

**Carmage Walls**  
**Commentary Prize**

**2019 Entry Form**

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

This editorial chided the City Council and mayor for not communicating with an elected official who wasn't doing his job properly.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

## OUR OPINION

# Communication needed for prosecutor problem, not a charter change

During the past two years, a perceived problem has been festering at City Hall, but few people have been willing to acknowledge the elephant in the room.

On Sunday, City Hall's worst-kept secret became public. We published a story in which city staff alleged City Prosecutor Brian Stumpe has been missing court days without notice and cases have been dismissed because of his no-shows.

Stumpe, for his part, said he informed city officials ahead of time in the instances he couldn't make it to court, and that nobody has told him there's a problem.

Rather than tackling the issue head-on, city officials slowly have spread the news via whispers and rumors. About a year ago, the city's Law Department came up with a passive-aggressive fix: It recommended changing the city charter to make the prosecutor position appointed rather than elected. Then, Stumpe would be accountable to the City Council.

Stumpe's job performance was never listed as a reason for the requested change.

We were able to inform readers about the issue in our Sunday edition through several open records requests. Until now, Mayor Carrie Tergin, council members or other city officials haven't been eager to talk about it publicly. We reviewed city emails and found that, last December, the city's court administrator discussed the problem via email with the city counselor, who shared the concern with the mayor.

The council (minus Ward 5 Councilman Jon Hensley, who was elected in April) was informed about the problem in a Dec. 22 email in which City Counselor Ryan Moehlman said the legal staff had to fill in for Stumpe eight times.

Dealing with the problem, we acknowledge, is tricky, because Stumpe is an elected official. As such, he's accountable to the voters, not to the mayor, council or city administration.

The city's Law Department was especially stuck between a rock and a hard place: It serves more than one master, including the council and Stumpe. As such, it wasn't the Law Department's place to complain publicly about the job performance of Stumpe.

But the mayor and council do not have attorney-client privilege preventing them from addressing the problem or informing city residents. It's also not a confidential personnel issue, since the mayor/council don't employ Stumpe, give him performance reviews, or control his salary.

The Law Department and the Jefferson City Charter Review Advisory Committee erred in suggesting a charter change, the local equivalent of a constitutional change, if a main reason was to deal with one employee. (They did cite other reasons, but, again, it's difficult to tell how much of a factor Stumpe was in the decision since the issue wasn't being discussed publicly.)

A disconnect between city officials' view and Stumpe's view of the situation seems to indicate a lack of frank discussion between the two. As our representatives, Tergin and the council should have alerted both him and us and the public to the perceived problem sooner.

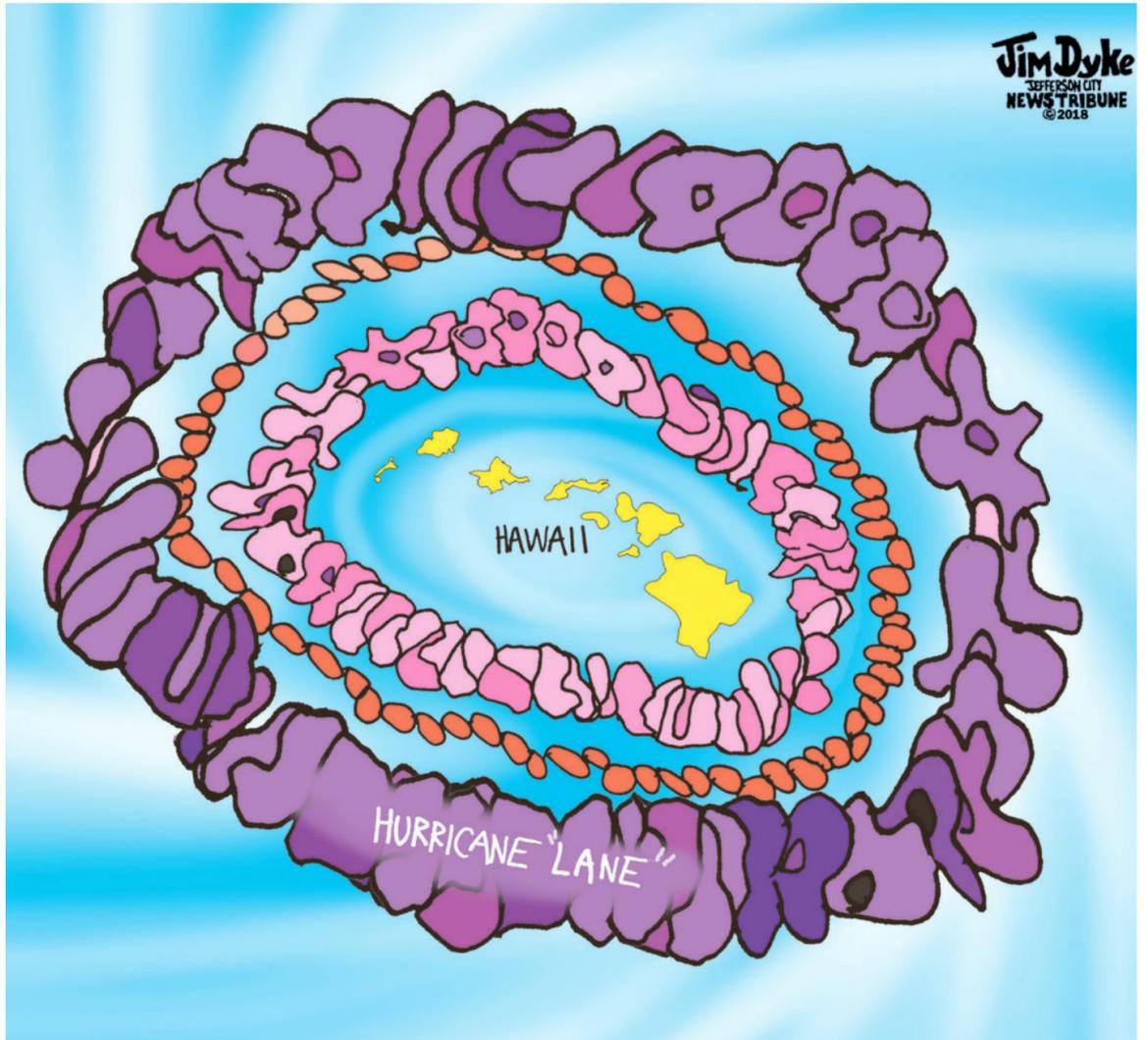
Now, the council has shelved the bill containing the charter change issue — along with four other proposed charter changes — on the "informal calendar," where it will die in after three council meetings if not acted upon.

Any charter changes would have to be approved by voters, and the council just missed the deadline to submit any issues to a November vote. Now, voters would have to wait until at least April 2019 to have their say on some of the other proposed changes, which may have merit.

We urge the council to publicly discuss the Stumpe issue, then act on the bill.

As for the prosecutor issue, we don't need a charter change. We need more open communication, leadership and a basic human relations handbook.

News Tribune



# How to keep Aretha's music playing

## COMMENTARY

What does a white boy from the white suburbs of Washington, D.C., have to say about the passing of soul singer Aretha Franklin?

At 16, I was a DJ on a local radio station, playing the rock 'n' roll and doo-wop recordings of the day. Many of the artists were black. Richard Penniman (aka "Little Richard") tells a funny story about white kids back then. In "Hail, Hail, Rock 'n' Roll," the 1987 documentary about Chuck Berry, Little Richard noted that white kids would have Pat Boone's albums on the top of their dressers to fool their parents, but the records of black artists hidden inside the dresser drawers.

The music of black artists like Aretha Franklin was soulful, and some of it was incredibly sexy, like Fats Domino's "I Found My Thrill on Blueberry Hill." Black artists, especially gospel singers, influenced Elvis Presley and other white singers of the day, who mimicked their style and artistry, sanitized it, and then presented it to white audiences, many of whom would not have accepted music sung by blacks.

Aretha Franklin began singing in church, and her music, her soaring voice, which touched every part of one's anatomy from head, to heart, to soul, soon became a vital part of the civil rights

songbook.

It was my privilege to see many of these performers in person, including Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie and Duke Ellington and their orchestras, Ray Charles, Cab Calloway in the all-black cast of "Hello, Dolly" starring Pearl Bailey, and many others on TV and in film, such as Nat "King" Cole, Sammy Davis Jr., Diana Ross and The Supremes, The Platters and the doo-wop singers of the '50s.

These performers and their stories of racism and injustice helped form my positive views of the civil rights movement, along with my time at NBC News in Washington where I listened to stories brought back by reporters who had covered demonstrations in the South, meant to be peaceful, but which quickly devolved into violent confrontation, and even acts of murder perpetrated by racists, a word that today is too lightly and too often overused.

Little Richard tells a story about how he and other black artists would write songs only to see the name of a white label owner or producer credited with their authorship, resulting in royalties going to them, leaving black artists with little to nothing.

Aretha Franklin suffered similar inequities. Take her most famous song,



Cal Thomas

"Respect." It was written by the late Otis Redding, but as The New York Times reported, "...every time the song is played on the radio, Mr. Redding's estate ... has been paid. Ms. Franklin never was."

I count two of Franklin's performances among my favorites. One is her role as a waitress in the cult hit "The Blues Brothers," starring Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi, which also included knockout performances by Ray Charles and Cab Calloway. Franklin sings "Think" in a scene so fantastically choreographed that it would have been a showstopper on the Broadway stage.

My other favorite performance is a duet with Tony Bennett titled "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" If you haven't seen it, go to YouTube. I tear up every time I watch.

The opening lyric goes:  
"How do you keep the music playing?  
How do you make it last?  
How do you keep the song from fading  
Too fast?"

How will we keep Aretha Franklin's music from fading? By playing it over and over again and introducing future generations to it, as we might any other classic. Hers is a story in song and a life that inspired and influenced millions.

That's not a bad epitaph for anyone.

## YOUR OPINION

Issue-oriented letters to the editor are welcome. All letters should be limited to 400 words in length; longer letters may be edited to conform to the specified length. The author's name must appear with the letter, and the name, address and phone number provided for verification. Letters that cannot be verified by telephone will not be published.

### CDBG projects pile on debt

Bert Dirschell  
Centertown

Dear Editor:

Headline from an 8/18/2018 NT article — "Community seeking low-income housing." From the article: "Jefferson City anticipates about \$250,000 in CDBG funds annually, provided by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This year, the city received \$286,021 for CDBG projects." Do our politicians have no shame, or integrity? How many millions (billions?) of debt are

we allowing them to pile on our children so that we can have our "free stuff?"

How low have we sunk as a people when we are willing to pile debt, and higher interest payments, on all future generations just so we can have free stuff now? Free stuff that we are unwilling to fund if we have to pay for it.

According to the Congressional Budget Office interest payments on the federal debt will triple to \$915 billion by 2018, if we continue to elect self-serving, fiscally irresponsible politicians who hand out free stuff. By 2020 interest on the debt will cost more than Medicaid, it will surpass the cost of national defense by 2023.

What will you say to your grandchildren when they ask why you allowed massive federal debt to be piled on them? We are to blame for having voted the scum into office, those who make a practice of handing out this free stuff, using it to buy votes and/or campaign contributions.

Before someone replies with the same tired, old "this will save us money in the long run," I ask

you, "When was the last time your taxes were lowered because of the savings from some government give away project?"

If those in Jefferson City want to spend \$250,000/year on subsidized housing then let them have the decency to fund the spending with their own money, not with more debt piled on our children.

### Bible refutes pro-choice beliefs

Wanda Roam  
Jefferson City

Dear Editor:

In response to the recent letter of Kevin Stamps who talks about abortion as a woman's healthcare decision, I refer him to what God has to say about the lives He creates and what He has to say about those who destroy those lives:

Psalm 139: 13-16 "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skillfully

wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them." God creates each life with a plan and a purpose.

God expresses his anger with those who shed innocent blood:

Psalm 106: 37-38 "They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan and the land was polluted with the blood." Jeremiah 32: 35 "But they built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." These abominations were happening in Israel and Judah in the prophet Jeremiah's day, but there is nothing new under the sun, and we in America are sacrificing our children to the gods of greed and convenience.

We have become a greedy, hard-hearted and entitled society that looks to child sacrifice as a right or as another form of family planning. God will not hold America guiltless for shedding innocent blood no matter how we may want to label it or justify it. The only acceptable alternative for not wanting to parent or being unable to parent a child is to give the child up for adoption.

Life begins at conception and is entitled to the same protections of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness our Declaration of Independence proclaims for all. We must abolish this industry of murder in America and repent of shedding innocent blood.

### Lack of knowledge leads college grads to socialism

Phyllis Greenfield  
Jefferson City

Dear Editor:

Tim O'Mara, in regards to your letter of Aug. 16; how about we bring back civics to middle school and leave out the "social part" of these studies?

Concentrate on understanding our Constitution instead of challenging it? The "right" to free speech without truth and personal responsibility can become a dangerous thing. I remember a teacher I had in the late '50s said "When there is too much freedom there isn't any freedom." Think about this. If one can spread lies about ones neighbor to the point of influencing other neighbors to turn against this person, what happens to the neighbor in question? Same teacher said regarding the way our framers set up our representation government; "To give in to popular vote is nothing less than mob rule." Well said, John Schrant, in 1959.

Why are young college grads turning toward socialism? I think lack of knowledge in American history and no knowledge of the successes/failures of Socialist countries in world history. Why else would Mr. Trump be called Hitler and his constituents Nazis if not lack of education? And finally, "To Kill a Mockingbird," is that any more important than "The Grapes of Wrath?" The latter is my family history.