

EDITORIALS

Bombs and purple fingers

Iraq remains a dangerous country, especially around election time. But its people refuse to be intimidated.

Despite the lobbing of hand grenades by Islamic terrorists, the firing of rockets and mortars and the bombing of one polling place Sunday, not to mention repeated violence in the days leading up to Sunday's national election, an estimated 62 percent of eligible Iraqis turned out to vote.

Many emerged from polling booths waving purple-stained fingers, the unabashed symbol of Iraqi democracy that stems from the first national election in 2005.

Some made a point of voting even though they lost loved ones in the pre-election violence. And turnout was high among Sunnis, and Kurds, not just the majority Shiites.

Furthermore, unlike five years ago, when only the names of parties were listed on the ballot to protect individual candidates from potential assassination, this year candidates campaigned enthusiastically. There were female and male candidates, and many who sought to cross the Sunni-Shiite divide, rather than seeking support only from those who shared their religious beliefs. Campaign posters were displayed prominently throughout the country.

The results of the voting remain undetermined, something that is unprecedented in and of itself. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his State of Law Coalition are expected to maintain the largest bloc of seats in the country's Parliament. But he will likely have to form partnerships with other groups to forge a new government.

There's no question, however, about the average Iraqi's commitment to democracy.

In the United States, we often take our voting rights for granted. So it is inspiring to see people who have suffered greatly, first under Saddam Hussein, then during years of war and terrorism, who are willing to risk their very lives to participate in the most fundamental right and responsibility of a democratic society.

The discrimination fix

Most employers, we believe, are conscientious about trying to prevent discrimination against workers on the basis of race, religion, gender or physical capabilities. But it would be foolish to believe discrimination never occurs.

When it does, workers ought to have a legitimate legal remedy. The law should assess real penalties against employers who intentionally discriminate, not allow them to get off by simply reimbursing discrimination victims for back pay and interest.

House Bill 1269, by Rep. Claire Levy, D-Boulder, appears to be a solid step toward providing that remedy.

Levy's bill allows workers who believe they are victims of discrimination to seek compensatory and punitive damages in state court — with monetary limits based on the size of the employer — not just back pay. That would put some teeth in state law and make employers think twice about violating anti-discrimination law.

It's no surprise that business groups are worried about the bill. But the greatest fear is not having to pay the damages. Rather, it is the attorney fees that may accumulate in trying to fend off such lawsuits, and the possibility plaintiffs' lawyers will try to use those accumulating fees to force big settlements.

One way to remedy that is to adopt the "English rule," in which the losing side must pay the fees of the prevailing side. That would discourage plaintiffs from filing cases with little merit.

Levy's bill allows a judge to assess attorney fees against the losing side, but that provision should be made mandatory, not left to the discretion of a judge. Then HB 1269 could be passed and provide more protection to workers, along with protection for employers against frivolous lawsuits.

LETTERS

The Sentinel appears inconsistent on law

Thanks to The Daily Sentinel's editorial board for choosing to opine further on the recent acquittal of former Grand Junction police officer Courtney Crooks on harassment charges that led to his resignation from the department last year. The following passage stood out the most for me:

"We hold police officers to higher standards than most people because they must enforce the laws, as well as abide by them. But like all others accused of crimes in the United States, they must be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Courtney Crooks was found not guilty by a jury of his peers, and that is the only judgment that should matter in this country."

If those managing the Sentinel truly believe in the above statements, then I am tempted to ask how this opinion affects the Sentinel's "Blotter" feature, in which the paper prints the names of adult citizens who are arrested or cited for criminal offenses in our area, and are thus presumed innocent until they get their day in court.

It's true that Mr. Crooks received a good deal more media attention than the average person accused of the same offense. However, if "all others accused ... must be presumed innocent until proven guilty" and "that is the only judgment that should matter in this country," then perhaps everyone whose name appears in the "Blotter" should have the disposition of the charges against them published when that disposition occurs.

At the very least, some form of the Sentinel's own words above should appear in each future edition of the "Blotter" as a disclaimer.

JOHN L. LINKO
Grand Junction

Don't turn over prisons to private companies

I have recently learned that the state senator who is supposed to represent me at the state Capitol, Josh Penry, has submitted a bill (House Bill 1219) that would authorize the executive director of the Department of Corrections to sell by competitive bid the correctional facilities owned by his department, regardless of the security level.

I do not understand why? Didn't we, as a state, learn from the costly riots that happened at the privately run Crowley County facility?

Why would a politician who is supposed to look after our rights want to turn over the rights of citizens who

are incarcerated to a for-profit private company?

If this is such a grand idea, why not take it a step further? Privatize the state police, privatize the judges. Why not privatize the whole legal system?

In my opinion this is maybe taking the first steps to that very destination. My hope is he will change his mind.

PEGGY BARRON
Grand Junction



to the people of Battlement Mesa.

If you share our concerns please get involved, stay informed. Don't sit idly by, thinking there is nothing you can do. Join with the Battlement Concerned Citizens, and together we can be effective in keeping Battlement Mesa a desirable place to live.

RON GALTERIO, Co-Chair
Battlement Concerned Citizens
Battlement Mesa

Battlement Mesa group aims to assist residents

What does the future hold for Battlement Mesa? Do you care? The Battlement Concerned Citizens care.

The BCC is a grassroots group of people working hard on behalf of all residents of Battlement Mesa to address the many adverse impacts that oil and gas development in our community may pose for our lives.

Presently, we are focused on the proposed Antero drilling plan for 200 natural gas wells in Battlement Mesa, and how to mitigate the impacts to the community if it goes forward.

We have made significant progress regarding health and safety issues, with Garfield County agreeing to perform a health impact assessment and subsequent health study in cooperation with the Colorado School of Public Health, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Grand River Hospital District. The HIA will be a valuable tool for use by all regulatory agencies involved in the permitting process of oil and gas development in residential areas.

The natural gas industry is hazardous, and our community deserves additional levels of protection if multiple wells are to be developed here. The BCC is taking a leadership role in protecting the health, safety, welfare and property values of the residents of Battlement Mesa. We are involved, on an ongoing basis, with various local, state and federal government agencies, to promote responsible development of oil and gas in our area and to hold the industry accountable

Why would police officers strip and move a corpse?

Regarding the police shooting of Brent Ingram at the Timbers Motel on Feb. 28: It's difficult to believe it is standard police procedure to move and strip the corpse of a dead person before an investigation has been started. Something stinks in the Grand Junction Police Department.

GLEN MOLLICK
Fruita

Recreation center needed in this city

When will the city stop wasting our tax money and put it to good use?

We will soon be into another summer with no place for our children and grandchildren to spend time. We need a recreation center here for the families, or a YMCA.

I have counted at least eight roundabouts that probably cost us enough money to have built a rec center. None of those roundabouts is necessary. A four-way stop sign would have been just as good, if not better, for the cost of the signs and labor to put them in.

What do we have to do to get our money spent on our real needs and not what the city wants? We should have had a recreation center years ago.

Maybe if all School District 51 students would write a letter and send it to our representatives, we would get the rec center. I doubt if anything short of that will get it.

LINDA PINKERTON
Grand Junction

Policemen suffer from shooting, too

Most of us don't know what exactly happened in Room 18 at the Timbers Motel on North Avenue on Sunday, Feb. 28. Only three people know, and one of them is dead. The three were in the room. Two of them were Grand Junction police officers and one was 39-year-old Brent Ingram, who died that day after being shot twice in the chest by police.



DENNY HERZOG

The two, who have not been identified per police department policy, are on administrative leave pending the outcome of an internal investigation into the shooting. If they were at fault, then they will have to deal with the consequences. Police Chief John Camper, in his short tenure in Grand Junction, has made it abundantly clear that he will

preside over nothing less than a squeaky clean police department. We can be confident that any investigation into his officers' actions will be thorough and it will be fair.

There is much we don't know, and the outcome of the internal investigation may turn out otherwise, but it appears from what we do know that the police were simply doing what we pay them to do. Their actions that Sunday afternoon may have been tragic, but they also made this community a little safer place for the rest of us. Let's thank them for that.

Assuming their actions are deemed justifiable — I admit that I hope that is the case — then let's be at least as sympathetic for them as we are for Mrs. Ingram. Police Department policy forbids the two from seeking their 15 minutes of fame in the media. That doesn't mean they aren't dealing with the trauma every bit as much as anyone else involved in the incident.

Officers who have had to kill someone in the line of duty report sleep problems, nightmares, flashbacks, depression and feelings of helplessness. In some cases they are unable to return to work. In others, it can lead to marital and family problems.

Many of those problems can be alleviated with professional help and peer and community support. I assume the Grand Junction Police Department is equipped to provide that level of support for the two officers who answered the call to the Timbers Motel on Feb. 28.

We'll owe them that, at the very least.

Denny Herzog is the retired executive editor of *The Daily Sentinel*. E-mail him at gjherzogs@gmail.com.

Clean coal is a 'possible' dream

The thing I love most about America is that there's always somebody who doesn't get the word — somebody who doesn't understand that in a Great Recession you're supposed to hunker down, downsize and just hold on for dear life. I have a couple of friends who fit that bill, who think a recession is a dandy time to try to discover better and cheaper ways to do things. They both happen to be Indian-Americans — one a son of the Himalayas, who came to America on a scholarship and went to work for NASA to try to find a way to Mars; the other a son of New Delhi, who came here and founded the Sun — Sun Microsystems. Both are serial innovators. Both are now shepherding clean-tech startups that have the potential to be disruptive game changers. They don't know to hunker down. They just didn't get the word.

As a result, one has produced a fuel cell that can turn natural gas or natural grass into electricity; the other has a technology that might make coal the cleanest, cheapest energy source by turning its carbon-dioxide emissions into bricks to build your next house.

Though our country may be flagging, it's because of innovators like these that you should never — ever — write us off. Let me introduce Vinod Khosla and K.R. Sridhar.

Khosla, the co-founder of Sun, set out several years ago to fund energy startups. His favorite right now is a company called Calera, which was begun with the Stanford professor Brent Constantz, who was studying how corals use CO2 to produce their calcium carbonate "bones."

If you combine CO2 with seawater, or any kind of briny water, you produce CaCO3, calcium carbonate. That is not only the stuff of corals. It is also the same white, pasty goop that appears on your shower head from hard (calcium-rich) water. At its demonstration plant near Santa Cruz, Calif., Calera has developed a process that takes CO2 emissions from a coal- or gas-fired power plant and sprays seawater into it and naturally converts most of the CO2 into calcium carbonate, which is then spray-dried into cement or shaped into little pellets that can be used as concrete aggregates for building walls or highways — instead of letting the CO2



THOMAS FRIEDMAN

emissions go into the atmosphere.

If this can scale, it would eliminate the need for expensive carbon-sequestration facilities planned for coal-fired power plants — and it might actually make the heretofore specious notion of "clean coal" a possibility.

A source says the huge Peabody Coal Company will announce an investment in Calera next week. "If this works," said Khosla, "coal-fired power would become more than 100 percent clean. Not only would it not emit any CO2, but by producing clean water and cement as a byproduct it would also be taking all of the CO2 that goes into making those products out of the atmosphere."

Sridhar's company is Bloom Energy. Several months ago Sridhar took me into the parking lot behind Google's Silicon Valley headquarters and showed me the inside of one of his Bloom Boxes, the size of a small shipping container. Inside were stacks of solid oxide fuel cells, stored in cylinders, and all kinds of whiz-bang parts that I did not understand.

What I did understand, though, was that Google was already getting part of its clean energy from these fuel cells — and Wal-Mart, eBay, FedEx and Coca-Cola just announced that they are doing the same. Sridhar, Bloom's co-founder and CEO, said his fuel cells, which can run on natural gas or biogas, can generate electricity at 8 to 10 cents a kilowatt hour, with today's subsidies. "We know we can bring the price down further," he said, "so Bloom power will be affordable in every energy-poor country" — Sridhar's real dream.

These technologies still have to prove that they are reliable, durable and scalable. If you Google both, you will find studies saying they are and studies that are skeptical. All I know is this: If we put a simple price on carbon, these new technologies would have a chance to blossom, and thousands more would come out of innovators' garages.

Our politics has gotten so impossible lately, too many Americans have stopped dreaming. Not these two. They just never got the word. As Sridhar says: "We came to America for the American dream — to do good and to make good."

The New York Times