

POINT OF VIEW

OUR VIEW

Driving Toward Safer Commute

With the election-season storm fizzling out and the parties settling into their partisan roles, politicians can now get back to the business of government.

As is often the case with presidential and even mid-term elections, issues that aren't sexy or as politically expedient as, say, the war in Iraq, or the battle over "moral values," get shuffled to the backburner. One such issue is drunken driving, a problem that's plagued American roadways for several decades.

When Congress enacted legislation in the early 1980s to raise the minimum drinking age from 18 to 21, there was a 38-percent reduction in alcohol-related traffic deaths from 1982 to 1994. Recent years have seen that trend reversed, with traffic deaths related to driving under the influence of alcohol or some other substance steadily increasing. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 17,013 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes last year, an average of one almost every half-hour. These deaths constituted 40 percent of the 42,642 total-traffic fatalities. Though deaths are down slightly from 2000, too many people are still dying in alcohol-related traffic deaths. Last year, Nevada recorded 172 alcohol and substance-related traffic deaths.

Hoping to stem the riptide of unnecessary bloodshed, Capitol Hill lawmakers, in May, formed the Congressional Stop DUI Caucus. Each of Nevada's congressional representatives is a member of the caucus, whose goal is to "energize the fight against drunk driving" by changing mindsets and, if need be, changing laws.

Local legislators would do well to emulate their Capitol Hill counterparts.

While lowering the legal blood alcohol limit from .10 to .08 was a good move, more needs to be done to send a message to drunk drivers. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, minimum-age drinking laws have reduced traffic fatalities among 18-20-year-olds by 13 percent, saving an estimated 21,887 lives since 1975. State lawmakers should consider further tweaking the law because too many lives are being lost unnecessarily.

While they're at it, lawmakers can also consider changing or enacting laws for crimes committed by perpetrators under the influence of alcohol or some other substance. Whether drugs or alcohol cause a crime or exacerbate criminal circumstances, substance abuse remains the tie that binds too many crimes.

Where's Big Brother?

The White power movement deserves credit for thing: it's an amorphous, hard-to-identify entity. Case in point: For the past few years, a group (at least it appears to be a group) of Neo-Nazi sympathizers has plastered recruitment flyers in various areas of Summerlin, particularly Village Square shopping center on Fort Apache Road and Sahara. In this era of Big Brother and cameras installed in stoplights, you'd think these racists couldn't—or wouldn't—be able to move around with such impunity, with such stealth. Save for the people who these guys (we're assuming some girls, too) tried to recruit, these racists haven't been seen by the people with the power to stop their propaganda: cops.

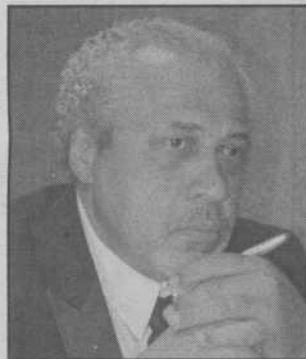
And since when have movie theaters become acceptable grounds for recruitment of bigots? As much as these people have a right to free speech and expression of ideas, movie-goers, shoppers, diners and visitors to a commercial center have the right to be left alone, to not have to endure racist literature.

More worrisome than the spread of hate propaganda in public places is the potential for violence. It's only a matter of time before these bigots move from the verbal to the physical and seek to make a statement by making an example of someone. By then, it's too late. Law enforcement needs to be proactive against racists. No one deserves to get hurt because of what someone thinks of them.



The election winner is....Bigotry

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice



LOUIE OVERSTREET

Campaign strategists for the president very cleverly used religious bigotry to assure his re-election. Before you accuse me of being one of those non-thinking Negro Democrats, the fact is that I have been registered as a non-partisan since the day I arrived in Las Vegas nearly seven and half years ago. So please do not assign my comments to those of a "sour grapes" partisan who must lick his wounds for the next four years.

In fact, recall that in several of my past columns, I alerted readers that campaign strategies were being employed to appeal to our base instincts and fears, not our intellect and hopes.

Campaign strategists for the president knew that there were enough homophobic religious leaders out there who were more than willing to share their bigoted attitudes to the extent it could turn an election. Thus, the successful strategy they came up with was to have their state organizers support ballot initiatives banning gay marriage and/or civil unions in key battleground states to make sure the zealot vote would turn out in numbers.

I am sorry to say this strategy worked to perfection in my old home state of Ohio. Later, more on the strategy to have Ohio serve as the poster child for getting religious bigots to vote.

The total popular vote did not play into either the Republicans or Democrats' campaign strategies. It was all about getting to the magical 270 electoral votes needed to be re-elected or elected President.

Thus, the strategy that was employed was for the Republicans to line up the "Solid South," western heart land states, and steal one or two industrial states. The Republicans knew stealing an industrial state or two would be "tuff" due to high unemployment in these states caused by outsourcing manufacturing jobs to foreign countries. Therefore, it became necessary to create an issue that the weak-minded would rally around regardless of their economic state of being. Low and behold, the issue became one of appealing to our latent bigotry. Bingo, it worked!

Name	Popular Vote	Percentage	Electoral Votes
Bush	59,459,165	51	286
Kerry	55,949,407	48	252
Difference	3,509,758	3	34

The Republican strategists, as noted, targeted eleven states to have gay marriage and/or civil unions become statewide initiatives.

State	E.V.	Bush %	Bush Vote	E.V.	Kerry %	Kerry Vote
Arkansas	6	54	560,000		45	460,000
Georgia	15	59	1,800,000		41	1,300,000
Kentucky	8	60	1,060,000		40	710,000
Michigan		48	2,310,000	17	51	2,470,000
Mississippi	6	60	660,000		40	430,000
Montana	3	59	260,000		38	170,000
North Dakota	3	63	190,000		35	110,000
Ohio	20	51	2,800,000		49	2,700,000
Oklahoma	7	66	960,000		34	500,000
Oregon		47	820,000	7	52	890,000
Utah	5	63	610,000		35	230,000
Total	73		12,100,000	24		9,970,000
Difference		+49			-49	
Difference			+2,130,000			-2,130,000

Some states were safe Republican states from the "get go." Thus, these states were merely counted on to increase the President's popular vote margin as illustrated in the tables. However, the states of Michigan, Ohio, and Oregon were targeted to get the religious vote out to counter the union vote and college educated vote in these three states. The strategy almost worked in Michigan and Oregon where the popular vote for the President was a lot closer than it should have been. In Michigan Kerry won by 160,000 votes out of 4,780,000 cast. In Oregon the difference was 70,000 out of 1,760,000 cast.

Thus, it boiled down to who would take Ohio and win the electoral vote count. With 5,500,000 votes cast by persons in the "Buckeye State," the President won the popular vote by a margin of a little over 100,000 votes (51%-49%). But get this on how the strategy of appealing to our basic bigotry (See Overstreet, Page 12)



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