

OPINION

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. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Katrina Katrina Katrina ... Bush

By Pat Webster
staff writer

There have been few times in my life as an American that I was as appalled at my country's government as I was when I observed the depressing response time to aid those hit by Hurricane Katrina. While I witnessed many acts of individual heroism and an outpouring of national generosity, I was left with the distinct impression that the government really dropped the ball.

The government failed on many levels, in many ways. Let's start on the local level.

The Mayor of New Orleans, while justified in his righteous anger toward FEMA; which we'll get to in just a moment, don't worry; was a poor planner in terms of disaster response. The now-famous photo of several dozen school buses sitting unused in flooded downtown New Orleans led many to ask why these were not used to evacuate citizens. However, I have difficulty accepting that anyone could have done a very good job after the fact, no matter what plan they had, considering that there was no power, communication or transportation that was viable once the city flooded. Among other things, he issued a mandatory evacuation order the day before Katrina hit and 80 percent of the city evacuated itself. Mayor Nagin gets a C.

Governor Kathleen Blanco transmitted her formal request for federal assistance on August 27, fully two days before the hurricane hit. There is a lot of misinformation floating around out there that the Federal government did not step in in a timely matter because they had not received state authorization. This is totally untrue. The Congressional Research Service issued its report on Tuesday

than Governor Blanco took all "necessary and timely" steps needed and informed the federal government that "the incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to save lives, protect property, public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of disaster." This was acknowledged and accepted by the government on August 28, the day before the hurricane hit. Governor Blanco gets a B+.

This leaves us with the federal government. While we're at it, we may as well start at the top, with the president. Mr. Bush in no way caused the hurricane, but his decisions compounded the disaster that was to follow.

Mr. Bush declared Louisiana in a state of emergency after receiving Ms. Blanco's request the day before, still a day before the hurricane even hit. What I can't fathom or even begin to understand is why federal assistance was authorized by the president to all parishes (counties) except those in the coastal region most likely to take the most damage.

I'm baffled. Furthermore, it took days for any significant federal disaster relief to appear. They saw the hurricane coming days in advance, federal help was requested days in advance and yet FEMA was caught flat-footed and totally unprepared. This is inexcusable.

Core to FEMA's problems was the Bush Administration's restructuring upon his inauguration. Bush removed the previous administration's FEMA leadership, which included several professional disaster relief figures, including the department head, and replaced them with campaign fundraisers / former college room-

mates. Five of the top eight new leaders of FEMA had very little or no disaster management skills whatsoever, including Michael Brown, FEMA head, whose previous work experience consisted of being the commissioner of the International Arabian Horse Association. His vast management and leadership skills ensured that federal response took three days to reach the area. Thirty seven percent of all Louisiana and Mississippi National Guard troops were in Iraq, with another third getting ready for rotation, yet no consideration was given to how this would affect state and local efforts.

The federal government's actions in a resource sense are no better. The money for levee maintenance has been cut 50 percent since 2001. FEMA's budget had been reduced by 1/3 last year alone, all in the name of streamlining it's efforts by making it a part of the Homeland Security Department.

This is from the government that campaigned on protection from terrorist-based disasters and response and claimed to have been improving our ability to react. If the response is this poor to a disaster we saw coming days beforehand, I cannot imagine how terrible the government's response would be to a terrorist bombing, chemical, or gas attack on a major city would be with no warning. Our government response was worse than the Indonesian response to the tsunami, for which there were mere hours of warning. If I were president, and I admit that I do not know all the circumstances, I would be irate. I would not be telling Brownie he was doing a heck of a job or assuring Trent Lott that his mansion would be rebuilt while thousands of poor New Orleanians are struggling to survive. The federal government gets an F.

The Behrend Beacon

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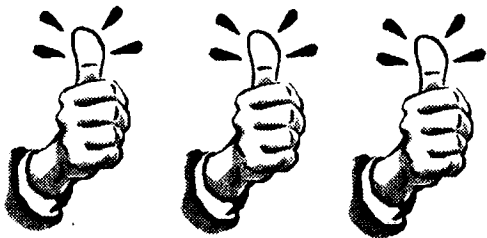
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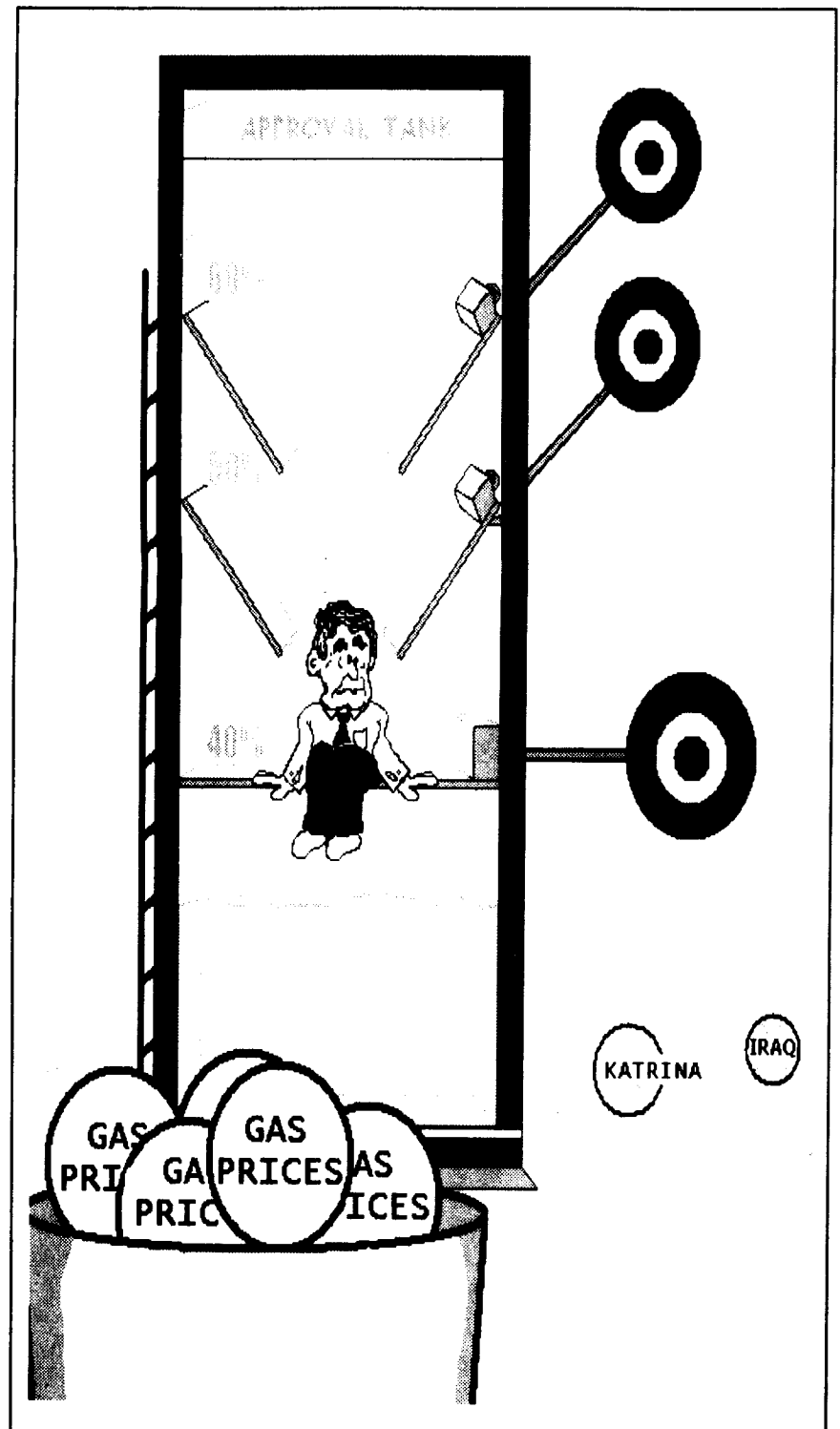
Beacon Thumbs Up



- Sheetz MTO accepting LionCash+.
- Free Pen Drives at the Computer Center.
- "Sex Jeopardy" in the MCC.
- Free credit reports for indebted students.

Beacon Thumbs Down

- High priced posters at poster "sale."
- The "after effects" of Dobbins food.
- Loads of SPAM received by PSU email accounts.



ZACK MENTZ

Quote of the Week

"God made the Idiot for practice, and then He made the School Board."
-Mark Twain

Letters to the Editor

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page.

Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to chrishvizdak@gmail.com or directly to the Beacon office, located in the Reed Building.

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run

the submission.

All submissions must include the writer's year in school, major and name as The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters.

Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue. All submissions are considered, but because of space limitations, some may not be published.

All submissions must include consent to be edited before they can be edited for publication.

Tennis court conundrum

By Amy Frizzell
editorial columnist

I'm just going to jump to the point. When are the tennis courts going to be fixed? I know many readers may not have the tennis courts at the top of their concerns, but for a little over 20 students on this campus that make up the men's and women's tennis team, it's up there.

This year is the fourth year that I have played varsity tennis for Behrend and it is my second year as a captain. It is also the fourth year that I, as well as the rest of the women's team and men's team, will have to play on courts that cannot even be termed as decent. What we play on is essentially nothing but concrete with lines. It is almost impossible to find evidence of what used to be a hard court surface while cracks allow for weeds to grow through the surface. The cracks have also allowed for the shifting of the courts, making them uneven with bumps and dents. On court one, a pole holding the net up has begun to pull out of the ground bringing a huge chunk of concrete with it.

All of these elements have made our courts dangerous to play on. The wearing away of hard court and the presence of cracks is a hindrance to sure footing,

causing players to trip, slip and fall. The pole that is coming out of the ground is a testament to its foundation being unstable, which will only get worse as the courts are neglected more and more. During the 2004 season, Allegheny College was invited to our annual Behrend Invitational. Upon the teams arrival, their coach immediately told us that their team will not be returning to play at Behrend again due to the fact that our courts were too dangerous to play on.

Not only are the courts dangerous to play on, but they're just plain unacceptable. Balls don't bounce as they are meant to bounce on concrete compared to hard court. That's why you don't see any USTA tournaments played on concrete: because its not an acceptable surface. Along with the surface, balls hitting the cracks often times stop the ball dead in its tracks or making the ball bounce in the complete opposite direction causing players to lose points. Occurrences like this are known to take place on average four to six times in one set; (that's twelve to eighteen times in one match.) Twelve to eighteen points can cause a person the match; two points can cause a person their match. These are unfair circumstances.

For the last three years, there has been talk of completely redoing the courts tearing them up and laying down new ones, which is exactly what should be done. Nothing has come of these talks, just more cracks and lost points. I can remember the athletic director coming down to practice my sophomore year and telling us that the courts were going to be redone that summer. I remember distinctly him even asking us what color we would like the courts to be...and we picked blue with white lines. That was two years ago. Now in no way, shape or form am I blaming this on the athletic director or the athletics department.

You wouldn't ask the baseball team or the softball team or even the soccer team to play all season with no grass. There is no way that anyone would expect the basketball teams to play on dirt. Why expect the tennis team to play on courts that are completely unacceptable? For as long as I've been here and even before my arrival to this campus the tennis team has been one of the top contenders in the AMCC conference, but when teams arrive at our courts we get laughed at. Not only does the tennis team get laughed at, but the school gets laughed at. No one likes getting laughed at.