

Opinion

A community letter to President Obama

By the people of Centre County

Over the last two months, *Voices* asked readers to develop a "wish list" for President Obama's early days in office. We've compiled the list here, removed the redundancies and named the contributors below.

President Obama, many of us heard your inspiring inaugural address and from it take confidence that you will act soon on many of these items. But we commend your attention to our list because some things we've not heard from you. So, from Central Pennsylvania to you President Obama, here's what *Voices* readers hope you'll accomplish. We know we can expect a phone call or e-mail from you asking for some help along the way, and we stand willing to help you move our land to live up to the promise of the Founders and those who

"Make student loans affordable, accessible and speedy. Make grants available."

have carried on their heritage until now.

End the war on Iraq and bring my brothers and sisters home.

Disband the Royal Army of the United States.

Close Guantanamo Bay (GITMO) detention camp ASAP.

Instead of sending troops to Afghanistan (as you keep promising) redirect that money into social services here at home.

End the arms race—stop selling weaponry to the rest of the world so they can annihilate each other.

Pass the Employee Free Choice Act.

Restore the Bill of Rights and sign on to the International Conventions.

Get us out of this recession. Fix this economy!

Follow through on tax cuts for middle and lower classes and tax increases for wealthy.

Restore American manufacturing.

Build strong technical schools and apprenticeship programs to support industry.

Take a long look at the regulations that are choking small businesses.

Rebuild the economy so that we create more wealth at home than we spend abroad.

Stop privatizing and make the government a good thing again by hiring workers at a good wage to provide critical services. That way elected officials once again become accountable for the work.

Prosecute everyone from the top to the bottom who benefitted illegally from the Bush/Cheney administration.

Dramatically reduce prison populations.

Get back to real regulations for the airline industry so planes are safe, and put teeth back into the EPA and OSHA.

Force the Department of Defense to cut costs and don't bow to threats that it'll hurt the troops when the department wastes so much money.

Tell your new Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that his renewed push for development and testing of new nuclear weapons in a Reliable Replacement Warhead program will not be pursued in your administration.

Regulate credit card companies.

Behave like the wise King Asoka of India who saw the horrors of war and transformed all of his arsenal into works of peace.

Regulate cell phone companies.

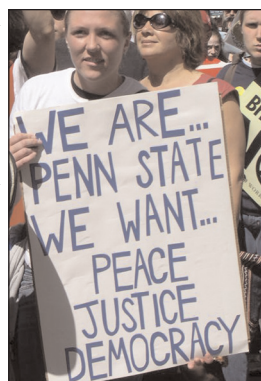
Bring back the fairness doctrine in media
Make college education affordable, lower college tuitions.

Make student loans affordable, accessible and speedy.
Make grants available.

Keep Social Security intact.

End the era of consumerism for which we have been waging these wretched oil and other wars

Develop



"Follow through on tax cuts for middle and lower classes and tax increases for wealthy."

alternative fuels.

We support you in building a clean energy future.

Develop green jobs.

Institute single payer healthcare.

Comprehensive sex education.

Implement alternative energy.

Develop and maintain strict, well-regulated environmental standards.

Support small scale farmers and sustainable agriculture.

Reinforce Roe v. Wade and repeal the international gag order.

Put enough money into social programs that people can get a leg up instead of getting stuck.

Support equal pay and non-discrimination laws.

Legal civil unions for all; regard marriage as a religious institution only.

Add a sexual orientation protection clause in EEOC.

Stop the bailouts.

Instead of bullying foreign nations, especially in developing areas, into cooperating with U.S. imperial interests, engage in

"Implement alternative energy and develop green jobs."

meaningful negotiations and trade agreements that justly compensate the home country.

I want to see a leader who says he will reach across the aisle actually reach across the aisle.

You said you would listen to those who disagree with you and that you would think outside the box. Please don't back down on this once the pressure from Washington comes along.

Stay connected with the people and keep inspiring us with your words.

Adopt your new puppy from the pound.

Fire KBR and all contractors in Iraq and elsewhere who serve our military. Make those federal jobs once again and hire people directly.

Raise the bar higher than it has ever been for transparency and ethical conduct in government.

Join the wise Alice Walker and learn from the Dalai Lama.

Compost and grow squash and other vegetables at the White House so your food does not travel thousands of miles from farm to plate.



Signed,

Madhu Suri Prakash

Heather Simmons

Natalie Ferrigno

David Reinbold

Art Goldschmidt

Ivana Lee

Delia Guzman

Suzan Erem

Mary Vollero

Zac Tayler

Laura Newcomer

Justin Eisinger

Tamara Conrad

Ann Marie Toccket

Bill Sharp

Betsy Green

Judy Heald

Bill Heald

Peter Shaw

Phyllis Mansfield

Kristine Allen

Readers: Do you have other ideas? Take issue with any of these ideas? Write us a 250-word letter and send it to oped@voicesweb.org. We'll get it into the next issue, space permitting!

SC school board should lead, not follow

by Donna Queeney

If you believe that State College Area schools are a community asset worth supporting and that community service is a responsibility, it may be time for you to step up to the plate and run for school board. It's your opportunity to have a voice in the future of our schools and of our young people.

Challenges Facing State College Schools

State College is a statewide and nationally recognized leader in educational excellence. The challenge to maintain and enhance this position has never been greater, with major issues including the following: Current budget constraints are especially high, with difficult financial decisions ahead. Unlike many districts across the state and nation, State College Area School District certainly is not in financial crisis, but the limitations loom large.

Many of our district facilities are in serious need of renovation or replacement.

Increasing numbers of students are coming to school with an ever-broadening range of behavioral, emotional, and other needs that require our schools' attention.



Changing technology is a continuing and expensive necessity.

Individually, board members have no authority beyond that of any community member. However, board membership is an

opportunity to have a role in preparing young people to be productive members of society and to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Characteristics of Strong School Board Candidates

State College is a community that expects and even demands quality education. What characteristics define outstanding school board candidates who can respond to those expectations?

A commitment to supporting excellent education is key. While balancing educational needs with economic reality is essential, the discussion should always begin with what's important for our students' learning.

Because school board members must grapple with a wide range of issues, a viable

candidate must be interested in all aspects of the district, rather than in only one or two issues.

Candidates who truly care about young people will be motivated to support the district's goal of providing each student, regardless of needs or ability, with the best education possible. For some students the education we provide can make the difference between a meaningful life and mere existence.

While it's important to listen to all constituencies, the board is elected to lead, not to follow. Thus candidates should be prepared to make the right decisions, even if they are not always the popular decisions.

A commitment to put the district's welfare and priorities ahead of personal interests is essential. Board members are elected to represent the entire community, not simply a segment thereof.

Successful candidates should consistently demonstrate positive interactive and communication skills. Board members are expected to model courteous and respectful behavior toward school personnel, community members, students, and colleagues.

Candidates should demonstrate their willingness and ability to gather information on issues through careful listening, reading,

...A viable candidate must be interested in all aspects of the district, rather than in only one or two issues.

and discussion, and to process that information effectively. These skills will be apparent through candidates' comments on the issues, and will enable them, once elected, to make informed decisions.

Candidates must recognize that the role of the board is to make good decisions, establish appropriate policies, and hire competent people to carry them out. Respect for the district structure is key. Because only the superintendent works for the board, any suggestions or comments for staff members are channeled through the superintendent.

Should You Run for School Board?
School board membership need not—in

see Lead, pg. 26

Step forward for school board election

by Brenda Walsh

Leading up to the presidential inauguration, President Obama seemed to be speaking to each of us in the State College Area School District when he said, "What is required is a new declaration of independence, not just in our nation but in our own lives, from ideology and small thinking, prejudice and bigotry." Alluding to Lincoln's first inaugural address, he called for "an appeal not to our easy instincts but to our better angels."

We are in search of "our better angels" to step forward as candidates for the SCASD Board of School Directors. As in 2007, five school board position terms are up for election. It may not seem possible but the primary election is right around the corner!

Important dates to remember—Pennsylvania elections 2009

—First day to circulate and file nomination petitions Feb. 17

—Last day to circulate and file nomination petitions March 10

—First day to circulate and file nomination

papers March 11

—Last day for withdrawal by candidates who filed nomination petitions March 25

—Last day to register before the primary April 20

—Primary (3rd Tuesday in May) May 19

Despite a contentious election in 2007, the nine school board members have put it all behind them and they have cooperatively done what is best for the district. They have accomplished a lot; most notably the following:

The DeJong Group was hired to assist the school board in creating a new District - Wide Facilities Master Plan (DWFMP) where a total of four community meetings will be held. (Another meeting will be held Feb. 12, 2009 at Mt. Nittany Middle School and the last meeting in March—date to be announced.)

A steering committee comprised of a cross-section of 44 parents, students, community members, teachers etc. was appointed in September, 2008.

A High School Educational Specifications Committee comprised of a



cross-section of 63 faculty members, parents, students and community representatives was appointed in September, 2008 to identify building modifications needed to support curricular needs.

On Oct. 13, 2008 a Resolution Committed to Sustainability and High Performance Schools was approved. All future school construction projects (new construction or renovations) will be designed to meet Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification. LEED certification provides long term benefits and minimizes impacts on the environment. Additionally, this construction practice employs a completely different planning process that creates environments that are energy efficient, healthy and comfortable.

Streaming video of meetings was made

available at <http://www.scasd.k12.pa.us/scasd/site/default.asp> (There is often an unacceptably long delay for meetings to appear on the Web site but C-NET continues to broadcast school board meetings on Channel 98.)

The SCASD Web site provides DWFMP information. (This site is monitored by the DeJong Group and the Web site often fails to link DWFMP documents in a timely fashion. But, the community has a responsibility to check frequently for updated information.)

Two Community Dialogues remain. Plan to attend the meeting on Feb. 12 and a final meeting (to be announced) in March.

The school board faces additional immediate challenges to hire a superintendent and an associate principal for curriculum development at the high school. As the DWFMP process is completed the school board must assess the recommendations of the steering committee and gather and dis-

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We need to build sound local economies

by Bill Sharp

A great majority of Americans believe the country is not on the right track. Each morning brings news of major industries, cities, states, universities, and employment tanking. Wall Street may not have seen the bottom yet. Unemployment is at a thirty-year high. We learn that we have been in a recession for a full year. Optimists are saying that if nothing else bad happens, we might see the beginning of a recovery the year after next.

Each year hundreds of billions of dollars are being permanently transferred from the lower into the upper income brackets. More and more wealth is held by a small minority. I am not opposed to wealth justly earned but there is something hauntingly unnerving about this trend.

The economy and government affect our individual and social health. We naturally



feel sympathy for the nearly one in eight of the people of the world who go to bed hungry at night, yet nearly the same proportion of our own people lack sufficient food. That is not the measure of a healthy economy. Meanwhile one in 100 of our adult citizens is incarcerated and the list of those with debilitating physical and mental problems is growing fast. That we have hit the wall should come as no surprise.

The problem is not with credit and borrowing, or even with the wealth harvesting of predatory interests, but with the very idea of creating wealth. States, counties, cities, towns and villages have joined the banks and automakers begging for bailouts.

Governments at all levels depend on revenue from taxes on sales, income, and property whose values are on the decline. We turn to the national government because that system can run up endless debts and print money.

We have been promised change and hope.

From where will the change we seek emerge? Do we wait and see or is there something we can do? If we want to see change, it really depends on us to make it happen in our own communities. Real wealth is created locally. For now let us think and act locally. If wealth was being created locally this growing disparity should not occur. What we lack is balance.

Times of change are times for reassessment. Our thinking should not be in terms of what others can do for us, but in terms of what we can do for ourselves.

I would like to make an appeal for the ideal of rekindling strong local economies.

What would be the advantage of rebuilding a local, wealth-creating economy? First, it would mean jobs. We need to rebuild our manufacturing, reopen factories and help establish new ones that serve not just a global marketplace but rather focus on the needs of people within a local region. Buying locally exerts a strong incentive for quality products. It keeps money re-circulating and reinvested in local initiatives. It shortens supply chains, and that alone reduces carbon footprints. Many communities, like ours, are blessed with schools and agencies that could help rebuild local businesses.

A good example of strengthening local economies is the local foods movement. There is much fallow land that could be converted into small farms and productive

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Community can discuss science and religion

by Peter Buckland

When Sarah Palin was nominated as John McCain's running mate, the culture war's intensity escalated. Her overt conservative Christianity inflamed the punditocracy, garnering some praise from Sean Hannity and some authors at the "National Review" while so-called liberal elites scorned her not just for her ignorance, but her embrace of teaching scientific ignorance in the form of teaching creationism and questioning whether industrialized nations have caused global warming.

She is not alone. Writers for conservative Christian media like "World Net Daily" have undercut popular climate change understanding, going so far as saying that "Holy Spirit discernment" shows that climate change science is all a hoax.

In the world of evolution in the last year, six state legislatures considered anti-evolution measures for state science education with Louisiana's gaining Gov. Bobby Jindal's signature. The movie "Expelled" came out, claiming that without Darwin there wouldn't have been a Holocaust. Louisiana and Texas are both in further evolution fights as you read this.

"New atheist" bestsellers like Sam Harris' "The End of Faith" and Richard Dawkins' "The God Delusion" have revived H.L. Mencken's anti-religious vitriol.

The culture war is alive and well. It seems

that neither side can countenance talk with each other. Right?

Wrong. For the last nine months I have been attending "Science and Religion" talks at the State College Free Evangelical Church in State College. They have shown me that even the most opposed people can civilly converse for hours and walk away feeling satisfied, enlightened, and closer to her/his fellow human beings. These conversations have encompassed a breadth of religious and philosophical views from Biblical literalists, to mainline Christians, a Taoist, a Jew from time to time, at least one agnostic, and a few atheists, all of whom I believe are searching for good ways to understand reality.

From my vantage point, it's been easy to believe that creationists are contemptible fools seeking to create an American Christian caliphate and it is hard not to hold onto that view in light of Palin. But are they pure boogeymen enslaved by wish-thinking? I have to doubt it.

One of the Science and Religion attendees is a chemistry teacher and an Evangelical. He is scientifically literate and articulate about science and his own faith. His belief in Christianity lacks Pat Robertson's rigid inflexibility. For him, faith is a search for salvation, that necessitates patience and kindness, and that subjects itself, at least in part, to scientific inquiry. He does not shy away from the



struggles this entails.

The first forum I attended covered the world of parasites in God's creation. How can humans believe that we are specially created in the image

of an omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipresent, and omnipotent God when liver flukes and malaria plague us and bring wretched suffering? For the chemistry teacher and each of the other believers at the forum, these were serious questions about the role of evil in God's creation.

We have also discussed the soul, religion as an evolved phenomenon, the birth of information in DNA, and other seeming imponderables. In some sense, we come together to look for ways to know if we know anything at all.

To my astonishment and great pleasure, thoughtful disagreements pop up not just between non-believers and believers but among ardent Evangelical believers themselves. They are as likely to cry "Shenanigans!" on one another regarding some particular aspect of faith, theology, or science as I am on the whole kit and kaboodle. Sometimes passions flare and we talk over one another or can be overly disparag-

ing. Certainly I have gotten a bit angry about disingenuous or misleading arguments. There is no way that I can reasonably back down from the position that creationism of all forms – Young Earth or Intelligent Design – is at best dead science. As Sam Harris says, "Let's call a spade a spade." I do. But it does not necessitate rancor.

Former pastor Eric Tober, to his great credit, invited as much discussion as possible while eschewing dogmatic bromide as the conclusion. Best of all, we all seem to really like one another. Some of us find little to agree on regarding morality's roots or humanity's ultimate purpose, but we do agree that the people we converse with on these matters deserve kindness and dignity and that the Golden Rule might be our greatest moral aphorism.

When we sit down with our neighbors, look them in the eye, and hash through how and what they believe, they cannot be caricatures to us anymore. By sharing ourselves with each other, we create and maintain the bonds of our communities. We are not governors of Alaska or members of the punditocracy. We are neighbors.

I believe Jesus said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Peter Buckland is a graduate student in Penn State's Education Theory and Policy program.

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seminate information to the public related to cost-effective options and alternative solutions for improving the educational environment based on objective data, curriculum needs, examination of options and public input.

Candidates for the Board of School Directors must also be prepared to fulfill these obligations if they are to win the confidence of the community's voters

The high school questions remain.

On Jan. 16, 2009 the *Centre Daily Times* reported on the steering committee meeting at which DeJong provided a status report and recommendations that included this quote: "DeJong advised against a 2,400 student building on either side of Westerly Parkway because the site is unworkable." What does that mean? The Steering Committee Report (distributed at the Jan. 15, 2009 meeting) that included this statement was not posted on the SCASD Web

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gardens. More of us should garden to raise and share our own food. There is an ample literature for cultivating small farms of up to five acres that offer not only lifestyle alternatives and additional income but employment and self-sufficiency. Our local agricultural college could gear up to train people to build such farms, and locally-grown foods, farm products and practical crafts would multiply.

There is also a large local arts and crafts industry. More of it could be devoted to practical, household crafts. There are hundreds of products that could be produced locally to feed the domestic demand. Cost could be higher but so too would be durability, reliability and pride of ownership.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of rebuilding local economies is that it helps to rebuild local communities. People who trade with each other get to know each other, support each other, come to the aid of neighbors in need, and take a stronger interest in self-governance. They retake control of their schools, transportation and communications infrastructures, social security, and health care, and become increasingly focused on a human scale of life that brings not only prosperity but contentment, pride of place and dignity in belonging to a community.

We can foresee the return of fairs and festivals and the celebration of holidays that help give meaning to our lives and remembrance of those who built our legacy. We could look forward to the day when gradu-

site so we're left to wonder. The community must check the Web site frequently to read the entire report.

Considering the state of the economy and decreasing enrollment the school board (and the community) should return to The Sensible Solution, <http://www.sensible-solution.org>. This incredible all-volunteer-effort has never been given the close scrutiny and opportunity that it deserves. If small is best, why stay large? How about making the high school north and high school south two separate, autonomous high schools of 1,200 students instead of holding onto one large high school?

In 2007, 89 percent of the voters voted for change and asked for:

—Transparency (no anonymous, behind-the-scenes shenanigans)

—Open meetings (no more closed Citizen Advisory Committee meetings)

—Open records (still difficult to access information)

—Assessment of needs vs. wants through a transparent process

ation, from either high school or the local college, is not a going-away party but a rite of passage and transition of a new generation into perpetuating a community that is cherished by them alongside older generations.

Admittedly, this vision is idealistic and perhaps nostalgic. It would not be easy to achieve. Indeed the dream of sending men and women to Mars is no great feat in comparison with the challenge of rebuilding an economy and community. Each community must find its own way. There is no blueprint. The model is not for everyone. There are endless opportunities for enterprising individuals and groups. There are also daunting challenges. Such a program will take strong leadership, a bright vision, a common will, courage and perhaps a significant degree of sacrifice. But if we can dream of building a new home for people on Mars, why not of building a real community where we live now?

How do we start it? The great anthropologist Margret Mead, who studied cultures all over the world, pointed out that not only can small groups make great change but indeed only small groups can start them.

Winter is upon us. It is a time of reflection. A new national administration and legislature is convening in Washington. Perhaps we should send them a message: We can, and we will, do it!

Bill Sharp is a retired teacher, planner and manager in government, business and higher education. He can be reached at bsharp@comcast.net.

We are in search of "our better angels" to step forward as candidates for the SCASD Board of School Directors.

—Responsible spending that does not depend on 4 percent real estate tax increases each year (the limit mandated by Act 1)

The "newbies" have embraced these criteria and the climate has changed. The school board has earned the community's respect. A number of volunteers who have served on the steering committee and the High School Educational Specifications Committee have demonstrated skills that could make them great candidates. There are angels among us who must be encouraged to step forward as candidates for the SCASD Board of School Directors in the primary election.

Brenda Walsh is a retired teacher and a grassroots-community activist in Patton Township and was involved with State High Vision from 2006-2007.

Whitey Blue: Feed the slots

by David M. Silverman

I was talking the other day to Whitey Blue, long-time Centre Region resident and hard-nose. Whitey, do you have any thoughts about slot machines being legal in Pennsylvania? They have been for several years now, but I don't recall ever getting your feelings about them.

"I think it's great! Why should people who want to gamble have to go to Atlantic City or Las Vegas? We need that money here for road repairs and other state programs."

But many people who can't afford to are playing those machines! Have you ever

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fact, should not—take a lot of time, for board members aren't responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of the district. It does require a sincere desire to ensure that the district maintain the highest levels of education for our students.

Beyond the opportunity to help guide our district's educational journey, the personal satisfactions of board membership are enormous. Visiting schools and seeing engaged students and staff; celebrating the successes of our artists, athletes, journalists, and other students; and realizing that we have prepared departing students to lead meaningful lives and contribute to society are rewards that can't be beat.

Circulation of nominating petitions begins Feb. 17, and they must be submitted by March 11. Think about it. If you're not the person to run, perhaps you can encourage someone who might be.

Donna Queeney, currently serving her 20th year on the State College Area School Board, recently announced that she will not run for re-election. In 2002 Dr. Queeney retired from Penn State where she was Director of Research and External Relations for Outreach and a professor of education.

been in a place where they have slot machines? You see all these little old ladies feeding their quarters into the slots, hour after hour. I'm sure they are spending money they or their families need for food, clothing and housing!

"Hey, the state is not in the business of criticizing people's morals, their enjoyments or their spending habits. That's a job for their preachers."

What about people who go broke playing the slots and can no longer afford rent or food

"They can move into the poorhouse, like the needy have been doing for ages.

You name it, you claim it

Voices prints letters whose writers identify themselves and provide contact information. We're breaking our policy of not printing anonymous letters to bring you this one.

We hope the writer will claim authorship so we can inform our readers.

May God have mercy on your Communist souls while you rot in hell! Move to Cuba, or Venezuela, or Zimbabwe, or China, or Bolivia, or Iran, or Angola, or Pakistan, or Afghanistan, or Syria, or Saudi Arabia, or Uganda etc. if you hate capitalism so much.

ASK Cosmo



Dear Cosmo,
My friends recently got a rescue dog that only has three legs. Do they make artificial legs for dogs? How would that work? Signed, Walkin' The Dog

Dear Lane Preoccupation,
I've seen lots of dogs and cats with three legs. Actually, I've seen TONS of male dogs on three legs, and we usually go back and forth a while to see who gets the last "word" in nose graffiti on the tree, fence, fire hydrant or car tire.

Dogs and cats seem to adapt fine to having one less limb. Watch one when it has a sore foot or toe—it scampers around pretty well on three legs. Bigger animals, on the other foot, seem to need all four on the floor. For instance, I have seen prosthetic limbs on horses. Just Google "Meet Molly" to see pictures of a thoroughbred horse rescued after Hurricane Katrina. The conven-

tional "wisdom" is to shoot a horse if it has a broken leg. Fortunately for Molly, wisdom outweighed convention. Her benefactors modified an artificial human leg by putting a toilet plunger-shaped foot on the end of it, and fitted the socket to her stump. It seems to work fine, and the horse actually **LIKES** using it.

People have weird standards when it comes to animals. They think nothing of cutting off tails, dew claws or parts of ears to make the dog "look right" for its breed, but they usually don't replace the excised part with a tail toupee, a Lee Press-On thumb, or little Spock ears for denuded Boxers, Danes or Pit Bulls. Ironically enough, for the show dog crowd, they actually **DO** make prosthetics for certain removed parts.

Letters to the editor

Rip-off bank policies

With over 40,000 students at Penn State, I realize the need for more banks. With the recent economic downturn it seems that banks have doubled their fees. The consumers are charged as much as \$37 for fees which used to be \$18.

Recently I made a deposit on Nov. 28, 2008 on a Virginia check from my brother's bank, Wachovia. After the deposit I wrote several checks and made transactions and found out that \$37 fee was charged for each transaction after Nov. 28, 2008 and was told the Nov. 28, 2008 deposit was not available to the bank until Dec. 4, 2008 which caused the overdrafts.

How long does it take for a deposit to clear? It was not clear whether the deposit was available in two days or four days. Consumers should know in advance what the bank policy is for cashing out-of-town checks. People on retirement, unemployment, Social Security or fixed income may

be penalized for not being aware of the different policies at each bank. I understand that the information is available at the M&T Bank, so consumers should be sure to read the fine print and not overlook it. It seems that a lot more financial institutions are going to be increasing their fees to cover the economic crisis or need for additional revenue to invest. Don't be a victim by not reading the fine print on bank deposits, charges and withdrawals. Try to find a friendly local bank that explains these policies in advance. I don't know whether it's need or greed for banks to charge such excessive fees but the poor get poorer and the rich get richer and you can see why.

The more you have the more you get and the less you have the more you need your monthly stipends. It's a case of those that have less pay more and those with more pay less. Stay on top of business practices and don't become a victim.

Andrew Jackson
State College

Campus and Culture from the Canine Perspective

Believe it or not, they sell testicular implants to flesh out the shriveled nutsacks of those doggies who became castrati to sing in the boys' choir but still want to look well-rounded for the evening wear and swimsuit competitions. Those would probably be nice accessories for gelded public officials and impotent policy makers who, sans huevos, waggle their flaccid dog and pony shows in the public spotlight.

And if you're the governor of Illinois, you'll need to re-order another giant oversized pair to defend your original ballsy move of auctioning off Senate seats.

Dear Cosmo,
Were you inspired by President Obama's inauguration, or were you your normal intractable, unsympathetic, condescending self? Was there any cause for joy that day for you? Signed, Another Hope for Change

Dear Save Your Hope for Spare Change,
I experience joy daily. Critical doesn't mean joyless...what a terribly Republican way to frame things. I WAS, in fact, inspired by the inauguration festivities. My human normally leaves the TV on Comedy Central, TNT or The Weather Channel to keep us company, but he left on the inauguration instead. It was a joy being spared another spate of old Scrubs reruns, endless episodes of different Law & Order franchises or the same forecast over and over for eight hours...with "Local on the Eights" every 10 minutes.

But that dreck is still better than that jihad-fearin' Texan's "war on terrorism" and September 11 flashbacks. It was pure joy to see the "axis of evil" replaced with an axiom of reason.

Mission accomplished.

End the torture now

Our community has held a Guantanamo Bay vigil, emailed, called, written letters, signed petitions and visited legislators. Now a group of ex-generals is urging Obama to take action on the torture issue and it is my hope that we will add our voice to theirs once again.

We cannot allow the United States, the self-proclaimed bastion of freedom and justice, to move torture from being an outrageous aberration to being an acceptable practice. We cannot allow our nation to make this torture transition. We cannot allow those who created and managed the torture system to achieve impunity nor can we allow these past practices to set a precedent. If the torture transition comes to pass,

torture will be regularized in U.S. governance. Our government and its agencies will have effectively gained the ability to declare any person outside the protection of the law.

Please contact the president to say we want:

—A Presidential Executive Order banning torture;

—The codification of the elements of an Executive Order into law;

—A Select Committee of Congress or a commission to investigate torture policies and practices since 9/11;

—Growing the moral consensus that torture is always wrong.

Go to change.gov/page/content/contact.
Brenda Black
State College

Don't wait for leaders in Washington to act

What does the "Bail-out" mean? "TARP." Sounds like a "cover"-up for "corporate welfare." Wall Street is forgiven its transgressions and Main Street is still bleeding.

Are we to continue to wait for a leader or Washington to help us? We are the ones we have been waiting for. Washington is still waiting for new small businesses to employ all the laid off workers. There is something

wrong with those fundamentals: 65 percent of new businesses fail. And now they have to do it without easy loaned capital for the start-up. Should we as a community turn to each other as Chris Uhl and Sue Erem (and others) have suggested in the December issue?

How do we go about it? Let's start talking together, here in this community.

Kevin Handwerk

Send your letters to oped@voices.org

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Why do you read *Voices*?

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ To find out more on topics that do not receive adequate coverage by other local media
☐ To learn more about local community-builders and artists
☐ For alternative opinions on local issues
☐ To support an independent newspaper
☐ Other: (Please specify)

What other topics would you like to see covered in *Voices*?

What would you change about the paper, if anything?

What would you change out about the Web site, if anything?

- ☐ More current news and photos
☐ Include classified ads
☐ Social networking (Facebook-style)
☐ Other (Please specify)

What **THREE** local issues are most important to you?

- ☐ Environment
☐ Government
☐ PSU
☐ The Arts
☐ Schools
☐ Economics
☐ Social justice/Civil rights
☐ Other (Please specify)

Do you donate financially to *Voices*? Why or why not?

Please tell us something about you.

Gender: _____

Age: ____

Occupation: _____

Current Town: _____

Education:

- ☐ High school
☐ Undergraduate
☐ Post-Graduate

Would you be interested in volunteering with *Voices* as a fundraiser, writer, photographer, proofreader, ad sales rep, Web reporter or graphic designer? If so, please include your name, phone number and e-mail.

Thank you for your time!
Please mail this survey to
Voices of Central Pa
P.O. Box 296
State College Pa 16804



Voices of Central Pa

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State College Pa 16804

www.voicesweb.org

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