

Opinion

2A SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2018

THE GREENVILLE SUN

EDITOR: MICHAEL S. RENEAU

EDITORIAL

Learn The Issues, Learn The Candidates, Then Go Vote

It becomes trite to say that every election is the most important one any particular community faces. Each is different, and each election cycle brings its own challenges and opportunities.

But the election Greene Countians now have before them is not exactly unimportant, either. For the next four years, everything from the future of our community's education system, to the management of our fiscal affairs, to the ways we prepare the up-and-coming generation for life in the working world is largely predicated upon the decisions we voters make at the ballot box in the next few weeks.

Numbers for early voting in the local primaries — which began Wednesday — are encouraging thus far. More than 300 people had cast ballots each day on Wednesday and Thursday, with another 300-plus voting Friday. As of press time Friday night, more than 1,100 had cast early or absentee ballots.

In the early voting period for 2014 for local Republican and Democratic primaries, more than 4,600 voters cast ballots early. We hope we can maintain a similar pace.

Representative government doesn't work if a community's electorate isn't engaged. And those who don't exercise their right to vote have no right to complain about the actions of government later on.

But the best kind of civic engagement requires more than just voting. It requires knowledge and consideration of both the issues and the candidates.

That's why last week we published a first for us — an all-inclusive election guide, meant to help readers get to know the men and women asking for their votes in the local primaries. It was a resource you could turn to to get information on all the local races on the ballot on May 1. Reader feedback has been nothing but positive thus far.

If you didn't see that edition, you can still purchase a copy at our office, here at 121 W. Summer St. We reached out to every candidate on the ballot for the May 1 primaries. We asked each to respond in writing to a series of questions, specific to the offices they seek. Nearly all did.

We're happy to provide this resource to the community; that's our job. And we hope voters take advantage of it.

Later this year, all Tennessee voters will consider who will be our next governor and who will replace Bob Corker in the U.S. Senate. While you may hear plenty of soundbites and rhetoric in their TV ads, we're happy to be publishing a series of issues-based responses from the major candidates for both those offices.

Beginning on page 5A of today's paper, you'll see how each of those candidates responded to questions regarding the opioid crisis and public safety in Tennessee. Last month, we ran their responses to a question about infrastructure. We will have several more in coming weeks:

- May 12: rural development and distressed counties
- June 16: health care and well-being
- July 7: education

These are opportunities to obtain in-depth responses and consider seriously who deserves your vote in November. We're grateful to the Tennessee Press Association — the trade group of newspapers around the state — for facilitating this series.

At the local, state and national levels, it takes more than just voting to do the job asked of all of us by our founding fathers. Don't just vote. Be informed first, then vote.

BIBLE VERSE

Read Philippians 4:1-9

Bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers ... Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep Your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 4:6-7 (CEB)

Prayer:

Dear God of peace, we thank You for creating a beautiful world for us to enjoy. Help us to appreciate the people of this world and to do our part to bring them Your peace. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Thought For The Day

Instead of dwelling on my anger, I will pray.

SEND US YOUR OPINION

The Greenville Sun welcomes letters to the editor submitted for publication. Letters should be on topics of public interest, addressed to the editor.

- Submissions must be original works, not chain letters or reproductions of other published material.
- Letters should be no more than 500 words. Longer submissions may be considered for guest opinion columns, at the editor's discretion.
- The Greenville Sun reserves the right to edit all letters for clarity, style and length. The editor reserves the

right to reject submissions.

- Submissions must include writer's full name, full address and a contact telephone number. The writer's name, street name and municipality/community will appear with the published letter. Phone numbers will not be published.
- Send submissions to: Letters to the Editor, The Greenville Sun, P.O. Box 1630, Greenville, TN 37744; email them to letterstotheeditor@greenville.sun.com; or drop them by our office at 121 W. Summer St., Greenville, TN 37743.



Are Schools Teaching Students To Devalue Free Speech?

BY LATA NOTT

It seems like every few months we're treated to the results of a new survey that has something dismaying to report about how young people approach free speech.

Last fall, the Brookings Institute reported that college students have a number of misconceptions about how the First Amendment works — a significant percentage believes that it doesn't protect hate speech, and that it requires that an offensive speaker at a public university be matched with another speaker with an opposing view.

Last month, a survey conducted by Gallup and the Knight Foundation found that 37 percent of college students think that shouting down an offensive campus speaker is acceptable; even more troubling, another 10 percent said that violence is also an acceptable tactic for silencing an offensive speaker.

Findings like these always lead to a lot of hand-wringing about the intolerance of today's youth, followed by a backlash of editorials pointing out that campus protests — especially at elite colleges — are over-covered by the news media, usually topped off by internet commentators decrying liberal snowflakes and at least one columnist reminiscing about the '60s at Berkeley. I enjoy that as much as the next person, but let's skip it for today. Why do college students have a shaky understanding of the First Amendment and an aversion to opposing or controversial views?

The problem starts in high school. I'm not just referring to the lack of mandatory civic education in public schools. Even in schools where students do learn about the First Amendment, many school administrators don't particularly want their students exercising their freedom of speech once they've learned about it.

Take the school walkouts that took place across the nation on March 14 to protest gun violence. About a week before that, my colleague Gene Policinski and I wrote a set of guidelines for students, teachers and school administrators trying to figure out how to approach the event.

We advised students to weigh their options carefully, as their First Amendment rights would probably not protect them if their school decided to discipline them for taking part in the walkout. (Public schools can

punish students for speech that "substantially disrupts" the learning environment, and a walkout could very well do just that.) But we also advised school administrators to think twice before defaulting to disciplinary action — "Given that we live in an age where there is much concern that young people don't understand the Constitution or support free speech, punishing them for exercising it, even if ... school administrators [have] that discretion, seems counterproductive."

That's why it saddened me to read that a high school in Arkansas decided to punish the three students who participated in the walkout by giving them a choice between a two-day suspension and corporal punishment. (Fun fact: corporal punishment is still legal in 22 states.) All of the students chose corporal punishment; one of them wrote a fair-minded and eloquent account of the experience for the Daily Beast:

"The punishment was not dealt with malice or cruelty, in fact, I have the utmost respect for all the adults involved. They were merely doing their job as the school board and school policy dictated ... I believe that corporal punishment has no place in schools, even if it wasn't painful to me. The idea that violence should be used against someone who was protesting violence as a means to discipline them is appalling."

Even a two-day suspension seems disproportionate to the offense of leaving your classroom for 17 minutes.

It was also disheartening for me to talk to the two high school journalists who published a meticulously-researched story about a fired teacher — and ended up having their story censored by the administration and their newspaper privileges revoked. As one of the journalists, Max Gordon, said, "[T]he whole point of a student newspaper is to teach the students. We want to grow and learn and experience these things, but if the administration tries to shut down any form of outside-the-box thinking ... it really hampers the growth by journalists."

And when educators emphasize obedience and conformity over free expression, they need to think about what lessons they're actually conveying.

Nott is executive director of the First Amendment Center at the Newseum Institute in Washington, D.C. Follow her at <https://twitter.com/LataNott>.

IN HISTORY

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Today is Saturday, April 14, the 104th day of 2018. There are 261 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:
On April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was shot and mortally wounded by John Wilkes Booth during a performance of "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theater in Washington.

On this date:
In 1775, the first American society for the abolition of slavery was formed in Philadelphia.

In 1828, the first edition of Noah Webster's "American Dictionary of the English Language" was published.

In 1912, the British liner RMS Titanic collided with an iceberg in the North Atlantic at 11:40 p.m. ship's time and began sinking. (The ship went under two hours and 40 minutes later with the loss of 1,514 lives.)

In 1935, the "Black Sunday" dust storm descended upon the central Plains, turning a sunny afternoon into

total darkness.

In 1939, the John Steinbeck novel "The Grapes of Wrath" was first published by Viking Press.

In 1949, the "Wilhelmstrasse Trial" in Nuremberg ended with 19 former Nazi Foreign Office officials sentenced by an American tribunal to prison terms ranging from four to 25 years.

In 1956, Ampex Corp. demonstrated the first practical videotape recorder at the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters Convention in Chicago.

In 1968, the gay-themed play "The Boys in the Band," by Mart Crowley, opened in New York.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon nominated Harry Blackmun to the U.S. Supreme Court. (The choice of Blackmun, who was unanimously confirmed by the Senate a month later, followed the failed nominations of Clement Haynsworth and G. Harrold Carswell.)

In 1981, the first test flight of America's first operational space shuttle, the Columbia, ended successfully with a landing at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

BILLY GRAHAM

From the writings of the Rev. Billy Graham.
Q: I've tried to get interested in church, because some friends say it'll be good for me, but frankly I find it kind of dull. Right now, I don't see any reason to keep going. — Z.W.

A: Have you ever asked your friends why they think it would be good for you to go to church? I don't know how they'd answer, of course — but I suspect they sense there is something about your life that could be helped by what church has to offer.

What is this "something"? I suspect they sense there is an empty place in your life — a place that only God can fill. You see, God made us so we could have a personal relationship with Him, and could experience His help and His presence with us every day. But when we ignore Him or shut Him out of our lives, we have an empty

place in our souls — an empty place only He can fill.

Perhaps you aren't even aware this empty place exists in your heart, although all your life you've been searching for a way to fill it. But only God can fill it — and He will as you turn to Him, because He loves you and wants you to know Him. And you can know Him, because He came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ to erase the barrier between us — a barrier caused by our sin. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

By a simple prayer of faith tell God you know you need Him, and then ask Jesus to come into your life. Then ask Him to guide you to a church where you can learn more about Christ and grow stronger in your faith.

The Greenville Sun

Award-Winning Newspaper UT-TPA Press Awards

Gregg K. Jones Publisher
Artie Wehenkel Advertising Director
Brian Cutshall Online Director
Dale Long Circulation & Printing Director

Michael S. Renau Editor
Sam Bundy Sports Editor

Edith O'Keefe Susong Publisher
1916-1974
John M. Jones Publisher 1974-2016

USPS 228700
Published Daily Except Sunday
121 W. Summer St.
Greenville, TN 37743

Combination of three Greenville newspapers: Democrat (established 1879); Combined with Searchlight (established 1905), May 1920; Combined with Sun (established 1895), October 1920.
All material in this newspaper is copyrighted by Greenville Publishing Company and, with the exception of the Associated Press, can only be reused with the express written permission of the newspaper's management.

Regular Business Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday
Telephone: (423) 638-4181
Fax: (423) 638-3645; Advertising Fax: (423) 638-7348
E-mail: news@greenvillesun.com
Periodicals postage paid at Greenville, Tennessee 37744.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Greenville Sun, P.O. Box 1630, Greenville, TN 37744.
CORRESPONDENTS: The Sun makes every effort to provide the utmost in local news coverage for our readers, and would be grateful for items mailed, telephoned or e-mailed to the office by any interested party regarding any region within Greene County or our readership area.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Carrier Delivery 52 weeks: \$118.00 26 weeks: \$62.00 13 weeks: \$32.00 E2Pay 4 Weeks: \$10.25
Mail Delivery in Greene County 1 year: \$132.00 6 months: \$66.00 3 months: \$33.00 1 month: \$11.00
Mail Delivery elsewhere in U.S. 1 year: \$213.00 6 months: \$107.00 3 months: \$53.00 1 month: \$18.00