

FROM READERS

Enforce traffic laws in San Francisco

Regarding your article "City moves for better, safer streets" (The Examiner, Aug. 27), I feel that while street design may be important, what really is lacking is enforcement of traffic laws in general in The City.

I've lived here for 10 years and have rarely seen a violation of traffic laws enforced when they occur, such as cars making right turns right in front of pedestrians in crosswalks. If people knew that their dangerous and illegal actions might be punished, they would be less likely to flaunt the law. One would hope that basic decency to avoid injuring pedestrians would be enough to make motorists not attempt dangerous maneuvers on city streets, but we need some other disincentive.

I think more enforcement and punishment of violators is the key to getting the word out that pedestrian safety trumps the need of drivers to rush to get where they're going.

Marc Schoenfeld
THE CITY

Celebrities seeking rehab

Alcoholics Anonymous says sobriety can only be gotten by surrendering your will over to God. They use the word God or Him (male God) seven times in 12 steps. The last step begins, "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps ..."

People such as Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan and others may not want to adopt a religious belief, so they won't benefit from being forced into this kind of rehab. They need to be offered other programs: Rational Recovery, Secular Sobriety and therapy.

Most people who are arrested are automatically put into 12-step programs. A glance into any phone book reveals the conglomerate that forms the "recovery industry," which makes a lot of money for therapists, and city and state governments, along with the resort rehab centers.

Offer people treatment options and we may see more success stories from people who need help.

Tony Haze
THE CITY

Bush's reasoning on Iraq

Once again, President Bush, in an act extreme of folly and desperation, has offered yet another reason to "stay the course" in Iraq. He claims that a hasty exit from our illegal and ill-fated occupation of Iraq will condemn the Iraqis to a similar fate suffered by the Vietnamese and Cambodians after our hasty departure from their respective countries.

Conveniently omitted from Bush's speech is the inconvenient truth that we attacked Vietnam to install a puppet South Vietnamese government to forestall the democratic will of the people who would have elected a Communist government by popular mandate. The killing fields of Cambodia were a direct consequence of our intervention and bore no connection to our withdrawal. The boat people had little choice but to flee after they were abandoned by their protectors.

Contrary to predictions by Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon, dominoes did not fall and Communism in modern-day Vietnam has assumed a distinctive capitalist flavor. However, our legacy of Vietnam lives on, affecting the health and well-being of the people. Our massive bombing using napalm, land mines and the chemical defoliate Agent Orange continues to abort the lives of innocent people. The high cancer rate and abnormal births are a tragic

Anna Carpenter
PERRYSBURG, OHIO

TO ADD YOUR VOICE

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By e-mail:
letters@examiner.com

By mail:
Editorial Page Editor
The Examiner, 450 Mission St.
San Francisco, CA 94105

By fax:
(415) 359-2766

commentary to our ill-fated foreign policy blunder.

Tragically, Iraqis are suffering similar health problems from our indiscriminate use of depleted uranium. The puppet Iraqi government will no doubt beat a hasty retreat at the first sign of a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

Tej Ubero
LOS ALTOS

Won't miss Gonzales

There will be much speculation in the coming days and weeks as to why disgraced Attorney General Alberto Gonzales chose this time to leave the sinking barge that the Bush administration has become.

I say just let it go. Let's just be grateful that he will soon be gone and the fumigation process can soon begin.

For years now, I have thought that John Mitchell, the former attorney general and Richard Nixon's co-conspirator, was the worst attorney general in American history. Alberto Gonzales makes Mitchell look like a Boy Scout.

Vernon S. Burton
SAN LEANDRO

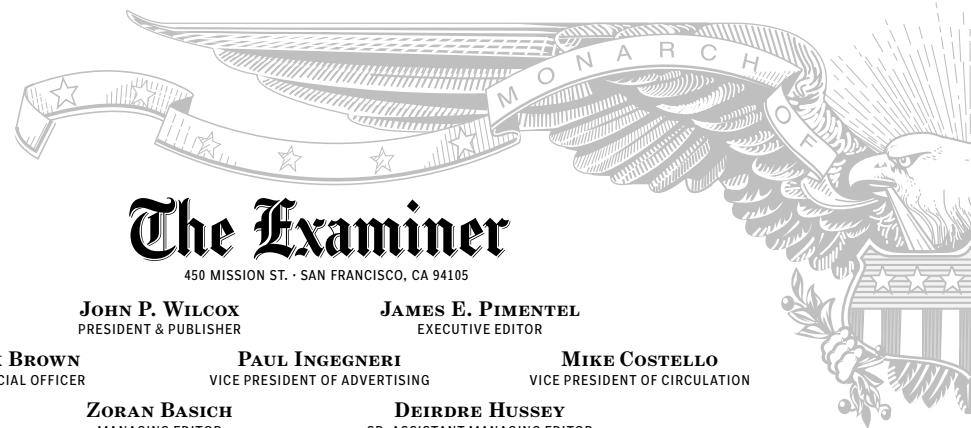
S.F. toilets too pricey

I am here in San Francisco on business and happened to catch the article on the new city toilets (The Examiner, Aug. 23).

I realize that real estate prices are based on location and that a house in my hometown in Ohio would probably fetch three times the amount here, but \$400,000 for toilets? Made in Kentucky? Are they gold-plated?

One would be hard-pressed to find many two-toilet homes in Kentucky for that price! Most homes with four baths in my hometown are only \$400,000, and you get all the rest of the rooms included in the price, too!

Anna Carpenter
PERRYSBURG, OHIO



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450 MISSION ST. - SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

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EDITORIAL

Flaky, frantic finale in Sacramento

If the annual summer budget showdown is the Legislature's most reliable large-scale conflict, the last-minute backlog of bills trying to slip past the appropriations committees in each house provides a suitably catchy encore. Running the appropriations committee gantlet this week are some 450 bills already passed by full floor votes, which could conceivably add \$5 billion or more to next year's just-barely approved \$145.5 billion budget.

Surgery performed by appropriations committees can be drastic, especially during periods of worrisome budget deficits. Bills not killed in committee can have their appropriations sharply reduced, entirely eliminated or otherwise amended to make them less costly before facing the final barrier of the governor's veto power.

The frantic pace of the last-minute vetting raises concern. Rushing to decide on hundreds of complex bills could undoubtedly lead to faulty legislation falling by the wayside. Yet on the other hand, one can see the value of scrutinizing an entire lineup of pending fiscal bills in concert with all the other demands competing for scarce revenue dollars.

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Perhaps if more legislators had big-picture information about rival spending needs when they voted to approve these bills in the first place, less legislation would be sent along for the last-minute appropriations logjam. At any rate, both human and bureaucratic tendency to procrastinate make it unlikely that belated frantic pushes will ever be eliminated from the legislative process.

What the appropriations committees face upon returning from August recess is a mind-boggling array of bills ranging from flaky to invaluable or even potentially harmful to the public interest. Much of the committee workload can seem like wheel-spinning. This week's most significant appropriations matter is Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez's bill requiring most employers to help pay for employee health insurance, an approach that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has already promised to veto because it does not equitably spread responsibilities to

insurance companies and individual policy holders.

At the more questionable end of the spending spectrum are items such as the bill requiring state school officials to devise alternate graduation requirements for proficient students who cannot pass the state high school exit exam. The legislative analyst predicts millions of dollars would be needed to implement this bill. One might think these millions would be better spent to improve California education so all proficient students actually could pass the exit exam.

Another notably eyebrow-raising bill would establish a state fund paying reparations to Hispanics who were illegally deported to Mexico way back in the 1930s, at a cost of tens of millions of dollars according to the legislative analyst. Since the bill would allocate \$200,000 to start a nine-member reparations board without actually putting any money into the payment fund, it is hard to see any valid point to that entire exercise.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Nate Beeler/The Examiner

