

# Opinions & Letters to the Editor

## The Publisher's Notebook

Charles A. Myrick  
Publisher / General Manager



## We are all better with transparency

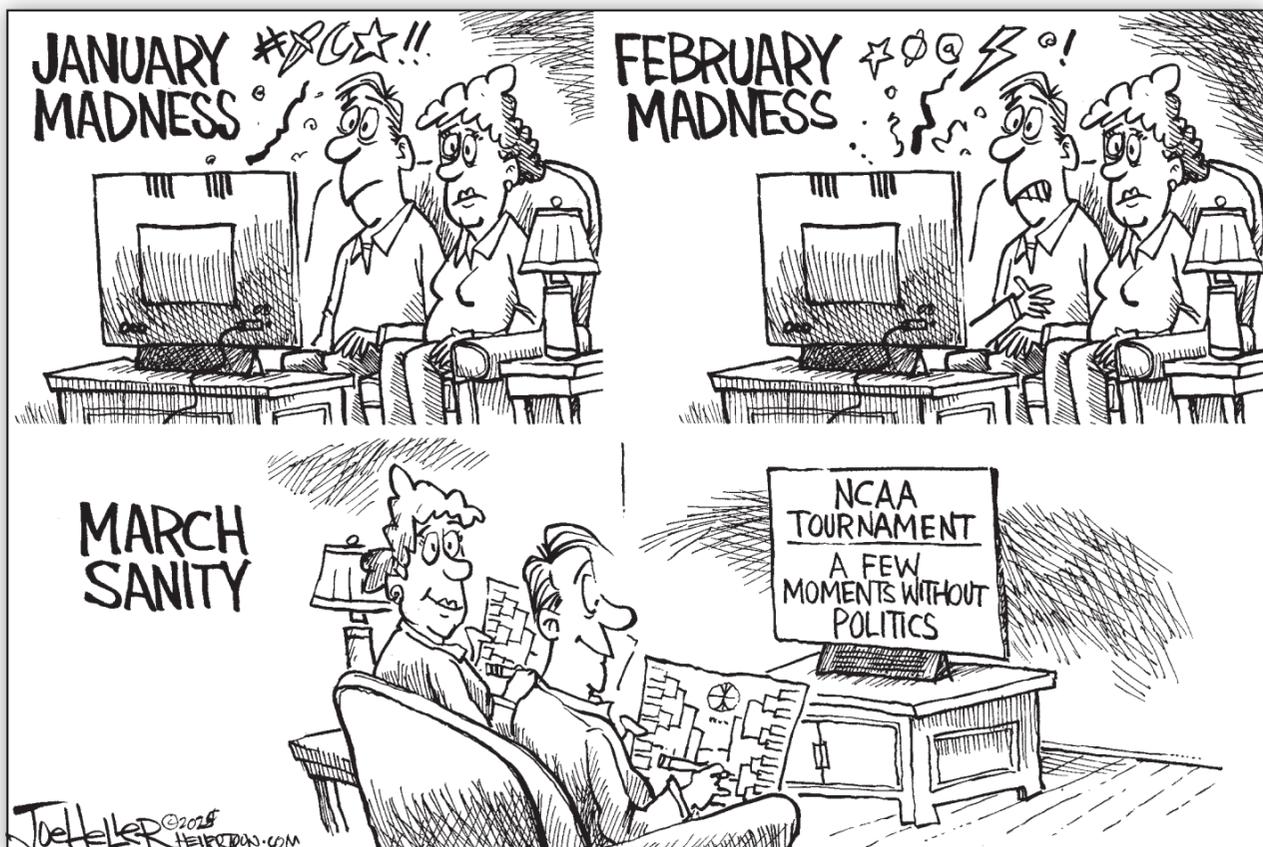
It's Sunshine Week. That probably means nothing more than a hill of beans to you. Or, even a bean. What is a "hill of beans" exactly?

Sunshine Week is a week set aside where we celebrate open records laws across our nation that help journalists keep transparency in our government alive and well. Without the many open records laws on the books, our beloved country would probably look and behave a whole lot differently than we're used to.

The actions of the current presidential administration, like him or not, speak to the need for transparency and open records, as do the actions of a Kentucky governor who overreached with laws on Kentuckians in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for open records is not a political one, nor should it be made out to be one. A democracy, or democratic Republic as we are, only works when we are honest and open. That's what open records do for us. That's why we celebrate Sunshine Week.

The website, sunshineweek.org, a useful website in the pursuit of transparency, shares "Sunshine Week occurs each year in mid-March, coinciding with James Madison's birthday, March 16 (1751). Madison was a driving force behind the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and presented the first version of the Bill of Rights to Congress. He also was the fourth president of the United States." The alarm bells started ringing following the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States, when it was discovered the federal government, in an effort to protect national security, was suddenly keeping more and more information out of the hands of legitimate journalists. The site goes on to share, For years, during Sunshine Week, government officials have issued proclamations citing the importance of the public's right to know, cartoonists have offered editorial cartoons depicting government transparency while newsrooms across the country continually support the mission by publishing columns informing the public about the legacy of freedom of information."

In Kentucky, the Open Records Act of 1976 helps journalists across the Commonwealth do their job. "In 1976, the



General Assembly enacted the Open Records Act, KRS 61.870 to KRS 61.884, which establishes a right of access to public records. The General Assembly recognized that free and open examination of public records is in the public interest. All public records, whether they are stored in a computer or on paper, must be open for inspection unless the records are exempted by one or more of the fourteen exemptions found in the Act. You may inspect any nonexempt public record regardless of your identity, and you may seek enforcement of the Act if you are denied this right," per the state-run website, transparency.ky.gov. Before the Open Records Act took hold in 1976, the Open Meetings Act was enacted in 1974. "The General Assembly recognized that the formation of public policy is public business, and should not be conducted in secret. The Act requires that all meetings of a quorum of the members of a public agency where public business is discussed or action is taken must be public meetings. Public meetings must be open to the public at all times, unless the subject of the meeting falls within one or more of the thirteen exceptions found in

the statute. You may attend any public meeting, and you cannot be required to identify yourself in order to attend."

Each year, Kentucky newspapers, their association, Kentucky Press Association, and their attorneys fight for weeks against legislation brought each year that in some way or another would limit the power of the press; this is usually done through eliminating or limiting the need for publication of public notices. Public notices are vital, especially with local government, in keeping the actions of local government clear to the voting public. This year, Kentucky newspapers and the public won a major victory with the death of House Bill 368 dying in Senate committee and never making it to the floor for a vote. Knox County's State Representative Tom O'Dell Smith and our Senator, Senate President Robert Stivers, played important roles in making sure the bill didn't see the light of day. Thank you to both men for standing for transparency in government and for supporting Kentucky newspapers. With that victory to celebrate, join with us in recognizing Sunshine Week across our great nation.!

## Letters to the Editor & Guest Editorials

### Thanks to our legislators, we all enjoy more 'sunshine' this week

I want to publicly congratulate and recognize the legislators from Knox County. Both Senator Robert Stivers and Representative Tom O'dell Smith stood strongly in favor of open, transparent and accountable government recently.

Thanks to the work they did, city, county and state governments and government agencies will keep putting public notices in local newspapers, newspaper websites, and on the FREE statewide website with 24/7/365 access, KYpublicNotice.com. Without leaders like them, others in the state legislature would have allowed important notices that impact all of us to be only on government websites. Keeping the actions our government officials - who work for us - printed in black and white, open to the widest public viewing possible, and published by a trusted third party like local media builds trust. It also protects your tax dollars, and is the right thing to do. Thanks to these principled lawmakers, we'll all enjoy a little more "sunshine" as we celebrate national sunshine week.

Jay Nolan  
CEO, Nolan Group Media  
Past President,  
Kentucky Press Association



## There must be a reason cows have horns and horses don't

I heard a story the other day about the city slicker who visited a farm for the very first time. He was fascinated by all he saw and had lots of questions for the farmer.

"Why doesn't that cow over there have horns," he asked.

"Well, some breeds of cattle don't grow horns," the farmer explained. "Others do, and we cut them off so they're not a danger to other cattle or to people. Sometimes, when they're small calves, we put dehorning paste on them, and they dissolve. But the reason that particular cow doesn't have horns is be-

cause it's a horse."

The truth is, if we're unfamiliar with rural living, there are lots of things we don't know or understand. By the same token, if we're unfamiliar with city living, there are lots of things we don't know or understand. And, with human nature being what it is, pride can well up in us simply because we know something the other person doesn't.

That's not just a city vs. country thing. Pride can well up in us because we have something our neighbor doesn't, no matter where we live.

Oh, but we must remember God hates pride.



### AIN'T IT THE TRUTH

Roger Alford  
COLUMNIST

He warns us: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"

(Proverbs 16:18).

I was driving to church the other day in a large city and was struck by the ginormous homes along the way. With so many professional sports teams, the city has a great number of highly paid athletes who can afford multi-million-dollar homes. The city also has highly paid businessmen working for major Fortune 500 companies who can afford multi-million-dollar homes. Yet, I've found those people aren't puffed up with pride.

In all honesty, the most prideful attitudes I've encountered have been in less well-to-do communi-

ties where people have become puffed up because their three-bedroom homes are a little bigger than the neighbor's down the road, because their pickup truck sits higher than the neighbor's down the road, because their car is a little newer, or because their lawn is a little greener, or because their cows are a little fatter.

Pride gives us a feeling of superiority. It convinces us that we're better than others, and even that we have no need for the Lord because we can handle things ourselves.

What we need to keep in mind always is this: "God

opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Knowing the difference between a cow and a horse doesn't make us better than someone else. It just shows we grew up on a farm. Knowing how to maneuver in a big city subway system doesn't make us better than someone else. It just shows we grew up in the city.

Let's lose the prideful attitudes that cause us to lift ourselves up, and let's lift up Jesus, the only One who is worthy.

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