

THE STATE  
**Journal Register**

"The Journal paper was always my friend..."  
— A. Lincoln, June 18, 1864



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"We want the Register to be the people's paper."  
— Publisher's statement June 19, 1881

OUR OPINION

Scrutinize  
trust fund bills

**LONG BEFORE** former Gov. George Ryan made worldwide headlines by emptying death row and before Illinois enacted sweeping reforms to how the death penalty is applied here, the Capital Litigation Trust Fund was a major step toward safeguarding defendants' rights in death penalty cases.

The fund was created by the General Assembly in 2000 to give death penalty defendants the means to adequately defend themselves at trial. Shoddy defense had been among the factors that led to Illinois' poor record on capital punishment; a record that includes 13 innocent people being wrongly sentenced to death only to be exonerated because of diligent investigation by private advocacy groups.

Administered by the Illinois State Treasurer's Office, the fund essentially levels the financial playing field for defendants, who in most cases could not otherwise match the money and resources available to the state's attorney's office prosecuting them. The fund is not just a noble concept; it is a necessity if we are to have faith in our system of administering capital punishment.

**SADLY, AN** investigation by The State Journal-Register indicates that the Capital Litigation Trust Fund may be viewed by some not so much as a tool of justice as an open gold mine.

The defense for Dale Lash, who was convicted in 2002 for the murder of Lori Hayes, was the second most expensive case in the trust fund's history. Lash's attorneys, Adam Giganti and Scott Hanken, ultimately billed the fund for \$387,762 — more than 2,900 billed hours at \$131.70 per hour — for a defense in which they called no witnesses.

Meanwhile, the bill is \$1.3 million and climbing in the case of Cecil Sutherland, who is accused of raping and murdering 10-year-old Amy R. Schulz in rural Jefferson County in 1987. When the Illinois Supreme Court ordered a new trial for Sutherland in 2000, Bloomington, Minn., attorney John Paul Carroll offered to represent him for free. But in July 2001, Carroll changed those terms, asking to be paid from the trust fund. He has since collected \$612,463, while his private investigator has received \$420,715. An itemized accounting of those bills is not yet available because the case is scheduled for trial next month.

Virtually any attorney in private practice knows that these numbers are outrageous. They convey the arrogance that comes with operating in the belief that none of this would ever become public knowledge; that as long as the bills were going to the trust fund, nothing would be questioned.

**WHY WOULD** they not be questioned? Because the trial judge who signs off on the bills does not want to be viewed as hindering the defense and creating grounds for appeal of a conviction.

We believe the Capital Litigation Trust Fund is one of the most important elements in restoring the public trust in this state's capital punishment system. We don't expect an adequate defense in a death penalty case to be cheap. But there must be some oversight to this system to ensure that those paid by the fund do not regard it as an underground spring — safely secluded from public scrutiny — from which money flows freely.

The Illinois Appellate Prosecutor's Office in December recommended that the Illinois Supreme Court establish clear criteria for trial judges to use in reviewing defense expense requests. It also requested that a subcommittee of the Capital Punishment Reform Study Committee be formed to continuously monitor the fund.

We believe this must happen soon if Illinois is to keep the death penalty. This fund is an important part of the capital punishment system of Illinois, and it must have the same safeguards against corruption as every other part.

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THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

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LETTERS, FAXES & E-MAIL

There certainly is scientific opposition to evolution

Dear Editor,

David Bloomberg occasionally writes book reviews in the Sunday paper. Often he uses this pulpit to slip in a few praises to his god of evolution.

In his most recent review, Bloomberg states that "early humans were bestowed with a sense of morality through evolution." No evidence was offered to support this opinion.

In the same review, Bloomberg stated that there is not scientific opposition to evolution. This is absolutely false and he knows it! There are thousands of scientists today who reject evolution on scientific grounds. There are dozens of books written that give sound, scientific arguments against evolution.

Some examples are "What Darwin Didn't Know: A Doctor Dissects the Theory of Evolution" (Geoffrey Simmons), "Darwin's Black Box" (Michael Behe), "Icons of Evolution" (Jonathan Wells), "The Design Inference" (William Dempski), "Refuting Evolution" (Jonathon Sarfati) and "Evolution: A Theory in Crisis" (Michael Denton).

These scientists would be startled to find out that their books don't exist. Evolutionists fear the growing criticism toward the theory of evolution within the scientific community, and often deal with it by denying that valid criticism exists. Not very scientific!

John Mark Henry  
Rochester

Springfield should be wary of 3 Wal-Marts

Dear Editor,

The city of Springfield needs to take a good, well-researched look at having three Wal-Mart superstores in town. They need to come to a town where Wal-Mart has already been for a few years and run out any signs of competition.

What does competition mean for the consumer? Choices! Wal-Mart is well known in the retailer/grocer business for dropping its prices unbelievably low for a long period to get the customers in and once they start a "habit" of going to Wal-Mart and shopping weekly, driving out the competition, the prices start to go up, usually higher than they would have paid at the grocery store. This is a gradual thing, but it will happen.

Look at Taylorville. They used to have several grocers and other stores; now it is Wal-Mart. I live between the two and find myself driving all the way to Springfield for work and shopping because I want choices. Think of the people more south of Tay-

lorville driving 30 miles plus daily for work. And hiring 700 people? Maybe at first, but can they maintain that number? Doubtful.

Long term, if they drive out the competition, will they hire all of them? We are looking at six major grocery stores in this town that will suffer by this. Is it worth it?

I ask the city to look at this closely unless they want the signs in Springfield to read, "Welcome to Springfield, population Wal-Mart."

Do not let them over run our smooth-sailing market!

Tricia Patterson  
Edinburg

Does this mean we should allow polygamy?

Dear Editor,

There has been much discussion about gay marriage and demanding equality under the law. Most proponents throw out the arguments against their cause that are based on morals or religion and claim those views have no place in our government.

Since I can't think of one reason that is not based on a moral or religious viewpoint why polygamy should be against the law, does this mean we should allow polygamy as well?

Line up, girls. Aw, forget it. I couldn't afford it.

Rich Hoffmann  
Springfield

Governor needs to get out in the field

Dear Editor,

During the past several years the Nature Conservancy, the state and the federal government have come together to purchase and protect not only special parcels of land but other large tracts of land for restoration.

I have been a member of the Nature Conservancy for many years. This not-for-profit organization, with private donations, buys or leverages critical pieces of land to protect and preserve special and/or endangered unique properties. In just one project area, along the Illinois River, thousands of acres of critical habitat have been saved for future generations, enriching not only hunting and fishing opportunities, but preserving recreational opportunities and critical wetland and wildlife habitat.

Neither the science nor the acquisition process are short-term endeavors. The study and planning necessary to bring these large projects to fruition take years

and consistent progress. The professional staff has spent years getting to know the diversity and value of our states resources, they are irreplaceable — all projects would be lost! I believe that conservation funding comes from special taxes on outdoor equipment (both state and federal taxes) and hunting and fishing licenses. These revenues are supposed to be earmarked for conservation projects; they are not general revenue funds!

The governor has done a wonderful job controlling the huge debt that he inherited; however, in this case it would be "penny-wise and pound-foolish." Cutting this minor funding would destroy programs of major importance. Outdoor activities are a large industry. These big projects will enrich a much larger "footprint" than the immediate area. Take a field trip, Gov. Blagojevich. See it yourself.

John Jewett  
Petersburg

Puzzled by rabbi's atonement statement

Dear Editor,

The March 13 "In My View" by Michael Datz, speaking "as a Jew and a rabbi," left me shaking my head. I was amazed at his statement, "As a Jew who has been raised to believe that only I myself can atone for my sins and that very little good has ever come from much bloodshed..."

Is he completely unaware of the rivers of blood that flowed from the time of Abraham and Moses as sacrifices were offered to atone for the sins of the people? What is the meaning of the shank bone used in the Passover Seder, but a symbol of the blood that spared the firstborn of Israel at the exodus from Egypt? Or what importance is the "Western Wall" in Jerusalem but to mourn the destruction of the Jewish temple where atoning sacrifices could be offered? I don't know where he learned the absurdity that he can atone for his own sins, but it wasn't from Abraham or Moses.

I do not pretend to know how the blood of Jesus absolves me of my own sins in the sight of God, but I learn it to be true from the Jewish Torah, as quoted in the opening of "The Passion of the Christ."

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

— Isaiah 53:5 & 6

Eddie Bratton  
Petersburg

Christian groups would be wise to stay out of Iraq

Dear Editor,

The death of four American relief workers and the injury of another March 15 in the northern city of Mosul, Iraq, underscores the danger in that country even for those there to help. They "worked for the Richmond, Va., based Southern Baptist International Mission Board" (Page 3, March 16).

I implore this organization and all other Christian denominations to stay out of Iraq. They must respect that Islam is the religion of the Shiites, 60 percent of the population, and the Sunnis, 20 percent. It is true that there were Christians in Iraq, half a million in memory serves. That was because Iraq was a secular monarchy under Saddam.

When Iraq assumes power on July 1 under an interim constitution, the status of those Christians may well be in doubt. True Muslims have little respect and mostly disdain for Christians and Jews. It is understandable that evangelical Christians are driven to help those in



File/Fort Worth Star-Telegram

**Friends and students gather to pray at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, after four Christian aid workers were killed in an attack in Iraq last week. A former student was among those killed.**

need, but circumspection should take precedence.

Milford Franks Jr.  
Springfield

Optimism is the only option

WASHINGTON — "Democratic creep" is not a derogation of a liberal candidate. On the contrary, it is the process — now well under way — by which free nations will win the world war on terror.

In Afghanistan, once a hotbed of al-Qaida training and Taliban tyranny, nobody can deny we helped bring forth the beginnings of democratic government. Afghans, including newly liberated women, are helping track down fugitive killers.



WILLIAM SAFIRE

In Iraq, we mourn our losses this past year, which now approach 2 percent of U.S. casualties in the Korean War. Many Iraqis died, too, but literally tens of thousands are alive today because Saddam Hussein did not have the power to torture and execute them — as mass graves tell us he did every year of his savage misuse.

Nobody can be certain that Iraq will remain whole and free after we turn over sovereignty on June 30. But prospects look far better than predicted by defeatists who claimed a year ago that political freedom had no chance of taking root in hostile Arab soil.

Free electricity keeps TV sets and air conditioners humming, oil is flowing, schools and businesses have come to life. Unemployment, now over 30 percent, will surely drop as the \$18 billion appropriated by the U.S. Congress — part of the \$87 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan — begins to flow heavily next month into reconstruction by Iraqi workers. (The WPA lives.)

We are training a civilian defense corps, twice the size of a joint Shiite-Sunni-Kurdish army, to take over free Iraq's battle against the Ansar-Qaida terrorists and Baathist diehards. With the transfer of political power to a transitional Iraqi government, public fury at the mortar and rocket attacks on "soft target" civilians will be a nationalizing, not a destabilizing, force — directed not at occupiers but against the terrorist invaders.

Next year, a trio of local politicians will emerge to lead the country.

Optimistic? In the grand design to uproot the causes of the rise of radical Islamic terrorism, defeat is no option. We have to believe in the popular success of a combination of democracy and prosperity. In this generation, the world has seen the power of the human desire for freedom.

From Kuwait to Qatar, the coalition's overthrow of Saddam has been a political tonic. Libya's dictator is making weaponry concessions lest his economy be wrecked and he be ousted. Repressive Iran is ripening for revolution. Egypt's boss and Saudi Arabia's princes are nervous because an arc of democracy bids fair to extend from Turkey through Iraq to Israel, with literature, enterprising populations blazing a path to liberating prosperity in the greater Middle East.

Syria's sullen Bashar Assad is feeling the heat. He benefited most from Saddam's corruption, and probably provided a hiding place for Iraqi weapons and a route of entry into Iraq for al-Qaida killers. His troops illegally occupy Lebanon; he supports Hezbollah and Hamas terrorists in rocket attacks and suicide bombings. His so-called intelligence sharing has been singularly unproductive.

Congress, more hawkish than President Bush on this state sponsor of terror, passed the Syria Accountability Act four months ago with large majorities; this week, Bush is expected to put some of its authorized economic squeeze on Bashar. He should consider that Step One.

This unified American message — substantial largess for free Iraq contrasted with the start of sanctions for despotic Syria — will not be lost on the Arab League meeting in Tunisia.

Success of democracy in Iraq is the key to democratic reform throughout the Mideast. When that reform dawns in Ramallah, there can be an independent, contiguous Palestine. When creeping democracy gradually brings a better life to people of the region, the basis for hatred and terror will erode and the suicide bomber will pass from the scene.

William Safire is a columnist for The New York Times.