

# A reminder about letters policy

THE ISSUE | Campaign letters.

OUR OPINION | Stay within the rules and letters supporting or denouncing candidates, parties or issues will be printed.

One sign that we're into the political season is to check the Letters to the Editor section at the bottom of this page.

The frequency of letters from readers backing a particular candidate, party or idea is increasing, which again demonstrates how well connected our community is to local and national politics.

Fueling the fire are highly charged congressional and presidential elections in November and a Sept. 9 Republican primary between three candidates running for Steuben County sheriff.

While we encourage readers to express their opinions, we think it's appropriate certain ground rules be revisited to help eliminate confusion.

Letters must be limited to 250 words or less. Those that exceed that limit will be rejected.

Also, letters pertaining to the Sept. 9 primary must be received by Sept. 1. Letters can be mailed, e-mailed or

faxed and Sept. 7 is the last day letters addressing the primary will run.

For the general election, letters must be received by Oct. 26 and no letter will run beyond Nov. 2.

As for letter-writing campaigns, we know they are an effective and inexpensive way to help sway undecided voters that are most often more appropriate to run as advertisements than opinion pieces. But there is room for compromise.

Letters will be accepted if they are original and address issues germane to the campaign. Boiler plate, or form letters, that look like they came out of a copy machine and say the same things won't be printed.

Finally, letters that are libelous – meaning they maliciously attack someone without foundation – also won't make it into the paper. Remember, criticism can be delivered in a respectful manner and, more often than not, has more impact when expressed in a civil tone.

## ARTIST'S VIEW



## COMMENTARY | MARY C. CURTIS

### Scandal plays out, then we move on

This is an important election year, we are told, as Americans set a course for the country and choose a new leader. And we – the media and their audience – are talking about Paris Hilton's campaign spot and John Edwards' extramarital affair.

In this case, though, the distraction may be more short-lived than usual. Signs are hopeful.

It's not that these stories will go away. Face it, sex is easier to comprehend than armored vehicles roaring toward Ossetia. The Olympics are no match for bulletins about a different sort of game.

John Edwards' fall from grace is a cable-ready story of hubris. Even Hilton's tongue-in-cheek foray into poolside politicking seems old school next to a family man's affair, a sick wife, a baby and, yes, another blonde.

But after pausing to observe yet another political and personal train wreck, the public will return to puzzling over whether drilling for oil off America's coastline will cause prices at the pump to drop.

The shortened lifespan of this tabloid tale doesn't add up to an excuse for Edwards, who put himself

squarely on the front of the *National Enquirer* when he lied repeatedly about a 2006 affair. This is 2008, when a detail like that about a public person – one with presidential ambitions – won't stay secret for long. By going ahead with a campaign, Edwards jeopardized his party and deceived his supporters and staff. A smart guy should have known it would end this way.

Thankfully, the familiar script is almost played out.

We've had a statement from him, stating the obvious: "I started to believe that I was special and became increasingly egocentric ..."

One from his wife, Elizabeth Edwards, showing the strength that has led some to wonder if the wrong Edwards ran for office: "I am proud of the courage John showed by his honesty in the face of shame."

And we've been spared the public press conference with the couple standing side by side.

*The Enquirer* will no doubt continue to wring the living daylight out of the story. On Saturday the plot thickened: The woman Edwards had an affair with said she wouldn't pursue paternity testing to determine who

fathered her child.

There may still be a few experts speculating on what it all means – to the presidential race, to the parties involved, to the everlasting differences between men and women.

Then, it will end.

Wars still rage in Iraq and Afghanistan, and now in the former Soviet Union. The housing market will get worse before it gets better. Autumn will bring presidential debates that move beyond Thomas and the personal.

For now, Edwards' signature issue of poverty and economic inequality amid prosperity won't be what he's known for, and that's sad.

But if you're feeling guilty for taking interest in the rise and fall of a golden career, remember it has always been so, since tabloid rumors of Thomas Jefferson's relationship with his slave Sally Hemings intruded upon another presidential contest.

No doubt voters hung on every word. No doubt they moved on.

■ **Mary C. Curtis is a columnist for the Charlotte Observer. Readers may send her e-mail at [mcurtis@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:mcurtis@charlotteobserver.com).**

## NATIONAL VIEW | MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

### McCain, Obama: Two sides of one coin?

Despite John McCain's reputation for straight talk, we're not hearing much from him on tax policy. Then again, Barack Obama has not been much better. Both senators are proposing tax plans that would dig the federal budget hole trillions of dollars deeper.

An analysis of the candidates' plans by the Tax Policy Center, a joint project of the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution, concluded that McCain's tax ideas would crank up the national debt by \$5 trillion over the next decade.

Obama's plans would increase the debt by \$3.4 trillion. The campaigns complain the center doesn't factor in their plans for budget-cutting, but we're skeptical McCain and Obama could cut enough to make up the yawning gaps in their accounting.

Besides that, neither candidate is proposing substantive solutions for reforming Medicare and Social Security, the cost of which is about to balloon and put severe stress on government finances. McCain and Obama know as well as anybody that the government cannot keep the promises it has made to voters and that the bill is coming due.

Even so, the same moldering rhetoric spills from them – McCain paints Obama as a tax-and-spend liberal. Obama tars McCain with the Bush brush. Little of substance is proposed.

The TPC analysis found that McCain would reduce taxes an average of about 3% of income for middle-income earners, or about \$1,400 annually, by 2012 but would give the top 1% of earners a much larger break, cutting their taxes by \$127,000. He would extend the Bush tax cuts and reduce corporate taxes, both questionable ideas. Other elements of his plan make more sense, including making permanent the research and development tax credit.

Obama would reduce taxes for low- and moderate-income families but would raise them significantly on the rich. OK. But his thinking clouds when it comes to tax breaks, including questionable proposals for new breaks for retirees and homeowners. And his plan to boost taxes on capital gains and dividends discourages investing and hurts those who rely on such income streams.

The nation faces a fiscal crisis in the coming years. Social Security and Medicare are unsustainable without changes. Tax hikes or cuts in benefits or – better – a combination of those cures is needed. The nation must not try to borrow its way out of this problem by running up crushing deficits that crowd out private investment and weigh down the economy.

Sens. McCain and Obama: Run these plans through the spreadsheet again. And then level with the voters.

## NATIONAL VIEW | DALLAS MORNING NEWS

### Edwards' risky business

John Edwards ran his failed 2008 presidential campaign on a theme of "two Americas," rich and poor. Well, as one political consultant said Friday after Edwards admitted to an adulterous affair, "We now know that there are two John Edwardses."

Indeed, Edwards went to great lengths during the campaign to portray himself as a family man. When wife Elizabeth's cancer returned last fall, the couple gave an emotional interview to "60 Minutes," in which the White House hopeful said that presidential candidates' personal lives "indicate something about what kind of human being they are." He invited the country to "look at what kind of human beings each of us are, and what kind of president we'd make."

We now know that Edwards is the kind of human being who would cheat on his spouse, lie repeatedly in public about it and, then, after he told his terminally ill wife the affair had ended, sneak into a Beverly Hills hotel in the middle of the night to meet Rielle Hunter, the other woman.

With Hunter at the hotel was her child, whom a former Edwards campaign staffer – married with children – says is his. The baby's birth certificate doesn't list a father, and Edwards denies that the child is his. He says, in fact, that he's willing to take a test to prove it. Unfortunately, his credibility is dreadfully lacking at present.

The Edwards affair also raises questions for the mainstream media, which didn't appear particularly zealous to report a story that first surfaced in the *National Enquirer* in October 2007. Only recently had mid-market newspapers, especially in Edwards' home state of North Carolina, picked up the pace, focusing on the potential fallout for the coming Democratic National Convention.

The most striking thing about this sleazy drama is what it says about Edwards' hubris. This arrogant politician ran for president and asked for scrutiny and judgment of his private life, putting his family and party at risk. Did he really think he was going to get away with this?

Read The Insider with Bob Rolfe Mondays and Fridays in *The Leader*

THE INSIDER



Bob Rolfe

## LETTERS POLICY | THE LEADER

■ Letters should be typed or neatly printed.

■ Letters must be kept to a maximum of 250 words. Letters longer than that will not be considered.

■ Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. No letters will be published unless verified with the author in person or by telephone.

■ Letters may be edited for space considerations.

■ The publication of any letter is at the discretion of the editor.

■ All letters become the

property of *The Leader* and cannot be returned to sender.

Mail your letters to:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR  
 THE LEADER  
 PO BOX 1017  
 CORNING, NY 14830

Letters also may be dropped off at our office:

Corning office  
 34 W. Pulteney St.

Fax your letter to:

Corning | (607) 936-9939

### Warming is price of failed policy

TO THE EDITOR | The United States House of Representatives adjourned recently for the August district work period. One of their top discussions before adjourning was how to solve the energy crisis. This crisis exists because of decades of failed fossil fuel-based energy policy. Aside from higher energy costs, this policy has wrecked havoc on our environment.

Global warming is changing our planet, not just in the arctic but right here in our own backyard. Global warming threatens our way of life and is inextricably linked to our energy sources. We have a choice, either continue the failed fossil fuel-based energy policy that has caused high energy prices and global warming, or invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency that will provide American-made, cheaper energy and allow consumers to go further on a tank of gas. We need leadership in

Congress that will help us create an American-made, clean energy economy. It is our responsibility to tell Kuhl that we want a carbon-free future. Call or visit his office while he is home this month. Tell him that we can't drill our way to lower energy costs. His office number in Bath is (607) 776-9142.

John Deans  
 Elmira

### Kuhl should take cue from Obama

TO THE EDITOR | *The Leader's* recent editorial, National View, *Dallas Morning News*, "Obama strikes right notes," was in the correct key and ended right on pitch, with "Prudence, however, suggests this Obama-mania rule of thumb: Lust, but verify."

Those of us who have never been enamored of rock stars ignore the comparison and see Barack Obama as a genuine human being with worthy aspirations and goals. If only Randy Kuhl

could let go of President George W. Bush's coat tails and take a cue from Senator Obama.

The choice of the Southern Tier, he pretty much ignored Monroe County, also part of his constituency, in the last election.

In the rare appearance, he was very personable, but had a penchant for talking one way and voting another.

Seeing Eric Massa's headquarters in Corning during a recent visit was very reassuring. The decorative front went well with the canopies of exhibitors in the fantastic arts and crafts show.

Eric Massa may not be confused with a rock star, but he provides a welcome contrast to our present representative in Congress.

Byrna Weir  
 Rochester

Letters for the Sept. 9 primary must be received by Sept. 1 to be considered for publication.