out of a call to defend our country and try to be a part of what will make us a safer and more peaceful society. Our world has been changed, and it is our duty to become more educated, culturally inclusive and diligent to our civic virtues. This is what we discussed.

After school I remembered several issues including these: KBR, Halliburton, Blackwater, and numerous other civilian contractors who profited from war; thousands of service members and millions of innocents killed and injured; trillions of dollars spent, while college became the most expensive in history; terrible treatment of veterans who put their lives on the line and paid a heavy price; and the security apparatus that has been exposed in the wake of those years after 9/11.

We discussed the noble acts of our countrymen. Our children do not seem ready for truth.

Casey Edwards, Grand Prairie

Common sense in short supply

Re: "Well not blamed for Azle quakes — EnerVest's site, like XTO's, should be allowed to keep operating, regulators say," Friday Business story.

Why do the worthy appointees of the Texas Railroad Commission need more "proof" that all the earthquakes near Azle were caused by fracking? Would not common sense be sufficient? Or is there insufficient proof that common sense is in anything approaching sufficient supply at the Texas Railroad Commission?

Thomas Prentice, Lakewood

UT should protect land

Re: "Report: Fracking hurts UT land in W. Texas — Million gallons of pollutant spilled, it says, but official calls document

one-sided," Wednesday news story.

Last summer my friends and I visited Guadalupe Mountains National Park and had the opportunity to canoe part of the Pecos River that runs through West Texas. I'm dismayed to find out that the University of Texas System, which was given land in West Texas in the Texas Constitution, allows fracking on the Pecos River watershed and other places with immense environmental value, not just for visitors like me, but, more important, for the communities and wildlife of West Texas who live there.

I understand a substantial part of the university's revenue comes from leasing this land and that money provides an affordable and world-class education, but I don't think that justifies the disproportionate damage that fracking does to the air, water and natural habitats of West Texas. UT should make a concerted effort to protect the land it was given and the people and animals that make it their home.

Ryan Malone, Austin

Syrian refugees deserve a chance

Re: "As refugee crisis hits close to home, all of us can pitch in — More volunteers are always needed to help those coming to U.S. settle in to new lives, says Wes Magruder," Monday Viewpoints.

Millions of Syrians are displaced because of the civil war in their country. And as the growing insurgency of the Islamic State looms closer, more and more Syrians flock to Europe and elsewhere to seek refuge.

Living in the United States, it may be easier for some of us to avert our eyes from the migrant crisis. But we must do our part in making this world a better and safer place for everyone.

This is why an international organization started by the Ahmadiyya Muslim community called Humanity First has two new schools in Jordan for Syrian children. As Ahmadi Muslims, we believe education is key to rebuilding lives of these refugees. Being able to go to schools doesn't just give these people hope, it also restores a sense of normalcy in their lives.

While schooling may seem like a distant priority in comparison to the daily needs of a place to sleep or some food to eat, the United States must do its part in not only keeping this generation of Syrians alive, but by giving them a life worth living.

Huma Munir, Pflugerville
@humamunir

Trump lacks character

Re: "Trump promises to rally, rile — Dallas visit drawing followers, protesters and spectacle seekers," Monday news story.

These thoughts are not about politics. They are about character. Even the most casual listener can hear Trump clearly revealing his character. These are some of his comments:

"[My daughter] does have a very nice figure. If Ivanka were not my daughter then perhaps I would be dating her."

"African-American youth have never done more poorly. They have no spirit. There are killings on an hourly basis."

"He [John McCain] is a war hero because he was captured? I like people who were not captured."

"I'm not sure if I have ever asked God for forgiveness. I don't bring God into that picture."

"Look at that [Carly Fiorina's] face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?!"

This is a man who has shown us the cruelty that drives him. Pay attention. There is no good or evil in Trump's world. There is only Trump. He cannot win the election, so his nomination by any non-Democratic party will guarantee a Democratic victory in 2016.

If any party nominates him, they will deserve the pain which their stupidity earns them.

Chip Field, Dallas

LETTERS & VIEWPOINTS POLICY

We value reader submissions. We receive far more than we can print and publish a representative sample. Letters should not exceed 200 words. Viewpoints columns, which may be submitted through viewpoints@dallasnews.com, should not exceed 600 words. Letters and columns are edited for length and clarity. Include your name, address with ZIP code and daytime phone number. Submissions become property of *The News*.

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Friday, December 11, 2015

EDITORIALS

Pressure Check on Stray Dogs

Hot-spot action gives city time to find real fix

Intense pressure by the City Council, residents and this newspaper is working: Dallas Animal Services is picking up loose dogs.

But for the sake of both the residents of southern Dallas and the poor animals roaming its streets, none of us can relax one bit.

The first month of City Hall's temporary effort to add dog patrols shows some interesting results. Mindful that the target area is extremely small and the extra trucks are there only twice weekly, consider these November numbers:

- 55 dogs were either picked up or surrendered, in contrast to 42 total in April through September.

- 39 citations were written; nine were issued in the six-month comparison period.

That's metrics-based evidence of the loose dog chaos that southern Dallas endures. Imagine what the tallies would be if similar resources landed in every neighborhood.

But the hot-spot strategy, aimed at one vulnerable area each month, is only stopgap.

City Hall also met its promise to get most of the inexplicably large number of Dallas Animal Services openings filled by the end of last month. Twenty-seven key staffers were hired; seven more spots remain.

Once the city gets everyone trained and deployed, it faces a much tougher goal: Sustained reduction of complaints about loose dogs.

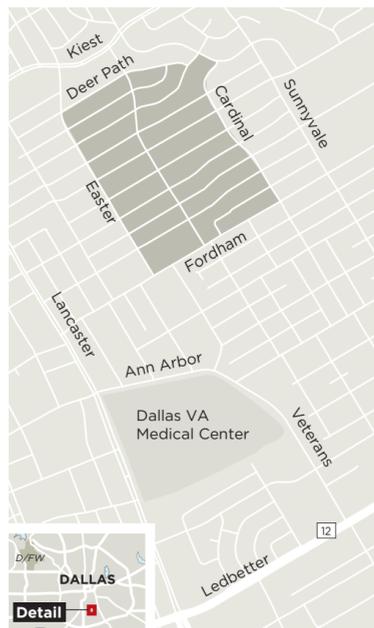
If you use action as a measuring stick, Dallas Animal Services has mostly ignored residents' concerns for a long, long time. But the growing outcry of "pick up the dogs, pick up the dogs" reached a pitch this year that DAS director Jody Jones' bosses finally perked up to.

This newspaper has expended a lot of effort combating the loose and abandoned dog problem. Here's a reminder why: The city needs more neighborhoods where people want to put down roots and pay taxes. Not only are people and dogs suffering, this is a pocketbook issue.

The more we interview, report and analyze, the clearer it becomes that at the core of this dysfunction is a governance problem. City Hall tends to defer to Jones as the shelter and field expert, and her views rule. In turn, Jones responds to questions and criticisms about her strategy with, "Hey, I'm nowhere near the top of this chain of command."

Too many times in 2015, dog-related con-

November target area



	Monthly average for prior six months	November
Dogs picked up/turned in	7	55
Service requests	14	68
Citations	2.5	39

SOURCE: Dallas Animal Services

Laurie Joseph/DMN

cerns have resulted only in deflection and excuses. Too often, Dallas Animal Services has seemed more interested in its high "live release rates" (translation: how many dogs it doesn't have to euthanize) than in the dogs running loose, neglected or abandoned.

Jones is correct that her job is relatively low in the organization. She reports to code compliance director Kris Sweckard. He reports to Assistant City Manager Joey Zapata, who reports to City Manager A.C. Gonzalez.

The hot-spot strategy has legitimately bought City Hall some time. Gonzalez would be wise to use it to figure out what is the right structure for an animal services operation that can — and will — do its job.

The rest of us must not let up on the pressure until this mess is fixed.

Mock Slaughter a Bad Idea

Planned gun rights protest is simple fearmongering

There are bad ideas, and then there are really bad ideas.

Gun rights groups Come and Take It Texas and DontComply.com plan to stage a fake mass shooting in Austin this weekend using cardboard weapons, fake blood, mass-attack "victims" and recorded gun noises to dramatize the carnage a gunman can do in a gun-free zone.

The gun groups call it performance art; we call it headline-grabbing fearmongering, the epitome of bad taste and crassness.

Gun-free zones, say the groups, provide "target-rich environments" for a gunman to mow down scores of innocent, unarmed people in a matter of minutes. The only way to stop a bad guy with a weapon, they contend, is a good guy with a weapon. And they don't mean well-trained law enforcement officers; they mean anyone with a firearm, roaming anywhere they want.

With the mass murders in Paris and San Bernardino still fresh in our memories, we don't need this kind of mindless stunt to drive home the point that deranged or evilly motivated people can do great damage. Even the Texas Legislature, when it approved open carry and campus carry laws, recognized that some places should be gun-free zones.

Originally, the gun rights groups planned to stage this stunt on the University of Texas campus — beneath the observation tower where sniper Charles Whitman, a UT student and former Marine, murdered 14 and injured 32 others in a 1966 mass shooting. After public outrage and the threat of trespassing charges,

the groups are moving this spectacle off-campus. Murdoch Pizgatti, the founder of Come and Take It Texas, says the protest will be an "over-dramatization," not a realistic event that would panic people.

That is small concession. But there is another issue that goes deeper than taste and tactics.

The state's new campus carry law, which goes into effect in August, allows concealed handguns on university campuses. But it also allows public universities to create zones on campuses that are gun-free, and private universities can opt out of the law. Universities such as UT, where so many people congregate every day, also have an obligation to protect students, teachers and visitors.

On Thursday, a UT committee released its recommendations for where on campus guns should be prohibited, including dorms and areas where K-12 students are present. Other schools have determined — or are leaning toward the conclusion — that the answer isn't more guns. No universities should let bad gun theater bully them into prohibiting gun-free zones.

Gun owners say their constitutional rights are at stake. While we are champions of the Bill of Rights, we respectfully disagree. None of our freedoms are absolute. There is a huge difference between the desire for unlimited gun rights and the responsibility of university presidents and others to determine what is best for the safety of their students, employees and customers.

A mock slaughter is opportunism at its worst.



Dan Wasserman/Boston Globe

LETTERS

Build a future for Fair Park

Re: "Seeking a new foundation for Fair Park," Sunday Arts & Life column by Mark Lamster.

Lamster's excellent essay compared the current seedy condition of Fair Park to an exciting future prospect for the park. It mentions the cost for revitalization, as quoted to the City Council, at nearly a half-billion dollars. This estimate deserves clarification.

The 2014 Mayor's Fair Park Task Force report cited a "needs inventory" total of \$478 million provided by parks and recreation staff. A review of this needs inventory reveals a lack of serious planning for what it will take to revive Fair Park. More than \$345 million of the total figure consists of a grab bag/wish list of new facilities, acquisitions or expensive building restorations with no clear purpose and no prospective tenants.

A better approach is to first create a landscaped signature park and fill vacant historic buildings with appropriate tenants who will reprogram, use and maintain them. Increasing the number of daily users will bring people and activities to Fair Park year-round — creating jobs, boosting tax revenue and catalyzing revitalization in neighboring communities. Such a prioritization is affordable, realistic and would generate tremendous economic value for Dallas.

Kavian McMillon, Dallas

Voters not choosing true leaders

Re: "Let's elect a unifier as president — America needs a straight-shooting problem-solver who's resolute but restrained," says Robert Gates, "Monday Viewpoints."

This is a wonderful column by Gates, who describes the qualities of an ideal president, a person who could accomplish great things by applying all the positive attributes of a great leader. Attributes that are sorely lacking in today's crop of politicians.

His column begs the question why we don't have candidates of the caliber he describes. We don't because that's not who today's voters are choosing. The U.S. electorate is consciously (or unconsciously on the part of some) selecting politicians described by Gates as having "governmental ineptitude, arrogance and corruption" and are "more concerned with getting re-elected than with the nation's future."

Numerous reports show that the U.S. has one of the lowest voter turnout rates in the developed world. We can rail all we want about the poor performance of our elected representatives, but until we get off our duffs and get out and vote, things are unlikely to change.

In the oft-quoted words of an old Pogo comic strip, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Dan Prevo, Ovilla

Report potential dangers

A neighbor in California saw Middle Eastern men coming and going from her neighbor's garage. It struck her as odd, but she said nothing. Had she said something to law enforcement, those parents of a 6-month-old child might not have killed 14 co-workers.

Neighbors of a distraught young mother saw her struggle, but said nothing. If they had, her three children might still be alive.

Schoolmates of two teenage boys said nothing when they read chilling comments about killing classmates. Had they said something, students in Colorado might still be alive.

When a teacher saw a young man toting what was purported to be a homemade bomb and said something, the young man was called a hero, the school became a target of vilification, and the city may be sued.

So, which is preferable to those who are attacking the city and school district: Say something and have it checked or say nothing and risk having children blown up? You can't judge a killer by age, gender, nationality, religion, etc.

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We should stop being afraid because we see things that *might* be dangerous, and instead use common sense, powers of observation and report it.

Lois Smith, Plano

Pearl Harbor Day coverage lame ...

Wow! Great job covering Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. One op-ed column on the next to the last page was the only article I was able to locate. Such a dishonor to the survivors and all those that died that horrific day.

Tammy Benton, Frisco

...Do a better job next year

Dec. 7, 2015, a day that will live in infamy at *The Dallas Morning News*. Just three areas printed something about Pearl Harbor: The Associated Press in a history column on a comics page, a column about how departments' communications are better now, and a notice that this year's ceremony will only have about 3,000 people, but they expect 6,000 next year, its 75th anniversary.

Hopefully, you can do better then.

Bonnie Jonas-Boggioni, Plano

Trump, barbarism and decadence

I hesitate at giving that idiot, Donald Trump, more publicity, but Oscar Wilde said something with more wit than I ever could. One of his remarks about America was "America is the only country that went from barbarism to decadence without civilization in between."

This is unfortunately echoed by Trump with his bizarre comments.

Christopher Haas, Carrollton

Go to WinStar? Never again

Re: "Doubling down — WinStar's aggressive booking of acts pressures N. Texas venues," Wednesday news story.

My first and last experience attending a show at the WinStar was so unpleasant that in spite of being interested in some of the entertainers, I won't be going back. Steve Martin and Martin Short were terrific, but the experience itself was dreadful.

First it is necessary to walk through the entire casino to get to the venue. I understand the reasons why. However, fog lights are required to see your way through the cigarette smoke. Apparently they have never heard of ventilation.

Once you finally make your way through that, you find conference chairs set out on a flat floor require you to look up at the stage and/or giant TV screens to see the performers. The seats are so close together — butted right up against one another — that if you take a deep breath, you knock over everyone else in the entire row.

Sadly, this location may provide the only chance to see some truly great performers, but I won't be back.

Karen Atkinson, Far North Dallas

NRA doesn't sell the guns

Last I checked, the National Rifle Association doesn't sell guns. The NRA is an organization dedicated to preserving a right given to us when this country was formed. The intention of that particular amendment was to protect this country against all forms of aggression, foreign or domestic.

If one were to research, you would find that most individuals who commit a crime or those from whom they illegally obtain that firearm, are not members of the NRA.

To imply the NRA is responsible for all gun-related deaths is no different than saying all Muslims are terrorists or most crimes are committed by African-Americans.

That is, of course, since we are throwing out generalizations.

Michael Campione, Plano

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EDITORIALS

BRIDGING DALLAS' NORTH-SOUTH GAP

Still Dogging the Problem

Kill rates down; problems persist outside shelter

Euthanasia rates are falling at the animal shelter. Now if the city could just show similar success when it comes to tackling the loose dog chaos and dead-animal dumping in southern Dallas.

First, the good news: Dallas Animal Services saved more animals than it euthanized last year, a goal the operation had been working toward for a long time.

In the most recent fiscal year, 52 percent of 30,000 animals left the shelter alive. That's a dramatic increase in the live-release rate — only 20 percent were saved in 2007.

Dallas Animal Services, which takes in an average of 80 animals daily, has employed multiple strategies: In addition to many of the animals being adopted or reunited with their owners, the shelter works with rescue groups and less-crowded shelters to find homes for others.

While we're heartened by the euthanasia milestone, we will celebrate more heartily when the city can show substantial progress on other troubling pet-related fronts.

Dallas Animal Services continues to battle the loose and stray dog problem in the city's southern half with a "hot spots" campaign. The intense focus — one tiny residential pocket per month — has resulted in an increase in impounded dogs and owner citations from the targeted area.

Dallas Animal Services has vowed to increase the number of hot spots in April. However, it's unclear how this strategy can be multiplied sufficiently to make a significant dent in the large swath of the city that needs help.

Likewise, despite City Hall efforts to fight illegal dumping in southeast Dallas, the number of dead animals thrown out along Dowdy Ferry Road continues to grow. A group of advocates has tallied 91 sets of remains — 64 of them dogs — since Aug. 1.

No citywide protocol exists for the oversight of these cases. Nor do the police or sheriff's department have an animal crimes unit. So individuals in various agencies instead scramble

Marking 91 deaths

What: The public is invited to help place crosses alongside Dowdy Ferry Road symbolizing the dead animals found there since Aug. 1 and to learn more about the dumping issue.

When: 9 a.m. Saturday.

Where: Dowdy Ferry Road, just south of Interstate 20.

Afterward: Volunteers will go door to door with info, printed in English and Spanish, alerting residents about free spay/neuter services and about rewards being offered in connection with the dumping.

For more info: Go to Dowdy Ferry Placing of the Crosses Facebook page.

piecemeal to get to the bottom of each dead-dog report.

Necropsies, limited investigations and first-person accounts suggest the causes of death fall into one of three categories:

- Unwanted dogs left on the side of the road to fend for themselves. All too often they wind up run over or killed by another animal.

- Dogs that died of natural causes — including diseases that vets say indicate owner neglect — then were dumped like trash alongside broken-down couches and construction scraps.

- Dead dogs that show signs of abuse and torture. Both ears of one poor creature were cut to the skull and his back haunches were dotted with puncture wounds.

For more than a year, we've devoted editorials to the challenges that loose and stray dogs create for the people who live, work and play in southern Dallas. As the number of dead dogs found in Dowdy Ferry grows, it's increasingly clear that these concerns also deserve more attention and action.

Much of what's going on inside the walls of the Dallas Animal Services shelter is admirable. But outside, the situation is an outrage.

More Routes, More Often

DART's evolving bus ideas are on right track

Our Houston neighbors have figured it out: If we want to entice folks to ditch their cars and hop on the bus, we'd better provide a system that's convenient for them to do so.

Last year, Houston tackled its sprawling growth and implemented a plan overnight that dramatically increased the frequency of bus service midday and on weekends. Its overhauled system is showing signs of reversing the trend of steadily declining ridership.

As *The Dallas Morning News'* Brandon Formby reported last weekend, more Houstonians rely on public transit not only to get to and from work but in the evenings for social events and throughout the day for errands and grocery shopping.

That's an example that DART — working on its own first comprehensive overhaul in years — is eyeing and would be smart to follow.

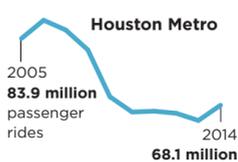
How very metropolitan it would be to have enough buses and trains running to and from enough locations to not have to own a car to get around this town.

It's part of the agency's long-term plan that residents have been weighing in on in public meetings. The last of those meetings is Thursday in Irving.

Unlike Houston's Metro — which planned for three years then flipped the switch on its entire plan overnight — DART plans to roll out its changes in a piecemeal fashion that will take a decade or more. While the changes here

Dallas and Houston bus ridership

Transit agencies in both North Texas and the Houston area have seen drops in bus ridership. The decrease was more dramatic in Houston. But that was before a system overhaul in 2015, a year for which data isn't yet available.



SOURCE: American Public Transportation Association
Michael Hogue/Staff Artist

Make your voice heard

Dallas Area Rapid Transit's last public meeting about its bus overhaul and long-term transit plan is today.

Noon
Urban Towers
2222 W. Las Colinas Blvd., Irving

won't happen as fast as we'd like, DART's proposals make a lot of sense.

They signal especially good news for southern and eastern parts of Dallas where people rely on bus service the most.

More frequent bus routes in large parts of the city would go from the traditional hub-and-spoke layout to form grids. There would also be a dramatic increase in the number of weekend bus routes with stops every half-hour or less.

It all adds up to a proposed system with more convenience, that's better for the environment and a lot more useful to those who most need it and want it to get to work and anywhere else they want to go in the area.

Imagine shorter commutes into downtown and to employment centers throughout the city.

Houston's Metro is ahead of DART's bus game, but there are logical reasons for that. DART has invested more heavily in rail over buses to date. Currently slightly more than half of DART's

passenger trips happen on buses compared with four-fifths in the Houston area. Still, DART lost more than 3 million bus riders from 2009 to 2014 when it ramped up rail.

That has to be a concern for the long-term health of the transit system. It knows it has to up its bus game to provide a variety of options for potential riders.

It's on the right track.



Dana Summers/Tribune Content Agency

LETTERS

School name game

Re: "Don't change school's name" by Ann Wilson, March 24 Letters

I agree with Wilson that John Hood was undoubtedly a brave Confederate soldier. So were Jackson and Lee. That is not the issue. Right after Brown vs. Board of Education in 1955, Dallasites started naming schools after Confederates as a poke in the eye to desegregation.

At the same time Georgia, South Carolina and Mississippi put the rebel flag on their state flags for the same reason. So they are symbols of the fight against segregation. Add to this the fact that these schools are almost completely minority. I wonder if she would like to go to O.J. Simpson High School. Or Bill Cosby High School. Or Aaron Burr High School. How about Cornwallis High School?

Michael Hernandez, Dallas/Oak Cliff

Bargain in good faith

Re: "Eminent domain questioned — Members say city should work with South Dallas property owners," March 24 Metro story.

I first heard of eminent domain proceedings many years ago as a young boy. I'm actually surprised we still allow this to happen. In the current case before the Dallas City Council, who on that council believes a house can be replaced for \$22,000? I know in my world it can't be done, yet we still allow this. At least the Texas Supreme Court has ruled it can't be done for private enterprise, though that ruling came too late for the people displaced by Jerry Jones' sports palace.

I also notice it never seems to be invoked against the rich and powerful — you know, the people with the means to fight it; only against the poor and defenseless.

I hope the day comes when this practice will be declared unconstitutional, and government entities will have to bargain in good faith for property owners' property. Will it cost more? Certainly it will. But when did doing the right thing carry a price tag?

Steven Ritchey, Richardson

Perfect adjective

Another newspaper's crossword puzzle had the clue: "Showy but worthless, adj." The seven-letter answer was: trumpery.

That word may regain currency shortly.

Joe Frank Allison, Mesquite

Ugly ties

Re: "Tie gives unions victory — Deadlock in teachers' case lets appeals ruling on non-members' fees stand," Wednesday news story

A split 4-4 decision in the Supreme Court, one of many more we can expect. The Republican-dominated do-nothing Senate refuses to even consider a nominee for at least another year, thereby almost guaranteeing that there will be more tied decisions, which is to say no decision. We are used to the "just say no" tactic. They have already shown their willingness to shut down the government rather than compromise.

Why are voters so outraged? Why is the GOP disintegrating? Because we thought we elected our representatives to actually do something besides play politics. The Constitution says they are supposed to consider the president's nominee. If they can't prove he's incompetent or dishonest, they should approve him. At the very least they should talk to him.

Steve McCluer, Far North Dallas

Part of the job, right?

Re: "Senators, Meet With Nominee," Tuesday Editorials

Kudos to *The Dallas Morning News* for urging Texas' senators to do their job and meet with Merrick Garland, President Barack Obama's nominee for the Supreme

Court. Not only is taking this step the smart approach politically, it is the Senate's constitutional responsibility to meet with and hold a fair and prompt hearing on Judge Garland.

The president has fulfilled his constitutional duty to name a nominee to fill the Supreme Court vacancy left by the death of Antonin Scalia. The U.S. Constitution doesn't make exceptions to the mandate to fill vacant Supreme Court seats. It contains no language that makes exceptions for election years, newly elected presidents or continuing presidents. Voters elected the president and our senators to do their jobs throughout their terms.

Since 1980, every nominee to the Supreme Court has been given a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing and vote in less than 100 days. The last four Supreme Court justices were confirmed in an average of 75 days after nomination. The president's nominee deserves to receive a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote, a courtesy that both parties have always provided.

Caren Edelstein, Dallas

Protecting Texans' voice

Re: "GOP lost moral compass" by Robert Franklin, Sunday Letters

Franklin disagrees with the decision to wait and give voters a say this November in who fills the vacant seat on the Supreme Court.

While the president has a constitutional right to nominate someone to fill the vacancy left by Antonin Scalia, it is the Senate's authority and responsibility to determine whether to proceed with that nomination. The Senate is not a rubber stamp, and the American people made clear they wanted a check on the Obama administration when they put Republicans in charge of the U.S. Senate.

There is a lot at stake: The next Supreme Court justice could change the ideological direction of the court for a generation, fundamentally reshaping American society in the process. Texans deserve to have a say in this decision. That's why I joined my Republican colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee in deciding that the Senate should give the next president the chance to nominate someone for this vacancy. And while some disagree with this decision, members of the opposing political party have been making the same argument for decades: If a Supreme Court vacancy arises during a presidential election year, we should wait until the election is over.

Texans deserve to have a voice in the selection of the next lifetime appointment to the court — and I am committed to making sure that they do.

Sen. John Cornyn, Austin

Getting real help for CPS

Re: "Advisers on CPS 'best of the best' — Judge names 2 to assess how to improve system," March 22 Metro story.

I have developed three foster care programs for three different agencies in Texas and two in Georgia. I am appalled that Texas has not been able to serve the foster care population even adequately, let alone well. I am convinced that this is the right path, to utilize experts not from the state, to form opinions and plans that would work for Texas.

Texas has simply rearranged the deck chairs on the Titanic over the last 20 years. Caseworker caseloads can be diminished. Caseworker turnover can be decreased. Children can have safe, loving foster homes in which to live. Texas needs to fund 100 percent of the cost of care for children to provide these positive outcomes. Texas has the money but chooses not to spend its money on our children, which are our future. In addition, we in the foster care system need to develop a deep trust between private agencies and CPS to facilitate collaborative efforts to fix the problem. That is doable.

Marilyn Mitten, Waxahachie

LETTERS & VIEWPOINTS POLICY

We value reader submissions. We receive far more than we can print and publish a representative sample. Letters should not exceed 200 words. Viewpoints columns, which may be submitted through viewpoints@dallasnews.com, should not exceed 600 words. Letters and columns are edited for length and clarity. Include your name, address with ZIP code and daytime phone number. Submissions become property of *The News*.

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EDITORIALS

BRIDGING DALLAS' NORTH-SOUTH GAP

Curbing Loose-Dog Chaos

Now the city gets chance to show if plan will work

Dallas Animal Services rolled out a remedy to the city's loose-dog problem Monday for which it can — and must — be held accountable.

The department has been working hard toward this moment since last fall, including:

- Filling numerous jobs that were empty for too long.
- Creating a communication link with 311 to speed complaint responses.
- Test-driving its plan in five neighborhoods.
- Writing far more citations this fiscal year, which doesn't end until Sept. 30, than ever before.

The plan will simultaneously target multiple areas and mobilize resources according to greatest need. These are tactics similar to the Dallas Police Department's successful hot-spot strategies.

Our sustained call last year to "pick up the loose dogs" — also the mantra of many leaders and residents of southern Dallas — is part of the proposed solution. But the Dallas Animal Services plan fixates more attention on human behavior than it does on the animals themselves.

As target areas are identified, volunteers will be sent in for about a week to explain the laws and share resources. Next to arrive will be the Animal Services officers, who will remove stray animals from the streets and issue citations to residents, including tickets to those who let their dogs run loose.

Dallas Animal Services has estimated that about one-third of dogs on the streets are truly strays while the rest belong to less-than-compliant owners. So the city believes it can most efficiently curb the chaos with a combination of education, enforcement and dog-catching.

The plan comes with about 20 metric-based goals. Some of the details — for instance, how to more precisely define frequent mentions of "gradual reduction over time" — are yet to be filled out. But plenty of data should be available to grade the effort; the council's Quality of Life Committee will receive quarterly updates.

While Animal Services director Jody Jones and others have long maintained that a "pick up the dogs" focus won't work, we aren't convinced. Especially those of us who spend a lot of time in



Staff Photo

Dallas Animal Services estimates about a third of dogs on the streets are strays; the rest belong to less-than-compliant owners.

'Hot spots' results

Targeted efforts in five small neighborhoods led to:

- 815 violations (no fines)
- 159 tickets
- 170 dogs to shelter
- 59 newly registered animals
- 135 neuters
- 2,947 packages of education materials
- 1,245 citizens contacted

SOURCE: Dallas Animal Services

southern Dallas and encounter numerous street dogs that look like they haven't seen anything resembling an owner in a long time.

We hope the great enthusiasm we hear from Animal Services about its educational efforts will be matched by a commitment to catch dogs and ticket irresponsible owners.

Count us with City Council member Tiffini Young, whose southern Dallas constituents cope daily with the loose-dog chaos. She said at Monday's committee meeting, "It's great to look out for our animals, but I'm going to keep talking about looking out for the quality of life for our residents and for our kids walking to and from schools."

You can bet that residents and their representatives in the southern half of the city — as well as this newspaper — will bark loudly if this plan doesn't work.

Misplaced politics

"Nobody wants to do that [focus on sex education and access to contraceptives]. Everybody wants to do the politics instead of policy."

Rep. Jason Dunnington, D-Oklahoma City, who voted against the measure

"This total ban on abortion is a new low in Oklahoma. I can't imagine an amendment that would fix the constitutional defect. This bill should be killed."

Amanda Allen, Center for Reproductive Rights' senior state legislative counsel

■ Doctors who feel bullied are bound to move their practices elsewhere, creating a bigger shortage of competent medical help.

The Oklahoma State Medical Association unsurprisingly opposes the bill. "It really places a chilling effect on physicians' practice in Oklahoma," said Wes Glinzmann, the group's legislative director.

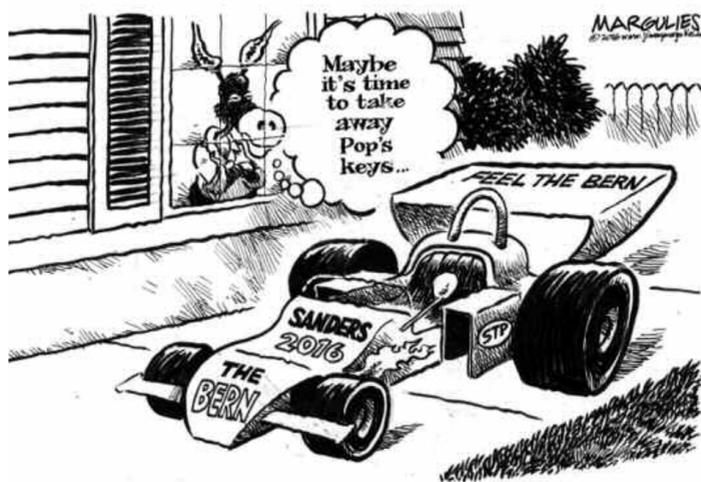
■ Taxpayers may not appreciate having to fund the legal battle that's almost sure to ensue. Due to depressed oil prices, Oklahoma already faces an ugly \$1.3 billion budget shortfall for the next financial year.

But Rep. David Brumbaugh, the bill's co-sponsor, seemed little concerned about legal costs: "If we take care of the morality, God will take care of the economy."

As to the consequences the Oklahoma legislators *did* intend, this draconian bill serves only to penalize women and limit their access to health services.

And as Dr. Mark DeFrancesco, president of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, noted, the legislation puts women at further risk because they may instead turn to unsafe, illegal methods to end their pregnancy.

Politics, DeFrancesco emphasized, has no place in an exam room. This bill has no place in any state.



Jimmy Margulies/The Record (N.J.)

LETTERS

Border patrol is too dismissive

Re: "Securing the U.S. border safely and humanely — Sarah Saldaña says ICE carries out judges' orders and protects women, kids," Friday Viewpoints.

In her essay, Immigration and Customs Enforcement director Saldaña says that newly arrived immigrants and refugees receive a "full opportunity to pursue a claim of asylum or other humanitarian relief." Yet most of the Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadorans who've arrived in recent years have been subject to "expedited removal," which provides no right to see a judge and no access to "humanitarian relief" of any kind.

The fault doesn't lie with Saldaña's agency so much as with Customs and Border Protection. When CBP arrests a noncitizen at or near our borders, they must ascertain whether the immigrant fears returning to her country. Too often, they don't. Human Rights Watch and the ACLU rightly point to the absurdity of CBP's claim that roughly 95 percent of the Salvadorans, Guatemalans and Hondurans it arrests expressly disavow any fear of returning to nations that vie for the highest per capita murder rate on earth.

Saldaña may justly take pride in establishing an Office of Community Engagement. But the "thoughtful scrutiny" she invites will be deservedly savage so long as her agency remains complicit with CBP, summarily deporting refugees who've been illegally deprived of the right to seek refuge here.

Paul Zoltan, Dallas/Lakewood

Losing the war on our future

Re: "Why America fails to win wars — Our military system is out of sync with our military ambitions, Andrew Bacevich says," Sunday Points.

Bacevich correctly points out that aligning our priorities and values is the solution to what ails America. What he fails to point out is that the U.S. is not winning the war on anything, at home or abroad. In the richest, most powerful country in the world, 22 percent of children live in poverty. We are not smarter than a fifth-grader when 21 percent of adults cannot read at a fifth-grade level and 60 percent of high school graduates never go to college. One-third of adult Americans are unemployed, yet 75 percent of adults never volunteer in their communities, let alone for military service.

As the world's leading democracy, America ranks 31 out of 34 for voter turnout in developed countries. The question that demands attention is whether America — as the self-proclaimed, self-imposed indispensable global superpower — will continue to turn a blind eye as we lose the war on America's future.

Gretchen Martens, Dallas/Addison @TheVeteranLady

Street 'repairs' ruin tires, teeth

Re: "Nature's call takes big toll on prairie," by Robert Wilonsky, Friday Metro column.

The city's repair of the damage caused by a large front-end loader's tires, according to Willis Winters, director of the Park and Recreation Department, will be as follows: "Soil will need to be repaired, grass will have to be replaced, and trees may have to be removed."

Maybe I am nuts, but why would there be a need to remove trees to repair tire tracks? Geez!

And while we are at it, Wilonsky's next article could question why city workers often leave "temporary street repairs" as worse hazards than they were supposed to be fixing. The city is awash in so-called street repairs that will knock fillings out of teeth and ruin tires and rims because too many city workers seem to have little or no pride in their work and their supervisors allow them to get away with it.

David Jones, Dallas/Northpark @drjonze

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Selected videos will be featured on our letters blog

Trustees must walk the walk

I had the recent pleasure of hearing the four candidates or their representatives present to a group as to why they should be elected the Place 2 DISD trustee. They also took questions. All constitute a good lot, but Mita Havlick, the only individual to have her children in DISD, is a standout, a bridge-builder, a critical thinker and communicator.

With the four to choose from, it is beyond me as to why *The Dallas Morning News* or anyone else would endorse Dustin Marshall for the simple and basic reason that he has chosen to send his children to private school, not the fine DISD elementary school near his home.

Marshall's explanation is that his children are legacies because he, too, went to that private school. That's an excuse, not an explanation. Why wouldn't all the other DISD trustees scoff at and discount Marshall's opinions for that very reason?

Havlick walks the walk. In my opinion, she is the best-qualified person for the position.

Patrick Shaw, Dallas/M Streets

Abbott, clean up Paxton's mess

We have several big problems in Texas that need immediate action. Child Protective Services needs millions of dollars to get the system in shape — not just new leadership.

One area for additional CPS money might come from Attorney General Ken Paxton's staff — or ex-employees still on the taxpayer payroll after they've resigned. Why would Paxton offer to keep those employees on his payroll? His judgment is so poor. Gov. Greg Abbott needs to ask for Paxton's resignation.

The two employees were earning \$16,220 and \$12,825 a month through June. Right there is \$100,000-plus we could use for CPS. Chip Roy said he was on leave due to his cancer. Wow! If he was worried about health care, he should have kept his job and not accepted a job with Ted Cruz's super PAC.

It was Roy's decision, and he should have the same opportunity for health care that the rest of us have when leaving a position — it's called COBRA. It smells to high heaven, and again, Paxton is right at the head, calling the shots.

What worries me is how many of the other 4,000 employees might be abusing the emergency leave scenario. There might be a huge amount of money right there for CPS. Abbott needs to get a handle on these departments and do right for the children of Texas and the taxpayers.

Lynda Waters, Dallas

Don't let Dallas destroy Trinity

Brooklyn-raised Dallas Mayor Erik Johnson tried to make Dallas a "world-class city." The present Dallas leadership has been moving toward another blight on our fair city. They seem to be setting up another monstrosity of concrete, traffic congestion and air and noise pollution along the best natural area in the city — the Trinity River.

After I graduated from college in Louisiana, I took a job in New York City. My wife and I lived on Long Island. What a wonderful experience.

NYC had dozens of world-class facilities and entertainment venues. We could use the mass-transit system and go from Long Island to Times Square in 30 minutes. We could go to arguably the most wonderful city park in the world, see the best live entertainment in the world and visit many other awesome places of interest.

Dallas citizens, don't let your leaders make the mistake of spoiling the most wonderful natural gift in the area.

Mel Barney, Farmers Branch