

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Ignorance of our history is appalling

"A society that will trade a little freedom for a little order soon will lose both and will deserve neither."

James Madison

During this bicentennial year of the Bill of Rights, it appears that a refresher course on that remarkable document may be appropriate.

The Bill of Rights, a set of specific amendments to the U.S. Constitution, was never intended to protect the rights of the majority; that wasn't and isn't necessary. Its purpose was to protect the rights of the minority, to keep a fragile democracy from being crushed by a powerful majority.

One example of the need for such protection is found in the behavior of the first white settlers in America. They fled religious intolerance in Europe and sought a place where they could practice their religion without interference. Once they found it, they instituted their own laws controlling religious practice, and allowed even less religious freedom than in the lands from which they fled.

The point of this commentary, however, is the fourth amendment of the Bill of Rights

The fourth amendment says: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the person or things to be seized."

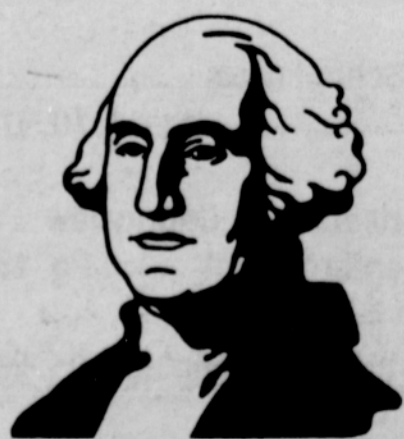
Local school policy requires urine drug tests of all student athletes, even though the district says it does not consider all athletes drug users. How, then, can the policy be justified? How can the policy *not* violate the requirement of probable cause?

People's opinions, including yours and mine, have little to do with questions of constitutionality, however. That judgement is left to the courts.

But something very exciting is happening here, something very American: Minority opinion is questioning majority opinion and policy. This challenge to the school district is an affirmation of the heart and soul of the Constitution, an affirmation that individual rights are important and must be protected.

It also provides a unique opportunity to teach some significant American history and show how it applies to life today. It would be a shame to let the opportunity pass.

We can't afford to trade freedom for order, and we can't afford to trade uncomfortable knowledge for comfortable ignorance.



Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch
Vernonia City Librarian

Although the library is generally known as the place to borrow books, every once in a while someone loans me a book from his/her personal collection and last year Penny Smejkal loaned me one of hers. Having the unusual title of *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* and being written rather like a diary, the book was put aside and not read until this last week. What a treat! This is the story of two women in the 1980s, as old Mrs. Threadgoode tells her life story to 48-year-old Evelyn, who is very unhappy as she tries to cope with middle-age. Woven into the tale she tells is the story of two other women—Ruth and Idgie—who back in the thirties ran a little place in Whistle Stop, Alabama, offering good barbecue and all kinds of love and laughter, along with an occasional murder. This story of humor and drama in the South, by Fannie Flagg, has recently been released as a movie starring Jessica Tandy and Kathy Bates. The movie looks like fun, but be sure to read the book. The library now has a copy and I thank

you, Penny, for loaning me this delightful book.

It's always rewarding to me to see that our little library consistently has most of the top ten national best-sellers. At present, we have eight of the ten, including Robin Cook's newest mystery with a medical theme, *Blindsight*. This one deals with a New York mob that is stealing corneas from reluctant yuppies.

If there are community members interested in researching their ancestors, please contact the library. A very nice lady, who has done much genealogical research of her own, has volunteered to help others with such a project.

In doing your after-holiday cleaning, please look for overdue library books. A list of these will be posted in the library. Check this list on your next visit to see if you need to search a little more thoroughly.

Library Hours: Monday and Friday 1-5 p.m., Wednesday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. **Preschool Story Time** is every Wednesday from 10:30-11 a.m.

Letters to the Editor

Education, not testing To the Editor:

Miss Christina Lynch, student-athlete at Vernonia High School, wrote in praise of drug testing athletes. She, like the Vernonia School District, confuses the results of drug *education* with drug *testing*. She admonishes: "Do not take it upon yourself to declare it unconstitutional." How can I not?

In 1943 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "Schools are educating the young for citizenship" and should "protect constitutional freedoms of the individual." If they don't, schools would "strangle the free mind at its source and teach youth to discount important principles of our government as mere platitudes."

Since 1985 students have lost much more than they realize. They have lost the right to free speech and privacy. Their lockers, gym bags and purses are not their own; students may be subjected to spot searches, polygraphs and breath-a-lyzers. At this point, even their hair, saliva and urine are not theirs.

VSD has continued urine testing and has set precedent for mandatory steroid, alcohol and tobacco screening — perhaps even for sugar if a diabetic is an athlete.

Surely now VSD *must* test for HIV and AIDS since there is a real danger of a bloody nose or skinned knee as an entrance point for a deadly virus.

If "health, safety" and "danger" are justifications for physical intrusion as a control mechanism, then it's not too hard to envision testing "suspected" homosexuals as a hazard to the wrestling team.

In the real world, Miss Lynch, you have lost much more than a vial of urine.

Let's give \$50,000 or more to the History Department, or found a Dep't. of Elementary Reasoning and Logic. Per-

haps then, we could *all* be proud of VSD.

Annette Naron
Vernonia

Let's work together

To the Editor:

It is my belief that it is cooperation, not competition, that makes a small town a great town. When we work together and share ideas and resources, we can accomplish almost anything.

We can raise the lights at the football stadium, or build a Health Center, or serve 2500 bicyclists coming through our town. We win football games and State Championships when the whole team pulls together. It is never a "one man show" that accomplishes such things.

It's too bad that not all people see it that way, for any other way is self-defeating in such a small town. If someone has an idea that might make something better, the way to enhance that idea is to join in, to share and to support each other . . . not to belittle or criticize or separate.

My belief is that in working together, neighbor with neighbor, friend and foe, we can have a community that is rich for all. That we can teach our children that each individual has value, that their ideas are unique and special and worth sharing. It also teaches them the meaning of community and how to be a part of something, whether or not everyone shares the same ideas within that group.

We can accomplish so much more working together instead of tearing things apart. These are the lessons I want my children to learn. What better way is there than having the adults around them being role models?

Barbara Fulmer, Parent & Community Member
Vernonia

No private agenda

To the Editor:

I have tossed my hat into the ring for [Vernonia] school board position #6. My reason for doing so is not that I have so much spare time that I don't know what to do with it, rather, I wish to do what I can to improve education in the district.

The community, it seems to me, makes a wise investment when it educates its young. Good education provides tools for the community's children to better themselves — hopefully so that they will be able to make a better world and to have a better life than their parents.

Obviously, the schools must be kept affordable for those who pay for them. Within the bounds of the resources that we have, we must be effective and actually accomplish what we set out to do, which is to provide that education.

Feeling the way I do about education has caused me to make this attempt. After I had filed for the position, it occurred to me that some might think that I was attempting a seat on the board because of a perceived anti-drug-testing philosophy. I had questioned the board about its policy at a recent emotional board meeting and remember feeling at the time that I was perhaps being labelled as an "anti" by some of the "pros."

My concern at the time was that the District was doing something merely expedient to cure a disciplinary problem in the schools when, in fact, what was being done might not be legal. Furthermore, I was concerned that the policy in question covered *all* drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, not just "street" drugs. I am glad that the issue will soon be settled. The point is, I would come to the board with no agenda other

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