OPINION

Guest Editorial

Three-legged stool cannot stand on only two

By David T. Thompson

My mom used to have a small, three-legged wooden stool. I don't remember the stool being used for any reason, just something to set a newspaper or magazine on for a minute.

It was small and thus not sturdy enough to hold anything of weight.

But no matter if it was strong and sturdy, the three-legged stool was no good if something happened to one of the legs. It couldn't stand on just two.

You're probably already wondering what a three-legged stool has to do with the newspaper business.

Open government is a three-legged stool.

It takes open meetings.

It takes open records.

It takes public notices.

Any of the three being absent you don't really have open government.

I would wager that the news side of newspapers thinks all of government can be "open" if just its meetings and records are kept public. And I would wager an equal amount that the advertising/business side would argue without public notices, government really can't be open.

Like the old Certs breath mint ad, "Stop. You're both right."

It takes all three. Together. If one of the three is missing, any one of the three, open government is off-balance.

Open meetings – much can go on behind closed doors and much does. The law gives public agencies the right to enter into closed meetings under certain conditions. The law limits the presence of people at those meetings and nothing can be finalized. Any final action must be done in public.

Open meetings also give the citizens the right to speak on a particular subject. Much like lobbying in some respect but the comments play an important part of a public agency's decisions on most items.

Open records – much like open meetings, most records are open. Those records can be closed to the public under certain conditions but the records are important for a variety of reasons.

Often, government records will reveal what has happened behind the scenes, with agencies trying to restrict knowledge of what has happened in certain situations. Maybe it's a financial settlement with a fired public agency employee. Maybe it's what happened in a court proceeding. Maybe it's just simple communications between agencies.

Open records are much more than that, I know, but open records are an important part of that three-legged stool.

Public notices – these probably get overlooked when compared to open meetings and open records. Newspaper editorial departments won't understand the reason for them, why government agencies should pay to have information published. Newspaper ad departments will favor this one over open meetings and open records. Those are good but with public notices certain information has to be published and that information could be very revealing.

On their own, each is important and each plays a role in open government – government of the people, for the people and by the people. True open government can only be open with the three-legged stool in perfect balance.

- David T. Thompson is executive director of the Kentucky Press Association, Frankfort, Ky. KPA is the trade association for the state's newspapers.

The Carlisle Mercury

The Carlisle Mercury (USPS 023-152) is published every Wednesday by The Carlisle Mercury, 117 Locust St, Carlisle, KY 40311. Periodicals Postage Rates are paid at Carlisle, KY 40311.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Carlisle Mercury, PO Box 272, Carlisle, KY 40311.

Member of Kentucky Press Association and The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

2007 SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $25.00 for one year in Nicholas County, $30.00 elsewhere in Kentucky and $35.00 out of state. Subscriptions include sales tax where applicable. All subscriptions payable in advance.

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Bond's Broadcast

I normally don't ever take to reference another publication because I understand there are factors which can influence every newspaper.

Sometimes, like for us last week, we can think we have the right information such as under the picture on the front page but as it turns out we had the wrong name and actually the wrong picture.

It happens. There's never a week goes by we don't find something after the paper is published we have done incorrectly.

Hopefully we get more right than wrong but we have never intentionally run something incorrectly and never will.

In addition, as long as I have been the publisher of a newspaper I have never intentionally run something to cause pain or deception.

I have tried to never run down anyone or any idea with malice. Sometimes I have a different opinion just as people do with what we write here, but I don't have any reason to make it a personal thing.

I have been accused of doing this on a regular basis. Especially if I interfere with the kingdoms some of our elected politicians and community leaders have tried to establish.

I have never had any motive other than my desire to see things better.

At the newspaper it isn't possible for us to know everything about every event or situation.

That's why we ask those who have news to let us know. It's easy to use your newspaper – just email the information to editor@thecarlislemercury.com, fax the information to 289-4000, or bring it by our office at 117 S. Locust Street, under the Deposit Bank building.

Give us as much notice as possible and we'll do our best. It's always been my policy to try and get as much information in the paper as possible.

Please don't take it for granted if you are planning an event. It doesn't matter how large or small the event is, if you want some publicity when we can give it, please make sure we have the information.

Just because flyers are put in windows doesn't mean we have the information. I have taken some complaints about the last big event. We can't help make things better if we are left out of the information loop. Our mission is to grow with Carlisle and Nicholas County as our present day moves toward the future.

HB

As I said in the beginning of this week's column I try not to address other newspapers or the content, but I think it's time to say a little something about the Herald-Leader and one of the sportswriters there, Mike Fields.

Pat Letcher and a couple others on Friday, called my attention to his comments in a game preview brief. Under the preview for Lexington Christian and Nicholas County his key to victory read something like, "if Nicholas County beats LCA it will be like Syracuse beating Louisville."

Tell me what that has to do with winning a game. What difference does it make what he thinks anyway, but I am convinced he owes the players, coaches and supporters of Nicholas County a major apology for his callous, demeaning remarks.

It's pretty easy to sit at a desk and not walk the sidelines and share the victories and defeats of a team. Just sit there and expel some ridiculous opinions, which are not factual, and then move on to the next victim.

I don't really care what he has to say anyway. In fact the Herald-Leader has a stable of columnists whose opinions are tremendously shallow and one-sided with no room for discussion or input.

I wish this column would help make these writers see a little more clearly and pontificate with a little more thoughtfulness and kindness.

The Herald-Leader, and the Lexington media for that matter, very seldom send a crew to Nicholas County for anything other than some sensational story. And from my experience the last several times the big city media members have made the big trip east to Carlisle the resulting stories have had inaccurate information.

That's why I said, sometimes we get what we believe is correct information and print it in good faith and it just doesn't work out. However I wouldn't damage anyone intentionally – we try to verify every fact we are handed.

Both Charles and I question the content in the stories we work on.

It really doesn't matter who provides the information we try and double-check the factual content. Not because we are cynical of everyone and everything but because we want to make both our sources and our readers look good.

As I said we never intentionally make someone or an issue appear other than how we have perceived it.

And we never will . . .

And so, for another week, thanks and thirty.

Veloz Viewpoints

Greetings from Nevada! I hope you are all having a great week.

Only one week left until my Mom, Dad and Grandma get here. I can't even begin to tell you how excited I am! We will have such a blast. I can't wait for them to see how big the twins are getting. They will seem like totally different kids since the last time they saw them.

Antonio is preparing to become a great walker. He has been using his walker and is a pro at it now. He can maneuver it very well and has even learned how to walk backwards looking over his shoulder. On Monday, Ben and I took turns calling for him and getting him to walk to us. It was really funny. He would practically run to us with a big grin on his face.

Analise hasn't gotten the walker down yet, but I'm sure in time she will get it. She is still a little short for it. I think there is a way we can make it shorter to fit her, but I'm not sure how. Maybe that is something we will have to work on so she can be more mobile too.

-ABV-

It is amazing how quickly time goes by when you are raising babies. It seems like everyday is a new challenge and a new adventure all in one. We went from extremely sleepless nights in the beginning to nearly full nights of sleep. We have now reverted back to the sleepless nights.

With everything from teething, to little colds because of the weird weather patterns we have been having, the babies have had a hard time sleeping. Ben and I have tried everything we can think of to get them to sleep better at night. We have been trying not to let them go down to sleep as early as they were before because they will sleep until about 2 or 3 in the morning and then want to be up to play.

And getting up that early doesn't really sit well with Mommy and Daddy who don't go to bed as early as they do and therefore are exhausted at 2 or 3 in the morning. Ben and I have taken turns sleeping in the living room with Antonio who only seems to want to sleep in his swing around 3 in the morning. He will be up playing for an hour or so then will go to sleep in his swing. The lack of sleep is definitely starting to catch up with Ben and me.

On Sunday, Ben was starting to feel weak like he was getting sick. So, the babies and I went to the baby shower for his sister-in-law and left him home to get some sleep. I told him he was useless to me if he got sick. I could handle the babies for the afternoon by myself with a house full of relatives ready to help me hold them. However, if he got truly sick, 24/7 by myself would be much more difficult so he needed to rest so he felt better. By the time we got home Sunday evening, he was feeling much better. Still not 100 percent, but better. To get the babies to sleep better, we are going to try feeding them dinner later at night so it sits with them longer.

I think they are going through another growth spurt and so they are hungry at night. Unfortunately, my milk isn't satisfying them as long as it used to. Therefore, we are going to try a later dinner and see if that helps. I am really hoping to avoid the formula route as formula for two will definitely get expensive. Hopefully a later dinner will remedy the situation.

~ Until next week, make it a great one!

Amy

Talkin' From The Mountains

Another Heartless Act

President Bush and some of our Republican Congressmen from Kentucky have acted in a heartless manner again.

Bush, with the help of some of our Kentucky Republicans, vetoed the reauthorization of SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program).

SCHIP provided low-cost health coverage to children whose parents can't afford private insurance. Bush's veto leaves 50,000 Kentucky children without healthcare. Six to nine million American children in other states are also losing their insurance.

America's largest private insurance lobbying group, doctors, nurses, and children's advocates and 72 percent of the American public supported the bill. Once again, Bush "The Decider" and his followers didn't listen to the people, Congress, or the experts.

The children's insurance reauthorization bill passed both the House and Senate with the help of some compassionate Republicans, but not enough Republican votes to stop Bush's veto.

Kentucky Senators Mitch McConnell and Jim Bunning, and fourth District Congressman Geoff Davis voted against the bill to help Bush use his veto power.

Davis claimed in this newspaper last week that to reauthorize the SCHIP bill would have expanded government controlled healthcare to families "making as much as $83,000 a year." Bush and his loyal bunch like Davis, Mitch McConnell and Jim Bunning, came up with that explanation and have been throwing it around all over the nation. It's a lie.

The Annenburg Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, respected by both Democrats and Republicans, makes a study of the lies and spin of politicians. The institute says there is nothing in either the House or Senate bill that would force coverage for families earning $83,000 a year.

No state sets its cut-off that high for a family of four and the bill contains no requirement for any such increase.

According to the Urban Institute, 70 percent of the children who would have kept or gained coverage are in families earning much less, and the bill contained no requirement for setting income eligibility caps any higher than what was in the current law. You can find the truth at the Annenburg Institute website at www.factcheck.org.

Bush also claimed the program was only "meant to help poor children," when in fact Congress always meant it to cover millions of low-income children who were well above the poverty line, and we average Americans out here know a person can be poor and still be above what the government calls the poverty line.

It's tough enough for average American families just to put food on the table, pay the rent and buy gas to get to work, much less buy health insurance.

Bush was born rich. He doesn't understand how families struggle to make ends meet, and his actions indicate he doesn't care.

Davis claims he struggled financially at one time. If he did, he's forgotten what it's like. I wonder if he's ever faced not having medical care for his children? And wouldn't we all love to have the sweet benefits program Davis, McConnell and his cohorts in Congress have passed for their own families.

In trying to explain his vote against children, Davis also claimed it would insure children who are "illegal aliens."

Another falsehood. It is against the law and would have continued to be against the law for non-citizens to sign up for the SCHIP program.

Bush, McConnell and Davis also say the SCHIP program is a step toward government-run health care. Bush claims Americans with health insurance would have canceled it if the bill passed. Wrong! Most SCHIP beneficiaries got coverage through private insurers who contract with states, and the Congressional Budget Office estimated that such a shift from private insurance to SCHP would have been low.

Incredibly,

Bush and his bunch want

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OPINION

Fourth District Report

Budget Gimmicks

When Democrats took control of the House earlier this year, they promised fiscal responsibility and careful use of the taxpayers' dollars. However, through creative math and budget rules, Democrats have, in fact, given the American taxpayer the exact opposite. Since the 110th Congress convened in January, the Democratic majority has promised the largest tax increase in history and presided over several massive expansions of government spending. But, the most galling thing about their actions is the dishonest attempt to sell it as fiscal responsibility.

In fact, at least 73 percent of the major Democratic initiatives are "paid for" with budgetary trickery, fees or tax increases. The two most common tricks they use to deceive the American people are: (1) using the same revenue raiser (or "pay for") to offset multiple increases in federal spending; and (2) massively increasing spending in the short term and then cutting it severely at a later date (also known as the "funding cliff").

In the case of the Farm Bill, the Majority increased spending by a total of $29 billion over the next ten years, with more than 65 percent of this spending paid for by budget gimmicks. The most egregious trickery involves delaying farm and crop insurance payments while accelerating the collection of existing premiums, and a $7.5 billion tax increase on companies that provide millions of jobs to American workers.

Additionally, more than 25% of the so-called "budget offsets" contained in the Higher Education Reconciliation bill comes from a budgetary scam that dramatically cuts student interest rates until June 2012. Then, in 2012, interest rates will balloon to recoup the cost of the reduction. We should not be playing politics with the fiscal future of our young adults.

Last week, the House considered the reauthorization of the State Children's Heath Insurance Plan (SCHIP). More than 50,000 children and families in Kentucky currently receive benefits under SCHIP. I fully support the responsible reauthorization of the program and have co-sponsored legislation to ensure those benefits continue. However, the bill put forward by the Democrats is neither a responsible reauthorization nor is it honest with the American taxpayer about its true costs. That bill includes both a funding cliff and a tax increase.

Over the next five years, the bill dramatically expands spending for the SCHIP program. Then, six months into 2012, the funding drops off a cliff, an 80% cut in the program. In other words, in 2012, Congress will have two choices: (1) maintain the increased spending provided for in this bill (which would eliminate the savings claimed today and send the taxpayers another bill for $113 billion); or (2) cut millions of American children from the program.

All in all, these three bills alone include more than $202 billion in spending increases. More than $145.8 billion of these increases are paid for through budgetary gimmicks, fee increases and tax increases.

Congress should not hide the cost of their decisions by playing accounting and bookkeeping games that mask the real price tag. As your representative, I am committed to increasing the trafisparency of how Congress spends your tax dollars.

Steve's Report

Throughout my teenage years, there was a group of 10 or 12 of us that were pretty tight, getting together just about every chance we could. We'd get together almost every weekend. At least once a month we'd go camping or hiking, or take a canoe trip down the river. Other times, we'd team up and play football or basketball.

Actually there was a core of seven or eight that were always a part of the group. The other four or five were made up of boys who had recently moved into the area, replacing those who had moved out or had drifted onto other interests. We were pretty informal about who we would hang out with, and would even go out of our way to invite those guys who didn't seem to have any friends. We were a fairly decent lot, if I do say so myself.

Bob was one of the four or five that came and went. He'd hang out with us for a few weeks until his taste for mischief started getting the better of him and he'd start making fun of us for being goody-two-shoes. Before long, he would stop showing up and we'd see him running with a rougher crowd. A couple of months later, Bob suddenly start showing up again. It was like he couldn't figure himself out, couldn't decide where he fit in, and was never completely comfortable with either group.

Bob was the undisputed King of one-upmanship. It didn't matter who told what story, he had always done it bigger, better, or faster. I've never met anyone as competitive as Bob. Truth be told, I have to admit that we would occasionally have some fun at his expense, baiting him with some whopper of a tale.

But it never failed. He took the hook every time. It didn't matter how outlandish we conjected our story, Bob would snort, accuse us of making it up, tell us he didn't believe a word of it, and then say, "But it reminds me of something that happened to me one time..." And then he'd do our tall tale one better.

When we got a bit older – about the time we all started driving – young women suddenly became a part of our group. It's not like we had a meeting and discussed it. It just sort of happened. This added a whole new dynamic to the group. The desire to impress females gave Bob the incentive he needed to take his showboating to a whole, new level.

One summer evening, a member of the group was celebrating his birthday so we decided to head over to the ice cream parlor to celebrate. No sooner were we all seated then Bob started in: "I bet I can eat more ice cream than anybody else." But it didn't matter what names he called us, he couldn't get anyone

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