

Letters to the editor

Graduation message from President Shirley

To Editor:

Yá'át'ééh! Congratulations! Your hard work and perseverance has paid off. You have applied yourself and succeeded. I am very happy for you and very proud of you. I am sure your parents and your relatives feel the same way about you. Henceforward, for the most part, you will be on your own. You are now in a position to make many of the decisions which will affect your life and the people around you forever.

No doubt many of you have already made up your minds to go to college or a university, or to go into the Armed Forces of the United States, or to go to a technical school, or to work for income. Whatever you have decided to do, I want to wish you continued success in your life.

There are many challenges to contend with on the road ahead. Always remember the teachings of our elders, "There are no impossibilities!" Believe it, live it, and you will continue to be a success.

Continue to apply yourself. Continue to persevere. And continue to pray, and I know you will be successful. You are a very beautiful person. Please, stay that way.

As you have graduated, and as you celebrate your success, please do it safely. Remember, no alcohol, no drugs, and no racing on the roads. Alcohol and drugs have killed many of our people, especially our young. By that, we know it not good for us so please leave it alone. It only means trouble and problems.

Your parents, your loved ones, the first lady of the Navajo Nation Vikki Shirley and I, as president of the Navajo Nation, want you to be safe and go a long way in life. Alcohol and drugs are not cool, and it is not our way of life. It is not our culture.

Again, congratulations and Godspeed to you for many more successes in your life henceforward.

President Dr. Joe Shirley Jr.,
The Navajo Nation

Good job (not!)

To Editor:

I want to say that at least some of the members of Gallup are doing a swell job in keeping prosperity, and tourists, away. You do realize that if tourists really start to like to area, it would probably bring in businesses, and businesses would bring in people who are really knowledgeable about issues and would demand change. Changes would have to be made in the way things were run, including city and county government, as well as in education.

Now, we know that we really don't want outsiders coming in here and telling us how to run things. They would complain about the schools and how they do not make AYP. They might even complain about how at least some of the schools do not enforce dress codes and how sometimes when kids get beaten up, or bullied, the rules are not enforced.

But then maybe they would really like the idea of their child's fight video being posted on YouTube. Outsiders might even complain about all the tagging/graffiti in many of the local business rest rooms. These outsiders might start insisting that something be done about the "gang-bangers" who flaunt themselves all over the place. Worst of all they would scream to high heaven about the drunks and pan-handlers that accost them in the parking lots and then get aggressive, or even stab them, when they don't get a hand out or their car keys. They would then want to do something about the liquor establishment, and that might mean you couldn't get a drink on Sunday afternoon at the restaurant.

I know that there are some who would like to see tourists, and others, bringing in money to the area. I for one am really sorry for them because they just don't understand what that would mean. If there were ever enough jobs for all the people in the area, then prosperity would change the community and the surrounding area so that it just wouldn't be the same anymore. Besides, with all these outsiders, it is likely that there would be a change in the people who run things. We also know that it is important to keep the Navajo and Zuni unemployed because they are a source of cheap labor and if the Navajo and Zuni had good paying jobs, they might stop making Native American art. We just couldn't have that.

I applaud the Gallup Independent for not focusing on any of these issues, or related issues. The newspaper is doing a great job on staying focused on the golf course. If the community can ever sort out management of the golf course, this will be a great little community ... well that is until we can get uranium mining back into the area. But let's not forget, two-headed sheep could be real tourist draw. Of course we would have to keep them at a minimum because we wouldn't want too many tourists as we all know where that could lead.

Keep up the good work, people!

Douglas Pierson
Tohatchi

Quotations of the day

By The Associated Press

"It's unsettling to the faith, that's why it's a scandal."

— Roman Catholic Archbishop John Favalora, who admonished a popular Miami priest known as "Father Oprah" after he severed ties with the church when tabloid photos showed him kissing and hugging the woman he loves.

"These Taliban have mixed up themselves among the refugees. They have shaven off their beards."

— Mardan Police Chief Syed Akhtar Ali Shah after the arrest of 39 suspected Taliban fighters hiding among refugees from a military offensive to rout militants from Pakistan's Swat Valley.

Letters to the Editor policy

GALLUP — The Independent encourages letters to the editor, which are published twice weekly — Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Letters must include writer's name, address and phone number although only the name and community of residence will be published.

Letters may not exceed 500 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. The Independent may choose not to print any letter for any reason.

Anyone may submit a letter, and there is no charge for publication.

Letters may be mailed, delivered in person, faxed or e-mailed to: Editor, The Independent, P.O. Box 1210, Gallup, New Mexico 87305, (505) 722-5750 (fax); editorialgallup@yahoo.com (e-mail).

Independent opinion

Councilors: Do what's right

On June 9, the Gallup City Council will be asked to vote for what is right for Gallup and its citizens. The decision about whether to retain Gerald Herrera as city manager or send him packing is, without doubt, the most important decision that members of the city council have been called upon to make in the past decade.

How members of the council approach this decision will go a long way to determining in the minds of all voters whether they made the right decision when they elected them.

E. Bryan Wall, the newest council member, has made it clear that he believes Herrera is not up to the job and wants him removed so the city can hire a professional. On the other side, Mayor Harry Mendoza has made it clear he is 100 percent in Herrera's corner, whether Herrera is good for Gallup or not.

For Mendoza, it's personal. Herrera's mother worked with Mendoza, and Herrera's wife was one of his biggest supporters in his campaign for mayor. Mendoza, as he has done repeatedly throughout his political life, decided that it was better to pay back a friend and supporter than do what is best for Gallup.

It can't be denied that Herrera is a nice guy, but nice guys don't necessarily make good city managers. Herrera is perfect proof of that. He came into office with no experience, no ability to handle the job, and since then he has become, at best, a mediocre city manager, one who just manages to get by because of a mayor who considers mediocrity the top standard in a city employee. This can be seen by the fact that he allows city employees like Lance Allgood and Bob Weekes to continue running the utility department and the golf course despite the fact that both have not shown anywhere near the ability to do their jobs.

But Allgood, who needs to be demoted to a position he can handle, and Weekes, who needs to be replaced immediately, are not the only personnel issues facing the city. We should strive for employees who will move Gallup forward instead of people who are hanging on, waiting for the day they can retire.

This is only one of Mendoza's flaws voters have had to put up with during this time in power — two years of watching a city government totally incapable of solving Gallup's many problems, whether it be the constant smell from the wastewater treatment plant, waterlines that con-

tinue to break, the need for downtown underpasses and an Allison overpass, or walkovers and other infrastructure.

It's obvious by now to most voters that Mendoza is a megalomaniac, like Kim Jong-Il of North Korea — and his lust for power is destroying Gallup. A look at his past should have given us a clue to what kind of person he would be as mayor. After all, it shouldn't come as a surprise that someone who was involved in the vicious rape of a young Zuni woman would grow up to be a politician who would brutalize the people of Gallup in the same manner a rape victim is brutalized.

By putting Herrera in as city manager, Mendoza has managed to get the control he craves but it's time City Council members do what is necessary to take back control of the city.

We are asking Jay Azua to step up and help take control back and show the people who voted for him that he is not Mendoza's puppet and he really is interested in improving the quality of life not only for the people in his district but for everyone.

We are asking Allan Landovazo to put aside his personal relationship with Herrera — the two grew up together, went to the same schools and socialize to this day — and decide that the general well being of Gallup citizens is more important than protecting one of his close friends.

We are asking Mike Enfield to carry out the promises he made during his campaign to bring about change in Gallup and draw upon his background as general manager of the General Dynamics plant in Fort Defiance. In that position, he had to make decisions daily about personnel and do what was best for his multimillion dollar company. He has to ask himself today: do I keep someone who is unproductive, argumentative and incompetent on the payroll? No, of course not.

Yes, it will be a tough decision but no one promised these four men as our elected officials their jobs would be easy and some of their votes would be unpleasant.

It is time to admit Harry's appointment of Herrera is a bad choice. It's time to correct that mistake and get someone in here who knows how to run a city government.

We would love to see a 4-1 vote on the resolution to remove Herrera. That would assure all the people of Gallup this is a council that puts the general welfare of its citizens before personal feelings. Say goodbye to Gerald Herrera on June 9. Vote for Gallup.



Biography and the law

In introducing his choice to replace Justice David Souter on the U.S. Supreme Court, President Obama touted Judge Sonia Sotomayor's biography. He noted her humble beginnings: she grew up in a housing project in the Bronx; a child of Puerto Rican parents; a father who died when she was nine; a mother who worked six days a week as a nurse so she and her brother could go to Catholic school.

If these humble beginnings mattered, as they relate to Sotomayor's view of the Constitution, Clarence Thomas should have sailed through his confirmation hearings instead of being subjected to "a high-tech lynching," as he famously put it. Clarence Thomas also came from humble beginnings (as did George W. Bush's Hispanic Attorney General Alberto Gonzales), but biography matters only if you're a liberal. If you evolve into a conservative, it is irrelevant, at least to the elites.

President Obama says a main criterion for selecting someone for the court is that the person be empathetic to people and to the consequences of legal decisions.

In a 2002 speech at Berkeley, Calif., Judge Sotomayor said she believed it is appropriate for judges to consider their "experiences as women and people of color" when they make decisions, adding that such things should "affect our decisions."

That statue above the Supreme Court — the one of a woman wearing a blindfold and balancing scales in her hand — is meant to depict the law as blind to one's gender, race and personal circumstances. Obama wants that blindfold removed and the law tailored, like a suit, to fit the individual. This is the classic liberal view of the law, or as Judge Sotomayor has put it, "(the

courts) are where policy is made."

None of this matters, because Democrats have the votes in the Senate to confirm her. Moderate and even some conservative Republicans will cower at the prospect of being labeled racist, sexist and anti-Hispanic. Plus, it is a one-for-one exchange, swapping the liberal Souter for the liberal Sotomayor, so not all Republicans will want to put up a fight. They should, if for no other reason than to train for the next nomination, not to mention standing on principle.

There are not many personal indiscretions that could torpedo this nomination. While tax avoidance sank Tom Daschle's nomination to be Health and Human Services secretary, tax problems didn't stop his successor, Kathleen Sebelius, or Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner. And we seem to have gone beyond the avoidance of nanny taxes that derailed previous nominations for lesser positions. So what should the Republican strategy be?

The strategy should be played out on at least three fronts. The first front should be her rulings, several of which have been reversed by the Supreme Court. These rulings are fair game.

Republicans should expose Judge Sotomayor's liberalism, as revealed in cases like Ricci v. DeStefano in which white male New Haven firefighters, denied promotion after an exam because no African Americans qualified for advancement after taking the test, filed a discrimination suit when the city of New Haven threw out the exam results altogether.



Cal
Thomas

and decided not to issue any promotions. The firefighters' suit was eventually dismissed. Sotomayor, as part of a three-judge panel hearing the case, upheld that dismissal. Even liberal Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen and Sotomayor's colleague, Judge Jose Cabranes, a Clinton appointee, expressed shock and disappointment over her ruling.

The second front should be a recitation of what the Founders had in mind when they wrote the Constitution and the benefits that come from conforming people to that document. Too many of our schools teach too little history, or falsify it. A history lesson would be good for the country. If the Constitution is treated like liberals treat the Bible, it loses its meaning, purpose and power.

The third front should focus on the hypocrisy of the left, including President Obama. There is a gold mine of quotes from liberals, like former DNC Chair Howard Dean, excoriating conservative judicial nominees. Republicans should use the quotes against those who opposed conservative candidates for the Supreme Court. During his brief time in the Senate, Obama voted against John Roberts and Samuel Alito. He acknowledged they were well qualified for the bench, but he opposed their nominations because he thought they might be conservatives.

If Senator Obama could vote that way, why shouldn't Republicans do unto him what he did unto a Republican president and vote against Sotomayor for her liberalism? At a minimum, her statements and record should receive a thorough going over.

Independent

LPS 016-605 ISSN 1099-8052

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1964-2007

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Published daily except Sundays and New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas by the Gallup Independent Co. at 500 N. 9th St., Gallup NM 87301. World Wide Web: <http://www.gallupindependent.com/> -gallupind/ E-mail: gallupind@cia-p.com. Subscription rate: Home delivery by carrier or motor route \$11.50 per month. Single copy 50c weekdays and \$1.00 weekends. By mail \$204.00 a year; \$102.00 for six months; \$17.00 a month 2-month minimum. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE INDEPENDENT, P.O. Box 1210, Gallup, NM 87305-1210.

This newspaper printed in part on recycled paper and is recyclable

The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

-Isaiah 35:1