

OUR OPINION

Electoral system must live up to voters' trust

Our little corner of America acquitted itself very well in the 2004 election. With very rare exceptions citizens were able to exercise their precious right to vote without interference or anxiety, and a lot of us did so, generally in the range of 70 percent of those eligible.

The biggest glitch — and it was more than a minor hiccup — was in Dallas Township, particularly the Middle District, where long lines wound through the parking lot throughout the day and evening. When the polls closed at 8 p.m., several hundred people were still waiting to cast a ballot, which they were allowed to do until the last vote was recorded.

There are even larger issues than inconvenience facing our electoral process, ones that must be addressed if the United States is to continue as a beacon of democracy to the world. More capable machines and uniform procedures are needed across the nation so that everyone can vote efficiently and accurately. Even more important, the electoral system must be rescued from the control of partisan officials and placed in the hands of people who are more interested in running fair elections than in who wins office.

Yes, this means some much-maligned bureaucrats should operate and monitor the system, rather than secretaries of state and other elected officials who owe loyalty to their party as well as the public, and sometimes have their priorities out of order.

It also is imperative that national standards be set for absentee and provisional ballots, replacing the crazy-quilt patchwork that now exists, with the potential to delegitimize an election.

On the local level, a fundamental improvement would be some new blood to act as election officials. These one-day jobs are not glamorous and they don't pay much, but the people who fill them can make the difference between an enjoyable or excruciating experience. Many of the present poll workers have been doing their jobs for decades, and they could use some help. Think about stepping up for the next round.

The turnout last week proved that the American people, including those of us in the Back Mountain, highly value our votes. But the present system and standards are not equal to our dedication, and must be fixed and updated before they discourage our participation.

Regional cooperation costs little, could pay dividends

Slowly but surely, the Back Mountain Council of Governments is proving its worth. The latest manifestation comes in the form of a \$50,000 grant that will pay for a study of open space and recreational assets in the region. The study, a supplement to one that covers Luzerne and Lackawanna counties, will create an inventory of undeveloped land, with the goal of directing development where it does the least harm to characteristics that make the region so attractive and that protect resources, such as water, that are vital to our prosperity.

There are both practical and principled reasons to embrace this intergovernmental arrangement. On the purely pragmatic side, the state and federal governments favor regional alliances, believing correctly that challenges often have no respect for municipal boundaries. So, when it comes time to hand out money, COGs and similar arrangements get a priority place in line.

The same argument can be applied in principle; given the nature of modern life, very few issues have an impact limited to one town or borough. The days of living, working and shopping in the same town are long gone for most of us, so we are affected by changes in construction, policing or recreation in communities where we neither live, work nor pay taxes.

Not all communities have joined the COG, often because they fear extra expenses, and there have been some. A larger planning venture needed modest financial support from the four member municipalities — Dallas Borough and Dallas, Kingston and Lehman townships. Fortunately, this new addition comes with no required local funding.

All in all, the logic of regional cooperation is obvious, and the effort deserves to be continued and expanded.

Letters, columns and editorials

Editorials, which are the opinion of the management of The Post, appear on the editorial page and are written by the editor unless otherwise indicated. Any artwork represents the opinion of the cartoonist, and columns are the opinion of the author.

Letters to the editor are welcome and will be published, subject to the following guidelines:

- Letters must be signed and include the writer's home town and a telephone number for verification.
- Names will be withheld only if there exists a clear threat to the writer.
- The Post retains the right to accept or reject any letter, and to edit letters for grammar and spelling, as well as to eliminate any libel, slander or objectionable wording.

Letters can be sent many ways:

By e-mail to: thepost@leader.net

By mail to: The Post, 15 N. Main St., Wilkes-Barre PA 18711.

By using the drop box located in the Uni-Mart convenience store on Route 309 in Dallas, across from the Dallas Shopping Center.

Always include a daytime phone number for verification.



Just ducky weather. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LIBRARY NEWS

Friends newsletter debuts, fruit sale looms



CAROL KING

If you haven't yet seen "The Library Link," the splendidly revised annual newsletter published by the Friends of the Back Mountain Memorial Library, run, do not walk, to the library to pick up a copy. Thanks to a generous supporter and true friend of the library, it has a new and very spiffy appearance. The contents are important, too!

...
NOW is the time to support the annual fruit sale. A coupon is included on another page in the Post today, and one is in the newsletter. This year there were some delays in organizing the sale, and you have just a little more than a week to get your prepaid order in to the library before the deadline of November 15. Because of the brutal force of the hurricanes in Florida which affected supplies, there is a slight increase in prices (which will probably be universal this winter). Please don't let this deter you from supporting the library through the annual sale — place your order as soon as you can.

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Another important item is the Friends

Annual Appeal Campaign. Jill Kryston's letter reports that the Friends still have to raise \$15,000 to meet their goal of \$30,000, the amount by which the state cut the library's aid this year. Please give generously to support one of the community's finest resources, open to all.

...
Children's Book Week, November 15-21, will be celebrated on November 16 at 6:30 p.m. with an Educational Reading Magic Show presented by Mark Piazza, titled "I Love the Library." If you like to read books you will enjoy Mark's fun-filled magic show as he weaves his wizardry using books that are in the library. Please call the children's room at the library, 675-1182, to register for the show.

...
Martha Butler, library director, reported that she attended a meeting in September of the Luzerne County Library System. Lynn Gonchar of the Tudor Bookshop presented a fundraising/awareness idea for the system. She proposed contacting 10 authors to come for a book signing event if each library would participate in providing raffle baskets and refreshments. Proceeds from ticket sales and a percentage of books sales would be divided among the libraries. Title I children Lehman visited the library in September, as did 25 three- to five-year-

olds from the I'm Big Now Day Care Center. Fourteen Brownies from Theresa James's troop came for a library tour and a reading and discussion of women's biographies. Statistics included: total circulation, 7,790; books added, 207; new borrowers, 101; and active borrowers, 16, 954.

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The book discussion group focused at its October meeting on "Disgrace," by J. M. Coetzee, a native of South Africa. His works of fiction have been heaped with literary prizes; "Disgrace" brought him the Nobel Prize for Literature. It treats the problem of race relations when he leaves the scene of his disgrace while he was a teacher at a South African university to live with his daughter on her "smallholding" in the countryside. The book is a somber one — the central character is not an admirable man — but, almost unanimously, the group found the story fascinating and the writing powerful. It was thought-provoking, and those present, as always, did not hesitate to express their opinions. Because of the interest expressed in the book discussion group,

Shirley Forney and others who have participated in its meetings ever since their inception in 1995 have offered to help start a new group. Please put your name on the list at the library desk if you are interested.

70 Years Ago
Nov. 9, 1934

CRISPEL SISTERS TO SING ON WGY

The Crispel Sisters, four youthful daughters of Rev. and Mrs. F. S. Crispel, who once served as pastor at the Maple Grove and Carverton M.E.

churches, will sing on the General Electric Hour from station WGY on Saturday night at 7.

They sing and play instrumental music and have been heard on a number of occasions over WNEB.

The new emergency education program which will be carried on here during the next five months under state supervision was approved by Dallas Borough School Board at its meeting on Monday night and permission was given to furnish room, heat and facilities for the adult education classes. A committee having as members Dr. G.K. Schwartz, Eugene Lazarus and Calvin McHose was appointed to investigate the nursing service offered in a similar plan for schools.

Neal D. Henry has been appointed representative for German's Better Bread in the Back Mountain section and reports an increasing demand for the product of the modern Forty Fort bakery. Mr. Henry is widely known in this section. He is the son of a former clergyman here.

Only Yesterday
is compiled from the
back-issue files
of The Post.

60 Years Ago
Nov. 10, 1944

LEHMAN PUPILS SET WAR BONDS RECORD

Lehman Township schools have achieved the distinction of being the first school of Luzerne County where 90% of the student body is buying war bonds and stamps. This record was made during the month of October and shortly the schools will receive a Minute Man flag which will be flown beneath the American flag on the school flag pole.

Two old friends, one of them from Dallas Township and the other from Dallas Borough met recently on a flying field in Italy. They are Pfc. Joseph Wallo, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Wallo of Dallas and Lieut. Frank Kamor, son of Mrs. Mary Kamor of Overbrook Avenue, Dallas Township.

Dr. Eugene Farley, president of the Bucknell Junior College, was guest speaker at the chapel exercises of Dallas Borough High School Wednesday morning. The theme of his talk was the necessity for young folks to adjust themselves to a rapidly changing world. He was enthusiastically received by the students.

50 Years Ago
Nov. 5, 1954

THIEVES STEAL GUNS FROM LABAR'S

State and local police are working on several clues that may lead to the arrest of robbers who stole three valuable guns and several shotgun shells from Caddie LaBar's Service Station late Monday night or early Tuesday morning. According to Chief of Police Russell Honeywell, thieves gained entry through a garage door window.

A worship service emphasizing emergency needs in Korea will be held in Shavertown Methodist Church Sunday, Nov. 14 at 11 p.m. According to Rev. Robert DeWitt Yost, pastor, Methodist congregations all over America will be conducting similar services on the same day. A novel feature of the service will be the presentation of "rice bags," symbolic of the sacrificial offerings of rice which the Koreans themselves have given to rebuild their war-ravaged sanctuaries.

Cedric Griffiths, Maple Street, Trucksville, was involved in an accident Wednesday afternoon when the car he was driving collided with that of Charles A. McGettigan, Kingston, according to Kingston police. McGettigan was taken to Nesbitt Memorial Hospital where he was treated for a possible fractured right shoulder. Griffiths suffered only slight bruises. The accident happened at Schuyler Avenue and Poplar Street, Kingston.

40 Years Ago
Nov. 5, 1964

TWO WHITE DEER LOOSE IN WOODS

Don't be surprised if you come across a good-sized albino deer running around the Loyalville woods, and unless you are really hungry, don't shoot them. Two of the rare white bucks escaped from Henry Vonderheit's Red Rock Game Farm, Route 118, more than a week ago, along with a regular white-tail. Mr. Vonderheit says they were scared by a big black bear, who had been appearing for some time.

Michael Brice, Terrace Drive, was listed in fair condition at Nesbitt Hospital by the middle of this week after suffering

injuries in a car-pedestrian accident on Machell Avenue Monday at about 12:45. Michael, 12, had been running down through the woods from his home to school at Gate of Heaven. As he popped out of the woods onto the roadway, he struck the side of the right fender of a truck driven by Walter Mekeel, Lehman, Dallas RD 2, who was going up the hill.

Fire totally destroyed a barn-garage and Volkswagon sedan inside on the John A. Kadilak property in Center Moreland last evening. Franklin Township Fire Co., assisted by Dallas and Kunkle, confined the blaze. The cause is unknown. Fire started in an outhouse attached to the back of the two-story barn.

30 Years Ago
Nov. 7, 1974

CRAGLE NAMED 'DRIVER OF THE YEAR'

Harry E. Cragle, Hunlock Creek, has been named a "Pennsylvania Driver of the Year" by the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association. Mr. Cragle has been a driver for the M & G Convoy Co., Buffalo, N.Y., for 35 years and has driven over two and a half million miles without an accident. Mr. Cragle is a Hunlock Township supervisor and committeeman and is a member of the Oakdale United Methodist Church.

Robert Masoner, Dallas, returned to Franklin and Marshall College last weekend for a two-day training program to learn how to assist high school students interested in F&M in applying for admission to the 2,000 student liberal arts college. Mr. Masoner, who is district manager for Bell Telephone, lives on Marabel Avenue, Dallas.

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