

IN OUR VIEW

Gallrein needs to debate

TDI EDITORIAL BOARD

The hotly contested race for the GOP nomination in Kentucky's 4th Congressional District has lasted this long without a debate.

Challenger Ed Gallrein has declined five debate invitations. Thomas Massie has asked for debates. He says he's willing to have any moderator to conduct a debate, including President Trump.

The 4th District runs from Greenup County to Oldham County along the Ohio River. Voter-rich northern Kentucky is a Republican stronghold. So are the rural parts along the AA Highway.

Massie has been in Congress since 2013. He's never lost an election. Gallrein, a farmer, businessman, and former Navy Seal, has competed in only one election for State Senate, which he lost.

Massie turned up for a debate at the Kenton County Library over the weekend but Gallrein didn't appear and declined an invitation to appear. The debate was conducted by the local young Republicans. An empty seat was beside Massie's seat with Gallrein's name. Massie made a point of shaking the invisible Gallrein's hand.

Readers are aware the television airways are saturated with political ads this time of year. Gallrein has drummed up his experience as a Navy Seal, his combat experience, and his love of country. Massie points out he voted with Trump 90% of the time.

So why won't he debate Massie? Gallrein was recruited into the race by President Trump. It's no secret Trump and Massie have had a troubled relationship. Massie was one of the members who led the effort to open the controversial Epstein files. President Trump made a trip to Kentucky to rally support for Gallrein. Presidents don't often leave Washington to campaign for a House candidate.

Massie has a high single-digit lead, according to two different polls. He knows his district and its people well. Massie is a deficit hawk. He frequently votes against bills he views as wasteful spending. Every dollar going out of Washington has a constituency — even research on snail darters and countless other things you've never heard of have a constituency.

People in the 4th Congressional District deserve a debate. For some reason, Gallrein has avoided all of them. If he expects to win by running television ads with a multi-million-dollar ad budget, that's not a winning formula. He's going to have to face undecided voters.

Democrats have a two-person primary. Melissa Strange and Jesse Brewer are the candidates. The non-partisan Cook Political Report list the district as solid Republican. The general election is 195 days away. That's an eternity in politics.

IN YOUR VIEW

Joy in Central Park

Last week while at Central Park I saw an elderly couple walking hand in hand by the pond. The lines on their faces were like stories of a book — each telling a different story. But those silver-haired women in modest dresses have been replaced with perfectly coiffed hair wearing designer labels.

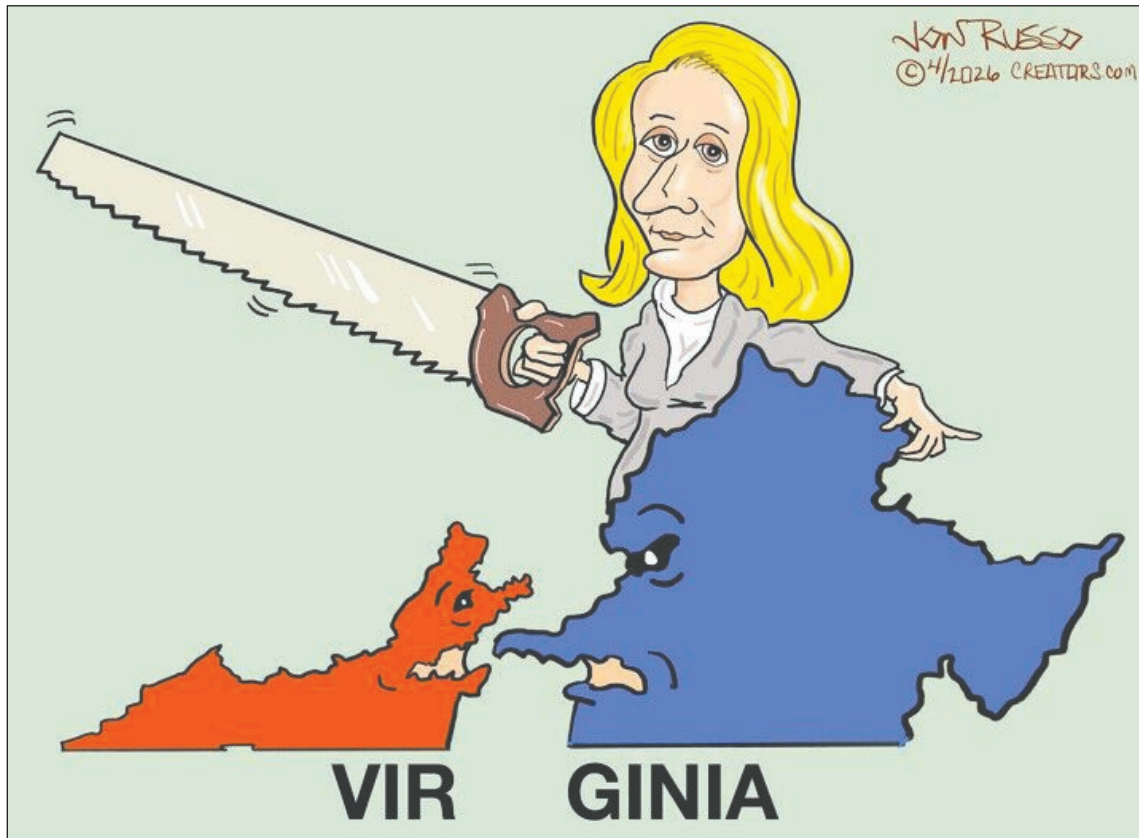
Today, women seem to hold themselves to a ridiculously unrealistic standard. If comparison is the thief of joy, then perfection is its lying accomplice. Some women scramble through life desperately in search of that "perfect" life, "perfect" appearance, "perfect" home, "perfect" spouse or anything to add to their social status. What a tiresome and empty task. It is also an unattainable one.

We are so fortunate to have Central Park in Ashland. Taking my late wheelchair-bound husband around Central Park to enjoy its beauty made for an ordinary day.

I thanked God for the mundane and savored the simplicity of the day. I find that the most extraordinary things in our life are not really things at all, but are hidden away in the most ordinary days. My spiritual adviser once told me, "Acquire joy, not happiness. Happiness is temporary whereas joy is eternal and can only be found in Christ."

In my view, I miss those days when we would stroll through the park and "I remembered God and rejoiced!" (Ps 76:3)

Kathy Chamis Ashland



As governor's race begins, Senate race has new signals

Kentucky's unusual political calendar, in which we elect governors in the odd-numbered year before presidential races, has occasionally interfered with even-year races for U.S. senator. That has hurt Democrats; factional splits led to Sen. Earle Clements' defeat in 1956 and Wilson Wyatt's loss in 1962, both to Thruston Morton, and Katherine Peden lost in 1968 to Marlow Cook, whose narrow loss to Louie Nunn in the 1967 primary for governor set him up for the Senate when Morton suddenly retired.

This year's Senate race might be more indicator than influencer of the 2027 governor's race — which began Monday with Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman's announcement that she is seeking the Democratic nomination.

Writing about the Senate race two weeks ago, I said 2020 Democratic nominee Amy McGrath would be the party's only viable choice for the general election unless fellow moderate Dale Romans "miraculously jump-starts his campaign."

Well, he's trying. After suggesting that he wouldn't run TV ads until May, Romans is on the air and McGrath is not (as of Tuesday morning). Tellingly, he's targeting her on social media with a video showing her saying she agrees with him on debate questions he answered first.

At this point, Romans' emergence makes it more likely that the Democratic nominee for senator will be Charles Booker, who led McGrath in the latest poll and was far, far ahead of Romans.

Booker is too liberal to be elected senator, but his close race with McGrath in 2020, his nomination to face Sen. Rand Paul in 2022, and his work for Gov. Andy Beshear have made him the favorite of liberals who generate most of the energy

among Kentucky Democrats. The conservative wing of the party is vanishing; in local races around the state this spring, there are very few countywide Democratic primaries.

All that is not encouraging news for Rocky Adkins, who ran 6 percentage points behind Beshear in the 2019 Democratic primary for governor, is his senior adviser, and travels with him more frequently than does Coleman, whom Beshear made his running mate in 2019 and 2023.

Adkins is expected to enter the race this summer, in ample time for the Aug. 1 Fancy Farm Picnic. He will be the more conservative candidate, exemplified by his vote in the state House for an almost-total abortion ban, triggered by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2022. He may shift that position in light of the decision and the legislature's rejection of exceptions to the ban, but Coleman seems guaranteed to get most voters for whom abortion is a voting issue; she endorsed abortion rights when she teamed up with Beshear, after largely opposing them when she ran for state representative in 2014.

As the younger and more liberal candidate, and the woman in the race, Coleman is likely to benefit from the energy and organization of Booker's campaign. But she also has support in the party's traditional center of energy, organized labor. A former teacher, she is aligned with the Kentucky Education Association, and announced Monday the support of Louisville-based Teamsters Local 89, which has 20,000 members.

That endorsement turned heads, since Adkins has strong labor ties, but he has plenty of other backers, and many Dem-

ocratic moderates to whom he can appeal. But he will have to create excitement, beginning with generating interest in even voting in the primary. That's something Kentucky Democrats increasingly have less opportunity and propensity to do.

In the Senate race, Romans continued his string of good debate performances Monday night on KET. As Booker kept pushing "Medicare for all," Romans interrupted moderator Renee Shaw to say, "We also need a senator who should know reality and is not going to say whatever sounds good in a public forum to get votes." It was the sharpest jibe of the race.

But it remains to be seen whether Romans can sustain his media campaign, and what TV messages McGrath will use. Romans had only 2 percent in a March 29-31 poll while Booker had 36% and McGrath 18%, with 38% undecided. There are many votes yet to be had, but Romans may have started too late. At this point Booker is still the favorite.

In the Republican primary, a committee with ties to 6th District Rep. Andy Barr (who polled 28%) is running ads attacking former state attorney general Daniel Cameron (21%), who is short of money and not on TV — but is looking to some Republicans like a more palatable alternative to Barr and businessman Nate Morris (15%), whose forces have been savaging each other.

Cameron started TV Tuesday, on a strongly religious theme. He said on KET (where Barr and Morris didn't show up) that he has the most Kentucky contributors, so he has grass-roots strength — and a chance. Might both our Senate nominees be African Americans?

AL CROSS has covered Kentucky politics for more than 50 years. His column originates in the Northern Kentucky Tribune, which offers it to other publications with appropriate credit.

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