

Carmage Walls Commentary Prize

2018 Entry Form

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What is the subject/title of the entry? County government

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Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? Under 50,000

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.) 2017 was a contentious year for Angelina County's government leaders. Disagreements between the county judge, county commissioners and sheriff often spilled over into embarrassing public displays more suitable for a three-ring circus. Unsurprisingly, the root of the problem could be traced to money. The county judge and commissioners wanted to hold the line on the budget and not raise taxes. The sheriff wanted more money to hire more deputies. County residents also wanted more deputies, in addition to fixing roads, but not if it meant a tax increase. The resulting brouhaha was a distraction that potentially threatened public safety: a rapper was allowed unfettered access to the county jail for a video shoot, and a slaying went unreported by authorities for days.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 6, 2017 THE LUFKIN NEWS

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PINION

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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OUR OPINION **County Budget**

Sheriff, commissioners must find a way to work together for good of Angelina's residents

e're embarrassed for our community. Angelina County commissioners met Tuesday for what should have been a routine budget workshop on a proposed fiscal 2018 budget. Instead, it turned into a three-ring circus, with County Judge Wes Suiter and commissioners in one ring, Sheriff Greg Sanches in the second ring and an unruly crowd in the third.

Sanches has repeatedly taken to social media this year to plead his case for more money for six additional deputies, pay raises and four patrol vehicles. His budget request totaled \$883,111 above last year's sheriff's office budget of \$4,617,085. He was proposing a 2-cent tax to raise those additional funds. (In comparison, Commissioner Terry Pitts said the other 30 county offices were asking for about \$130,000 total in increased funding.) That standing-room-only crowd was at the meeting in part because Sanches took to social media to urge them to show up to support the sheriff's office. What he failed to mention was the difference between a workshop and a public hearing.

The workshop should have been a discussion between Suiter, the commissioners and Sanches. Instead, that discussion between Suiter and Sanches disintegrated into them trading claims that the other was being less than truthful.

The public isn't allowed to

favor of that idea.

Sanches took to social media again Tuesday night to thank his supporters and to urge them to remember the day's events come election time. Later in the week, a petition started by "Angelina County Stakeholders" began circulating on Change.org asking Angelina County commissioners for a "re-evaluation' of additional manpower for the department while understanding the everchanging criminal climate within the region."

Lost in all the drama and grandstanding is the impact the actions of our elected officials have on economic development. Simply put, no employer is going to be willing to locate any aspect of their business in Angelina County given the openly hostile and dysfunctional proceedings witnessed during the hearing. Forget about ever luring a major industry to town.

While there are harsh feelings right now, we don't believe all is lost. But it will require compromise on the part of the commissioners' court and the sheriff's office.

While we disagree with his relentless social media campaign, we've used this space to say that Sanches is correct. His department needs additional manpower. But common sense should dictate that asking for almost an additional \$900,000 in one year is too much in a tight economy. That's not a one-time charge; those salaries, benefits and pay raises (which make up the lion's share of that almost \$900,000) would be in each subsequent budget. Our commissioners need to step up and make some decisions that outbursts and interference. During are going to be difficult and, almost certainly, unpopular. Raising the tax rate in order to pay for the safety and security of our citizens Cheshire both suggested incre-Sanches asked each commission- mental personnel increases for the sheriff's office, but neither gained any traction with other members of the commissioners' court, perhaps due to Sanches' all-or-nothing approach. And as difficult as it is to believe right now, voters need to remember that both parties are trying to do their best to represent all 85,000plus residents of this county, not just a vocal handful.

Health care remains prominent topic

s recent rains across much of East Texas brought cooler tem-Heast lexas

things were heating up at your State Capitol here in Austin. Health care was a prominent topic of conversation as the Texas House cast a variety of votes toward addressing the

needs of Texans.



Ground ambulance service. A number of my colleagues and I were recently made aware of the Health and Human Services Commission's proposal to cut Medicaid payments for a significant number of ground ambulance services across the state.

Ambulances provide vital 911 services, especially in rural districts like ours. Often, ground ambulances serve as the only means for a rural community to access emergency medical care. Further, many EMS agencies in Texas already operate on slim margins, and when they are unable to recover the operating costs through payments made by government and commercial health insurance plans, they must turn to local taxpayers to pick up the balance.

Otherwise, EMS agencies are forced to make difficult cuts, such as reducing staff and serviceable ambulances. These operational reductions not only lead to slower response times, but also limit access to care in already underserved areas

As the representative of a district that could be negatively impacted by the cuts that HHSC is proposing, I helped draft a letter expressing concern with the proposal that was set forth. This letter has garnered the support of more than 40 of my House colleagues, which I believe sends a strong message that these proposed cuts could have a devastating impact on rural Texas.

Special session legislation. In other news, the House recently voted to provide critical funding for speech, occupational and physical therapy services for children in Texas. These young Texans are among our state's most vulnerable children, often needing around-the-clock care to ensure their safety and well-being.

With a unanimous vote, the House showed that we believe further restoring services for these children should be part of what we accomplish during this special session. I was proud to support the bill, House Bill 25, and I'm hopeful that our colleagues in the Senate will join our effort to help these children in need.

Additionally, the Texas House approved legislation that would continue

the Maternal Mortality Morbidity Task Force. The task force will review cases of pregnancy-related deaths and make recommendations to help reduce the incidence of pregnancy-related deaths in Texas.

This task force was created in 2013 and was set to expire in 2019 absent any action by the 85th Legislature. After legislation continuing the task force had failed to pass during the regular session, the governor added the continuation and expansion of the task force to the call, allowing the Legislature another opportunity to address this critical public health issue.

Reminders: The mobile office is back on the road in August and looks forward to seeing you around the district. Here's this month's schedule: from 9-11 a.m. Aug. 16 at the Houston County Courthouse in Crockett, or from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at the Trinity County Courthouse in Groveton; and from 9-11 a.m. Aug. 23 at the San Augustine County Courthouse in San Augustine.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact our office if we can help you in any way.

Trent Ashby is the Texas State Representative for District 57 that includes Angelina, Houston, Leon, Madison, San Augustine and Trinity counties. His email address is trent.ashby@house.state.tx.us. He and his staff are available during the week at (512) 463-0508 or 634-2762.



JUST TRY AND ACT CASUAL...ICE GAVE TEXAS

comment or ask questions during a workshop, not that it stopped the citizens who showed up from doing either. Suiter showed great restraint in not clearing the courtroom despite the crowd's repeated a public hearing, and by state law there has to be one before the budget and tax rate are set, the public can ask questions and comment on must be one of those. Suiter and the process.

er individually about raising taxes to support his proposal. Each said no; they didn't want to raise taxes. Commissioners Greg Harrison and Kenneth Timmons both said they had heard from more constituents who opposed a tax increase than those who supported one.

Suiter said he had proposed trying to give Sanches half of what he was asking for this year and the other half next year. He said commissioners rejected that.

Commissioner Bobby Cheshire asked about adding just one deputy this year. He was the only one in

"We're here for the citizens of Angelina County," Sanches said.

It would just be nice if all the parties involved started acting like that were really the case.

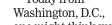
LAW AUTHORITY IN ENFORCING IMMIGRATION

Time for our leaders to tell the truth

hose of you who are my age should remember the TV show

from the 1950s and '60s where contestants tried

to stump a panel by "telling a lie" about who they were and their occupation. The idea was to, with a straight face, confuse the panel (the public). Today from



one might think we are watching this TV show all over again. It might be entertaining, funny and intriguing except that the lies spewing from the mouths of our leadership could be devastating to the whole country. There is a saying that has been around for years — "you are a lie and the truth ain't in you" or "how do you tell if a person is not telling the truth? - they opened their

leaders?

GUESSIPPINA BONNER

There are those who believe trickledown economics is what is needed in this country; however, what about trickle-down truth-telling from our

What are we teaching our children? Should we teach them to lie to get whatever they want? Should we teach our children that it is OK to lie when things are not going the way you want? Should we teach our children to lie and, when caught, to double-talk to cover up? Should we teach our children that a lie is not a lie, but "alternative facts"? Wake up, America.

For a spiritual basis to answer my question about what should we teach our children, the Bible offers one avenue of reference. First, an apology is offered to the ministers, spiritual leaders, priests and pastors in Lufkin. I am no Bible expert, but always a student.

On the matter of telling the truth, I turn to the book of Proverbs. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish. A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame. Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment."

All of this and more comes from one book of the Bible. So, I challenge those of you who are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of this section of America known as "the Bible Belt," check it out. Demand that the people responsible for leading this country stop with the lies. There is no such thing as "alternative facts." It is plain and clearly a lie.

In closing, I quote Thomas Aquinas - "As a matter of honor, one man owes it to another to manifest the truth." The truth, although sometimes painful, but how refreshing, should not be a casualty of an election.

> Guessippina Bonner is the Lufkin City Council member for Ward 1. Her email address is Guessippina620@gmail.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Police deserve support

I recently had the pleasure of attending the Citizen's Police Academy. Here are several of my impressions after 12 weeks of this experience: Our police officers are very well trained and continue to train and advance their skills throughout their careers. With all the rigorous requirements for hiring, it is very difficult challenge to become a Lufkin police officer. Lufkin PD has very sophisticated equipment and procedures for investigation and

WORLD RIGHTS

fighting crime. The many police officers, dispatchers and other members of law enforcement that I met are very professional and dedicated to their profession. This is a very challenging and at times dangerous job.

We are blessed to have a great group of folks willing to put their lives on the line for us and serve 24/7 including holidays and weekends. Consider thanking an officer the next time you see one. In my opinion, they deserve our appreciation and support.

Robert W. Anderson Jr., Lufkin

mouth."

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Sunday, Aug. 6, the 218th day of 2017. There are 147 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On August 6, 1945, during World War

II, the U.S. B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay dropped an atomic bomb codenamed "Little Boy" on Hiroshima, Japan, resulting in an estimated 140,000 deaths. (Three days later, the United States exploded a nuclear device over

Nagasaki; five days after that, Imperial Japan surrendered.) On this date:

In 1813, during the Venezuelan War of Independence, forces led by Simon Bolivar recaptured Caracas.

In 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war against Russia and Serbia declared war against Germany.

In 1926, Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel, arriving in Kingsdown, England, from France in 14 ½ hours. Warner Bros. premiered its Vitaphone soundon-disc movie system in New York with a showing of "Don Juan" featuring synchronized music and sound effects.

In 1930, New York State Supreme Court Justice Joseph Force Crater went missing after leaving a Manhattan restaurant; his disappearance remains a mystery.

In 1942, Queen Wilhemina of the Netherlands became the first reigning queen to address a joint session of Congress, telling lawmakers that despite Nazi occupation, her people's motto remained, "No surrender."

MALLARD FILLMORE By Bruce Tinsley AND THE AND THAT MILLIONS OF THOPE PEOPLE I YOU LIKE YOUR NEW HOME, PEOPLE CAN WORK MOLLY ... WITH. HOPE YOU UKE ME ...

HEADLINES IN *Local* **HISTORY**

AUGUST 6

One year ago General Electric continues its plunder of Lufkin

Industries' properties, announcing the closure of a

The head of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Deep East Texas states the organization does not dispute police officers' account of fights at the club and says changes will be made.

Ten years ago

Angelina County officials are pleased with

results of the county and city's agreement to house Lufkin's Class C offenders at detention facility.

Twenty years ago

Lufkin-Conroe Communications is replacing the 800 existing LCC pay phones throughout its service area with "smart phones."

Lufkin City Council kills proposed rate hike for water and sewer services and scales back a proposed garbage rate increase.

From the pages of The Lufkin Daily News, compiled by The History Center, TheHistoryCenterOnline.com.



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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2017 THE LUFKIN NEWS

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OUR OPINION VCounty **Roads**

Lack of funds for road maintenance means Angelina County residents in for a bumpy ride

rtists have been waxing poetic about roads since Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" was first published in the 1916 collection "Mountain Interval." Later in life, Frost said his poem was often misunderstood and that it referred to the tendency to regret past decisions, no matter how inconsequential.

Dr. M. Scott Peck wrote about "The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth" in his 1983 bestseller in which he sought to reconcile the psychoanalytic tradition with the conflicting cultural currents roiling the "Me-Decade" individualism of the 1970s.

But we believe the lyrics by a couple of musicians from the 1970s and '80s best describe the road woes facing Angelina County residents today.

The Doors' Jim Morrison sang Keep your eyes on the road, your hands upon the wheel in 1970's "Roadhouse Blues." In 1989, Chris Rea sang, You have strayed upon the motorway to hell in "The Road to Hell."

Those sentiments are appropriate today. "When is my road going to be fixed?" is an oft-heard query from county residents.

Commissioners attempted to answer that question earlier this year, rating the condition of each road, culvert and bridge in their precinct, and also documenting anticipated maintenance costs.

hear me. Sarah Reppond

We look at our circumstances and complain they have not changed. I know I am a good person. So, if you might be in this situation,

s we go from day to

day, many will say

I have prayed and

prayed and the Lord does not

check out the following: ■ You got out of a bad

relationship because it was bad, but you are still resentful and angry (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You got out of financial debt, but you still can't control the desire to spend on frivolous

things. (You let the devil leave his bags)

you still long to try it just one more time. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You say, "I love my neighbor" and yell the

loudest when children born in another country now find themselves in America at no fault of their own. (You let the devil leave his bags)

You put the devil out, but did you let him leave his bags?

■ You said "I forgive you" but can't seem to forget and have peace with that person. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You told your unequally yoked mate that it was over, but you still continue to call. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You got out of that horrible oppressive job, but you are still trying to sabotage the company after you've left. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You broke off your relationship with that hurtful, abusive person, but you are suspicious and distrusting of every new person you meet. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You have said I believe in equality for women, except in places of power such as political leadership and in the board rooms of America. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You decided to let go of the past hurts from growing up in an unstable environment, yet you believe you are unworthy of love from others and you refuse to get attached to anyone. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ You believe people of color have made great strides, attained superior education and understand the American way, but they need you to tell them what is best for them. (You let the devil leave his bags)

■ When you put the devil out, please make sure he takes his bags.

Happiness keeps you sweet,

- Trials keep you strong And sorrows keep you human.
- Failures keep you humble,
- Success keeps you glowing,
- But only God keeps you going!

As we approach the season of Thanksgiving and Christmas praise, let the devil take his bags with him! (adapted from an anonymous rendition)

Guessippina Bonner is the Lufkin City Council Member for Ward 1. Her email address is Guessippina620@gmail.com.

HEADLINES IN Local HISTORY **DECEMBER 3**

One year ago

Stubblefield Learning Center graduates 42 students. Lufkin's First United Methodist Church puts on its annual presentation of "An Evening in Old Bethlehem" at the George H. Henderson Exposition Center.

Ten years ago

■ Lufkin High School receives \$6,000 grant from National Aeronautics and Space Administration to start a robotics team at the school.

CASA in the Pines will present its ninth annual Christmas Tour of Homes.

Twenty years ago

Donner and Prancer have made a temporary home at Ellen Trout Zoo. The reindeer will be on display through the first of the year

The Lady Panthers used a half-court press to rout Jasper Lady Bulldogs, 60-27, in basketball action in Panther Gym. Meleko Sweet paced the Lady Pack with 14 points.

From the pages of The Lufkin Daily News, compiled by The History Center, TheHistoryCenterOnline.com.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Sunday, Dec. 3, the 337th day of 2017. There are 28 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On Dec. 3, 1967, a surgical team in Cape

Town, South Africa, led by Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the first human heart transplant on Louis Washkansky, who lived 18 days with the donor organ, which came from Denise Darvall, a 25-year-old bank clerk who had died in a traffic accident. The 20th Century Limited, the famed luxury train, completed its final run from New York to Chicago after 65 years of service. On this date:

In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States by the Electoral College. In 1833, Oberlin College in Ohio — the first truly coeducational school of higher learning in the United States — began holding classes. In 1925, George Gershwin's Concerto in F had its world premiere at New York's Carnegie Hall, with Gershwin at the piano. In 1926, English mystery writer Agatha Christie, 36, disappeared after driving away from her home in Sunningdale, Berkshire. (Christie turned up 11 days later at a hotel in Harrogate, Yorkshire.) In 1947, the Tennessee Williams play "A Streetcar Named Desire" opened on Broadway. In 1953, the musical "Kismet," featuring the song "Stranger in Paradise," opened on Broadway In 1960, the Lerner and Loewe musical "Camelot" opened on Broadway. In 1965, the Beatles' sixth studio album, 'Rubber Soul," was released in the United Kingdom by Parlophone (it was released in the U.S. by Capitol Records three days later). In 1979, 11 people were killed in a crush of fans at Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum, where the British rock group The Who was performing.

sponsored that we have an overflow and can place wreaths at other cemeteries in the area

Rita Redd, American Legion Auxiliary 113, Lufkin

Ending prescription drug abuse

Have you ever found yourself with a surplus of prescription drugs? Many times they are great for our ailments, but we end up with an abundance left over? Sadly, 240,029 people use prescription medication for a non-medical related problem for the first time every year. Although 90 percent of prescription drugs are abused by youth, they are not the only ones contributing to this substantial number. Even more eye-opening is the fact that drug-related deaths have now surpassed the fatality rate of car crashes. What can we do to stop this growing problem, protect our youth and ourselves? Thankfully, two solutions have been created to eliminate prescription drugs from sitting in your medicine cabinet. You can safely dispose of your medication at a drug collection unit. Merely throwing them in the trash can be dangerous. Instead, you can use the risk-free method of a drug collection unit. Angelina County's drug collection unit is conveniently located at the Angelina County Sheriff's Office, 2311 E. Lufkin Ave. Further, it is available every day of the week, 24 hours a day. This is a safe and effective option to dispose of your unwanted drugs. Opioid pouches are another great resource. The pouch contains a carbon that bonds to pharmaceutical compounds. After placing the pills in one of these pouches, just add water and shake. This neutralizes the active ingredient in the drug. Once neutralized you can feel at ease throwing pills away. The pouch is a biodegradable bag, so it is safe to throw away with the prescription drugs. Thanks to the Texas Targeted Opioid Response grant, these are free of charge. Contact The Coalition at 634-9308 to pick up your pouches today. It is time to put this growing problem to an end. We can no longer sit back and watch friends and family fall into the trap of drug addiction. Will you take action and fuel the change?

GUESSIPPINA BONNER

■ You got out of a bad habit or addiction, but

GREENVILLE HERALD BANNER 20017

YES, IT LOOKS FAMILIAR ... BUT YOU CAN DO BETTER EVEN WITH A NATION WIDE TREE SHORTAGE ...

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Honor our flag

We won the battle but, we lost the war. I was there during the Battle of Hue (Way) in South Vietnam and 668 men lost their lives and 3,707 were wounded and we still have a large number missing in action.

Around my neck I wear a medal I earned in combat and in my pocket I carry a copy of my SWCC military credentials so as not to be disrespectful nor dishonor the loved ones who lost their loved one in Battle, as well as the wounded who still walk these streets defending our flag.

When these million dollar sports players disrespect and dishonor our flag, they also disrespect and dishonor the loved ones who suffered their losses! If they wish to dishonor us, then these players should also suffer our losses as well. They should be fined a maximum of one years pay for their freedom of speech we fought and died for. SN William C. Walker (SWCC), Lufkin

Those answers are disheartening.

The county is responsible for maintaining 726.2 miles of roads. That doesn't include roads within the county that are not county-maintained, including: private roads constructed in private subdivisions, maintained by the private residents or homeowners association; interstate highways, U.S. highways, state highways, farm-to-market roads, spurs and park roads maintained by the Texas Department of Transportation; roads within an established subdivision that have not been accepted for maintenance and are the responsibility of the developer; and roads within the incorporated limits of cities and other entities, maintained by those entities.

The county's 2018 budget includes about \$2.5 million in the road and bridge fund. That conservative evaluation by commissioners estimated the county needs \$15 million to maintain failing roads during the upcoming fiscal year. In addition, according to commissioners, it costs about \$42,000 to re-oil one mile of county road. At that rate, it would cost more than \$30 million to re-oil all of the county's roads. The total budget for 2018 for every county-related entity is \$23.7 million.

It's painfully obvious that the funds to maintain county roads aren't keeping pace with the costs of maintaining those roads.

"We're extremely conservative and we need to make do with what we have," Pct. 4 Commissioner Bobby Cheshire said. "Raising taxes and putting more tax burden on property owners is not what we want to do."

The Texas Legislature has, in the past, approved some measures to address the issue of maintaining county roads. However, state Rep. Trent Ashby (R-Lufkin) says the state's responsibility is maintaining the state highway system, not county roads.

That leaves commissioners with too much road, not enough resources and only two possible solutions: raising taxes or coming up with a different way to fund county government that doesn't rely on property taxes. Nobody wants to raise taxes. Finding that alternative funding source seemingly ventures into the realm of fantasy — it's a solution that every other taxing entity in the state, including the Legislature, is currently seeking.

The county appears to be doing what it can to reduce costs in order to use those savings for road maintenance. Now it's time for county residents to do the same - to quit tearing down back roads and to care about more than just the road in front of their house, because it's most likely going to be a bumpy ride for quite a while.

Honoring our veterans

Regarding the cancellation of the Lufkin Pineywoods Veterans Day Parade from someone who has heard both sides and many in between and can see both sides and have participated in the Angelina County Veterans Day Parade every year.

The reception from the City of Huntington when asked was above and beyond and at no charge to the organizers and with the "What else can we do?" attitude. This year's parade was the biggest and best vet.

Hopefully the City of Lufkin and the City of Huntington can work together in the future and make the Angelina County Veterans Day Parade a big success. And if people would stop and think about it, they probably wouldn't even have the freedom to have a Lighted Christmas Parade through downtown Lufkin if it weren't for our brave men and women in the armed forces. Think about it. Shouldn't the Veterans Day Parade be as big as the Christmas Parade?

Enough said, so let's move on. The Nov. 30 opinion page in The Lufkin News said in the last sentence "Let's find a way to get back to honoring our true American heroes with an event befitting the service they've provided to us all," really struck a cord with me and think the perfect solution is right here in front of us.

What could be better than having a wreath for every veteran buried in Garden of Memories then expand to cover other local cemeteries where numerous veterans are buried. Currently we can't even get enough for Garden of Memories.

This is all about remembering, honoring and teaching our younger generations about the value of their freedoms and the importance of honoring those who have sacrificed so much to protect those freedoms. When each live wreath is place on the veterans grave and that veterans name is said out loud, it is a way of showing honor and respect for them and their service to our country.

Our dream would be to have enough wreaths

MALLARD FILLMORE

Emily LaRoe, Greater View Christian Academy Drug Free All-Star

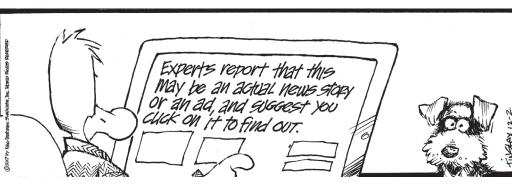
Have your say

To submit a letter to the editor, bring it to us at 300 Ellis Ave. in downtown Lufkin, mail it to P.O. Box 1089, Lufkin, TX 75902-1089, or visit an easy-to-use form at lufkindailynews.com/ letters. Or you can email your letter to news@ lufkindailynews.com.

Please limit your letters to 350 words. Be sure to include a daytime telephone

number on your letter. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and unsigned letters will not be used. We will only publish one letter per writer during a 30-day period.

By Bruce Tinsley



Your elected officials

Let your elected officials know what you think. Here is contact information for each

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U.S. Rep. Louie Gohmert

Gov. Greg Abbott Room 200, State Capitol

Austin, TX 78701 (800) 252-9600 (512) 463-2000 gov.texas.gov/

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OUR PINION Goodbye to 2017 2 incidents bring difficult year to a close

2017 will, thankfully, come to a close in a few hours. It's been a tumultuous year across the state and nation; and unfortunately, we weren't immune in East Texas. Two events earlier this month involving the Angelina County Sheriff's Office illustrate that point.

Lufkin hip-hop artist Mario Gebrekidan, aka Lil Yo, posted his video "I'm Back - Lil Yo Music Video Preview" on YouTube; the video features Gebrekidan in the Angelina County Jail. The footage inside the jail shows Gebrekidan wearing an inmate's jumpsuit and being escorted by a jailer from a cell to a visitation area to speak with a woman. The footage also appears to show Gebrekidan rapping from a holding cell in the jail and changing out of the inmate's uniform into his clothes as if he is being released.

Jail Warden Thomas Strickland said Gebrekidan and his filming crew were allowed to film in the jail's lobby because it's a public area. "We did have a breakdown in security, as far as them allowing someone to come inside the jail and do a video."

That's an understatement, to put it mildly. Sheriff Greg Sanches said there will be an investigation, and that "If we find some kind of policy violation, we'll have to take disciplinary action.'

If? Allowing an officer to be filmed escorting Gebrekidan inside the jail while wearing an inmate's jumpsuit is not a "breakdown in security." It's inexcusable. The officer in question is clearly visible in the video. We believe Sanches should act quickly and decisively to correct this breach of security.

In a video posted on social media, Sanches said he had spoken with Gebrekidan about the video and requested it be taken down. Sanches also said Gebrekidan had told him the video would be removed. However, as of Friday afternoon, it remains online. The video has more than 11,600 views on Facebook and more than 3,800 views on YouTube. Gebrekidan sold authorities on his proposal by touting it as an educational documentary. After watching the video, that can, again, best be described as an understatement. There is a great deal of vulgar language in that 1 minute and 40 seconds. Gebrekidan claims the video is a promo for a documentary he plans to release in 2018. "I am still releasing my documentary," he said. "That was just a promo video as an intro. ... My documentary will be an hour and 30 minutes long, but it'll take me three to six months to get everything done." He says the project will send a positive message for kids to stay out of trouble. Gebrekidan needs to take his own advice. The video ends with a nighttime panning shot of the jail and the Sheriff's Office, presumably shot by a drone. During their legislative session this year, Texas lawmakers made operating a drone intentionally over a correctional facility punishable by up to six months in jail. The regulation is designed to protect the public from weapons that drones could possibly carry, and to prevent drones from sneaking drugs or contraband to inmates.

various American governments have done it for years regarding smoking. This mental contortion now has a new chapter. The four largest

(Altria, R.J. Reynolds, Loril-

ASHINGTON — Preaching moral-

lard, Philip Morris) are, under government compulsion, funding newspaper and television ads to tell — actually, to remind — people that their products are sickening:

"Smoking kills, on average, 1,200 Americans. Every day. More people die every year from smoking than from murder, AIDS, suicide, drugs, car crashes, and alcohol, combined." "Cigarette companies intentionally designed cigarettes with enough nicotine to create and sustain addiction." Etc.

Please. Tell us something everyone hasn't known for decades. In 1988, the surgeon general declared tobacco addictive. Since 1966, there have been increasingly severe health warnings on cigarette packs. In 1964, the surgeon general declared tobacco carcinogenic. In 1906, a character in an O. Henry story used a common slang phrase: "Say, sport, have you got a coffin nail on you?" In 1604, England's King James I called smoking "harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs."

Eight years later, a colony named for him, Jamestown, in a place, Virginia, named for his immediate predecessor (Elizabeth I, "the virgin queen") became an enriching source of tobacco - until a tobacco farmer named Washington

LO MPH

MENU

UNEXPLAINED - # O

20 MPH -\$20

35 MPH-\$50

50 MPH - \$75

I MOVE OVER -\$ 100

MATDANES AUGENS MANEEL

disrupted things. The strange, meandering path of tobacco — a legal commodity that is harmful when used as intended - to the present began in contradictions. They are crowned by this one: Many state governments are addicted to revenue from tobacco taxes. The federal tax on a pack is \$1. The lowest state tax is Missouri's 17 cents; the highest, Connecticut and New York's \$4.35; the average, \$1.72. So, many governments have huge stakes in a steady supply of new smokers to replace those killed by smoking.

Hence these governments cannot afford for their anti-smoking efforts to be too successful. Furthermore, if every smoker quit tomorrow, Social Security's slow-motion crisis would accelerate and many public and private pension systems would be staggered by having to revise downward their actuarial assumptions about the number of persons who will die before collecting many or any benefits.

In 1998, 46 states, in a mutually lucrative collaboration with trial lawyers (some of their \$13 billion in fees amounted to tens of thousands of dollars an hour), sued the tobacco companies. The companies agreed to - if they will pardon the expression cough up \$246 billion over many years. The theory, more successful than plausible, was that health care for smoking-related illnesses makes smoking a huge net cost to the states. Actually, smoking might be a net financial gain for government: Cigarettes are the most heavily taxed consumer product and, again, many smokers' premature deaths limit their receipt of entitlement benefits for the elderly - Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, nursing homes, etc.

The lawyers also argued that tobacco is so

were about as many ex-smokers as smokers. In 1845, former President John Quincy Adams wrote, "In my early youth, I was addicted to tobacco." Its addictiveness was known and surmountable long ago

Much of America's health care expenses (from lung cancer, coronary artery disease, AIDS, Type 2 diabetes brought on by obesity, violence, vehicular accidents) result from known-to-be-risky behaviors involving eating, drinking, smoking, driving and sex. The most cost-efficient thing government does is dispense health information about smoking, cholesterol, automobile seat belts, sunscreen use, etc. This is why only a sixth of adults, compared to nearly half 50 years ago, are smokers.

But the anti-smoking message that government is now coercing from the tobacco companies — Trust us, we are untrustworthy — merely confirms common sense: Filling one's lungs with smoke from a burning plant is dumb. Smoking is increasingly concentrated among downscale, low-information Americans. (Hence tobacco taxes are regressive.) It has lost the cachet that once made it a marker of sophistication. Ninety percent of smokers begin by age 18 and vanishingly few after 21. So, the way to extinguish smoking is not by belaboring the health issue (smoking is the leading preventable cause of death, it has killed many more than all of America's war deaths, etc.) but with the sort of broadcast ads California used years ago to cut smoking 17 percent: "I tried it once and I, ah, got all red in the face and I couldn't inhale and I felt like a jerk and, ah, never tried it again, which is the same as what happened to me with sex."

> George Will writes for The Washington Post. His email address is georgewill@washpost.com.

HEADLINES IN Local HISTORY

DECEMBER 31

One year ago Angelina County Tax Assessor-Collector Thelma "Midget" Sherman retires after 35 years in county tax office.

Lufkin Panthers take 57-49 victory over Pine Tree Pirates to win the Silver Bracket of the 2016 Leroy Romines Memorial Basketball Tournament in Longview. Courtnee Garcia paced the Panthers with 17 points.

Ten years ago

Man steals pile of clothes from a table in department store in Lufkin Mall and escapes quickly in white SUV, according to a police report.

Twenty years ago

Lady Pack basketball team coasts to 68-36 non-district win over Kirbyville High School Wildcats. Tawana Rhodes led the Lady Pack with 13 points. The Lady Panthers currently stand with a 14-4 record on the season.

From the pages of The Lufkin Daily News, compiled by The History Center, TheHistoryCenterOnline.com.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press Foday is Sunday Dec 31 the 365th and final day of 2017.

addictive that quitting requires heroic willpower that few can manage. Even then, however, there

POST-NET NEUTRALITY

What's next for President Trump after

2017's solid policy accomplishments?

Feds don't need to remind us that smoking kills

ity while practicing cupidity can be tricky, but American tobacco companies



2D

In his Facebook video discussing the rap video, Sanches said he always tried "to be up front and honest and not run away from any kind of story."

Unfortunately, that wasn't the case following the shooting death of 27-year-old Tresten Gray. Deputies responded to the scene of her shooting about 11 a.m. Christmas Eve. The Sheriff's Office said nothing about the incident until The Lufkin News contacted them after we were told about the slaying two days later. They were, however, quick to release information that a suspect had been arrested Thursday night on a felony warrant for murder.

Sadly, this isn't the first time this year that the Sheriff's Office has been slow to share information about a homicide investigation. The March 24 death of a Rivercrest man was initially reported as "suspicious." Authorities confirmed the death was being investigated as a murder on March 27. An autopsy of 73-year-old Franklin Donald Cox released in September states the cause of death was "sharp force injuries" and cites five stab wounds — two in the neck and three in the torso. That murder is still unsolved.

We understand authorities not wanting to jeopardize an investigation into a slaving by releasing too much information too soon. But not releasing any information jeopardizes the safety of the community they are sworn to protect.

ng in the final U of 2017. People are noticing that Donald Trump has gotten a lot done in his tumultuous first year in the White House. If in, say, 2014, a Republican, of either the conservative or moderate variety, predicted that in 2017 a

omething is happen-

newly elected GOP president **BYRON YORK** and Congress would -

1) Cut corporate and individual taxes.

2) Repeal the Obamacare individual mandate. 3) Appoint a highly respected conservative to the Supreme Court.

4) Appoint a one-year record number of judges to the circuit courts.

5) Get rid of reams of unnecessary regulations. 6) Destroy ISIS.

7) Approve pipeline projects and new oil drilling. - then a lot of Republicans would probably

have cheered. Loudly. No need to go through the litany of complaints

against the president or the succession of hairon-fire, Twitter-fueled controversies that have marked the wildest first year ever in presidential politics. Or the special counsel investigation into the Trump-Russia affair that some Democrats (and some NeverTrump Republicans) hope will result in Trump's removal from office. Despite it all, Trump has racked up a solid record of firstyear accomplishment.

It would not be a great surprise if much of Trump's second year consisted of reminding 2018 midterm voters of how much he did in his first year. Maybe that will be enough to keep Republicans in control of House and Senate, although the historical averages alone — presidents tend to lose a lot of congressional seats in their first midterm — argue against it.

And Trump's second-year agenda is unclear. There has been talk about an infrastructure bill. About welfare reform. But it seems likely that what Trump does in his next year will be anchored in his unilateral executive authority, just like his first year.

Perhaps the critical factor in whether Trump can succeed from a policy standpoint next year is whether he is able to attract high-quality people to his administration.

On many, many occasions during the campaign, candidate Trump promised he would hire only the "best people" if he were to win the White House.

The recent, noisy departure of Omarosa Manigault-Newman showed that was not true. So did the brief tenure of Anthony Scaramucci. And Sebastian Gorka. And others. In the Trump White House, there have been White House staff who had no business being White House staff.

Of course, the president has hired many firstrate people, too, in the White House and across the administration: John Kelly, Mike Pompeo, James Mattis, Neomi Rao, H.R. McMaster, Nikki Haley, Marc Short and more. The question now,

administration. is whether the president convince the best people, or even just really good people, to work for him.

with the coming, inevitable departures from his

The first thing a potential high-ranking Trump hire has to consider is the sheer difficulty of working for Donald Trump. Throughout the campaign and in the White House, Trump's instincts have been remarkably consistent with those of many Republicans (and some independents) across the nation. But working in the atmosphere that he has created, and thrives in, can be a trial. What Trump needs in the second year are people who can endure that trial and focus on the president's political instincts.

"He needs people more aligned with him," noted one Republican lawmaker in a text exchange recently. "Not toadies - Pompeo and McMaster disagreed with him on Afghanistan and persuaded him — but people more in general alignment with his instincts. His key cabinet members and White House advisors need to channel his instincts in a constructive fashion for the country, helping him achieve his goals."

"There are so many top-notch people on the sidelines," noted another GOP lawmaker.

A significant part of the problem is this: In the supercharged atmosphere of Washington, a prospective Trump aide (and his or her spouse) can face intense professional and social disapprobation from being associated with the president.

"They definitely can," said yet another Republican lawmaker. "I think there needs to be 1) more assurance that Trump and the administration have their backs (I'm thinking of the 'mean' tweet from Trump about the House Obamacare repeal bill), and 2) more assurance that the Senate will get them through the approval process. Russ Vought (nominee for deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget) is still waiting for his confirmation vote, and the same with Tom Garrett for Ex-Im Bank."

If, as expected, some on the Trump team head for the exits in the new year, the problem will become more serious.

Personnel isn't sexy. And the key person in Trump's policy successes is Trump himself. But the president will need the actual "best people" if he is to make his second year as consequential as his first.

Byron York writes for Newspaper Enterprise Association.

MALLARD FILLMORE STUDES "HAD SCENTED INDICATE THAT THE FIRST PERSON SOAPS IN MIND ... WHO SAID CHRISTMAS ISN'T ABOUT THE PRESENTS. KINGLAY 12-30

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 31, 1879, Thomas Edison first publicly demonstrated his electric incandescent light by illuminating some 40 bulbs at his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

On this date:

Gov. Greg Abbott

Austin, TX 78701

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(512) 463-2000

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick

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Austin, TX 78711

(512) 463-0001

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Room 200, State Capitol

In 1775, during the Revolutionary War, the British repulsed an attack by Continental Army generals Richard Montgomery and Benedict Arnold at Quebec; Montgomery was killed.

Your elected officials

Let your elected officials know what you think. Here is contact information for each.

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By Bruce Tinsley



