

OPINION

Bluegrass Beacon

She's worth more than a Penny for her thoughts

By Jim Waters
Education Commissioner Barbara Erwin finally saw the light.

It took a police investigation into her recent gig as superintendent in St. Charles, Ill., for Erwin to accept retirement and for Kentucky Board of Education chairman Keith Travis to admit her hiring "wasn't in our best interest."

It wasn't in our children's best interest either, sir. Erwin received all kinds of letters that said she was the right person for the job when she took a parting shot blaming the media for her demise rather than accepting personal responsibility for her actions.

But the media didn't trump Erwin's resume. It was a stamped file to kick up missing in St. Charles, which instigated the police investigation. It didn't make Erwin claim 85 sick days a year at taxpayer expense.

Now, the board search starts over. And Travis said he wants a Kentucky educator to fill the post.



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her with the professional respect she deserves and just offer her an interview."

Even if they don't, you won't find Sanders slaving away at a desk from a group of retired educators to improve the children's education around the country, including at a Florida elementary school in Miami.

That's why the board should seek out Sanders — who worked for 17 years in Jefferson County, the state's largest district — and ask her to help them.

"I just didn't fit the central-office mold very well," she told me. "My passion has always been making sure every child makes progress every day."

That passion results in Sanders supporting more emphasis on getting elementary school students to read and do mathematics at grade level.

When students can do math, the doors open for social studies and history," she said. "When students can do math, the doors open for science."

That's what I really like about Sanders, her clarity and passion. No mumbo-jumbo. No spinning. No painting a pretty picture with failure at its core.

She should have been Kentucky's education commissioner the first time around. And she's the right choice now.

Jim Waters is the director of policy and communications for the Bluegrass Institute, Kentucky's free-market think tank. You can reach him at jwaters@bippa.org. You can read previously published columns at www.bippa.org.

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BOURBON COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
Quality Care...and someone who has been there

OPINION

GUEST

Continued from Page 5

repeatedly, but the Republicans have added and misrepresented his position.

It's not true that casino gambling will significantly erode the moral fabric of the commonwealth. Like tobacco and gambling, there has been an integral part of Kentucky's identity, not just in the past but in the present.

That's why the board should seek out Sanders — who worked for 17 years in Jefferson County, the state's largest district — and ask her to help them.

"I just didn't fit the central-office mold very well," she told me. "My passion has always been making sure every child makes progress every day."

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to Prohibition is a good idea. Besides, surveys after survey indicate that far fewer gamblers become addicts or drug users.

Like it or not, gambling is a way of life in this country. As many, if not more, lives have been ruined by gambling than by tobacco and alcohol.

That's why the board should seek out Sanders — who worked for 17 years in Jefferson County, the state's largest district — and ask her to help them.

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clauses, and repossessions are a national epidemic. Yet you don't hear the Republicans speaking out against it.

Finally, we need casino gambling to protect and preserve our signature industry, horse breeding and racing.

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beat Ricky P? It's "Have you ever been to the Derby?"

The horse industry hasn't done a good job, over the years, of educating the fellow citizens. The widespread assumption is that all owners and breeders are wealthy enough to lead a jet-set, magazine lifestyle.

That's more than untrue. Kentucky from being West Virginia or Arkansas or some other southern state that doesn't have a distinct identity.

But our horse industry is in trouble and needs help. As on-track attendance has declined, Kentucky's tracks have sought new forms of revenue in order to keep our purse structure competitive with other racing states.

Our real states have supplemented their revenue from pari-mutuel wagering, both on the live product and through simulcasting, with revenue from slot machines and other forms of gambling.

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Equine Education Project (KEEP) tells us, the horse industry gives more than it takes. It boosts the commonwealth's economy by using thousands of acres of farmland, providing hundreds of jobs, and paying out millions in taxes.

Simply put, the horse industry is the main institution that keeps Kentucky from being West Virginia or Arkansas or some other southern state that doesn't have a distinct identity.

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casino gambling is one way to do it. A certain portion of the new gambling revenue can be earmarked for the horse industry. It has worked in other states where gambling hasn't been nearly as ingrained in society over the years as it has in Kentucky.

No matter what Fletcher and his narrow-minded synchophons might say, Kentuckians have no reason to fear casino gambling. However, to the contrary, they have plenty of reasons to embrace it, beginning with all those Kentucky cars that cross our bridges every day so the participants can gamble in Indiana.

As we do with the bourbon industry, we must casino gambling as a business, not a sin. We must regulate it carefully and, yes, tax it heavily. We must constantly monitor the social costs and address them with recovery programs. But we must have to generate new revenue and protect our trademark horse industry.

Beginning with Fancy Farm, Bearshair must make their case eloquently, passionately, and succinctly. He has the facts on his side. Then he should guide the discussion to where it belongs: Ernie Fletcher's utter betrayal of his campaign promises and the people who believed him four long, and sad, years ago.

— Billy Reed is a former state legislator of the Courier-Journal and a former senior writer with Sports Illustrated magazine. He is known for his coverage of thoroughbred racing, and has extensive knowledge about the gambling industry.

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