

# OPINION

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## The Day

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER SINCE 1881

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"The newspaper should be more than a business enterprise. It should also be the champion and protector of the public interest and defender of the people's rights."

As written by Theodore Bodenwein in his will establishing The Day Trust.

### OUR MISSION

To publish the highest quality newspaper and to be the dominant source of news and advertising in the region.  
 To be a strong, profitable company that serves the needs of the customer.  
 To be a good employer.  
 To lead in the growth and well-being of the region.  
 To return the company's profits to the community to serve the public interest.

## A school system in peril

New London High School is emblematic of the city's school system at large. Both require better leadership, more attention to helping teachers work with students and a commitment to follow the Board of Education's strategic plan.

NLHS now faces the threat of probation from the New England agency that accredits public secondary schools. The agency cited an inadequate curriculum and school facilities.

The high school also has come to the center of state Education Commissioner Theodore S. Sergi's radar screen because of flagging CAPT achievement scores and low participation in taking the examination. Commissioner Sergi told the local Board of Education to fix the situation. As a result, Principal Wayne Alexander, who is putting energy and imagination into the effort to improve the school, has developed a plan.

But the worst situation is the crisis of confidence that has developed regarding the administration of Dr. Julian Stafford, the schools superintendent. The most direct example of this situation are the decisions of a growing number of parents to send their children to other high schools. This trend cannot continue without disastrous results for the city.

Attendance, test scores, the physical condition of the high school all are problems confronting Mr. Alexander, the school administration and the Board of Education. In some cases, NLHS has failed to show improvement in test scores and the percentage of students going to college while comparable urban schools elsewhere gotten better. This happened despite the fact New London High School spent more money per pupil than the other schools.

In 2002, New London sent only 57.4 percent of its graduates to college. Other comparable schools that did much better are: James Hillhouse High in New Haven, 79.7 percent; Bassick High School in Bridgeport, 72 percent; New Britain High School, 71 percent; Harding High in Bridgeport, 67 percent.

In fact, the percentage of NLHS students going to college has been declining over several years, while a number of other urban high schools have shown improvement.

Today's Perspective section looks at New London High School from a variety of viewpoints, using voices within and outside the community.

## Agenda 2003

The section reflects the strong interest among New London residents and from institutions here to make New London High School and its other public schools better. Pfizer, the Coast Guard Academy, Connecticut College and Mitchell College and businesses are contributing volunteers and, in Pfizer's case, money to the cause. A committee of educators had been planning the proposed regional magnet school at NLHS to teach science and technology.

But the success of an idea as well conceived as the magnet school depends upon the ability of the school system to deliver high quality at its general high school, in particular, and within the rest of the schools. A showcase magnet school celebrating the best in science and technology won't be enough to attract new residents to the city if the rest of the school system fails to meet high standards.

The performance of students at New London High School derives from the success or lack of it of the New London public schools at lower grades. Students who are not achieving as competently as they should be in lower grades will find their problems magnified at they progress in the system.

The concern expressed by New London parents mirrors that contained in a letter from the principals of the city schools to Dr. Stafford. They cited problems with curriculum development, communication, follow through on plans agreed to by the administration and principals and a professional development plan to support improvements in instruction and performance.

Each of these points made by the principals is a major issue. All require effective leadership. As the system will go, so will go New London High.

The successful future of New London's educational system is a responsibility shared by the school board, City Council and administration. In the final analysis, though, it is the duty of the residents of the city to demand excellence.

## Taking away rights

Michael Thomas, the chief sachem of the Narragansett Indian tribe, is right when he says the changes to state law proposed by a Rhode Island gaming study commission don't make sense. They don't allow a level playing field and they ask voters to approve or disapprove a casino before they have any idea where it would go, what size it would be and other pertinent information.

Yet the gambling study commission is pushing this nonsensical idea. Rational people have to ask why? Is it to put the controls of a huge money machine in the hands of a few select politicians?

Under existing law, both statewide and local approval are required in order to expand gambling in Rhode Island. What's more, the law requires disclosure to state residents of where the casino would go, who the financial backers are and who would operate it.

Further, there could be no referendum on the plan until the city or town where the casino would located, had passed a resolution endorsing the plan.

Throw out that sensible system, the gaming study group says. Instead, it calls for state voters to have just one chance to vote on the idea of granting a single casino enterprise license. That vote would take place without any specifics about the casino development. If residents approved a casino in principle, a five-person gaming control board appointed by the governor with Senate approval would decide where the casino would be located, who would control it and who the backers were.

The gaming control board would seek competitive bids with provisions for revenue sharing with the state. Then the three highest bid-

### Gambling study commission's proposal is ludicrous.

ders would compete at a public auction.

This plan would give enormous power to the politicians on the board and leaders in the legislature. It would provide virtually no voice to the people of Rhode Island. Why do the politicians want to get a straight up-or-down vote on a casino. Because such a plan, lacking specific details, would be more likely to win approval.

The existing law, requiring the state to get approval for a site in Warwick or Newport or Providence, would present details that would cause many more people to speak out against a casino plan because of its location in particular. The study commission is saying, in effect, Just approve the concept of a casino. Then we'll decide all the details.

Before they vote on something that has such a big impact as a casino, Rhode Islanders deserve to know where the gaming site will be, how large it will be and who will be running it. Rhode Island's study commission apparently doesn't think the voters are smart enough to do that.

Or maybe, the politicians think the voters would be too smart if they had the facts.

This plan smells badly, a stench that suggests that power politics, not the people's opinion, will determine the outcome. Rhode Island voters should let their state representatives and senators know they shouldn't bet on this deal.



## LETTERS TO THE DAY

### No end to what liberals will say

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 I wasn't surprised to see the April 3 letter "Will suspect weapons magically appear?" by Paul Beyfuss.

Since all of the gloom-and-doom predications of the leftists, liberals, and Democrats have proven to be untrue, wrong and, in most cases, outright lies where this war is concerned, I figured the after-the-war arguments would start appearing.

We are winning this war. Then, we will rebuild this country and give the Iraqi people a chance at a normal life.

Trying to sully those events with baseless accusations that American troops are going to "plant" weapons to "prove" they were there all along is a blatant lie, un-American, and simply wrong. It's an insult to every American and every soldier.

For those of who believe this hogwash, please move away from America. You can join Peter Arnett, the congressman who accused the U.S. military of targeting women and children in bombing raids, or perhaps Columbia University professor Nicholas De Genova, who gave a speech calling for the slaughter of U.S. Marines.

It's great that we have different opinions, but when people cross the line and start wishing for America's defeat, I say get the hell out. Go live someplace else since you find this place so darn unpleasant to your sense of morality.

Thanks to the troops; God Bless America and all we do.

**Robert Alan High  
 Norwich**

### Double standard applied to presidents

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 During Monica-gate, people everywhere lamented over the difficulties they would soon be experiencing in explaining President Bill Clinton's actions to their children. Yes, that's right, they played the children card, as though they were going to be sitting their children down and explaining the dress issue and the cigar issue in great detail, and moaned over just how traumatized these little cherubs would be.

Since I've heard no similar outcry over the pre-emptive killing going on in Iraq, I can only assume that those concerned people mentioned above aren't having the same difficulties in explaining the death and destruction to their children as they were in explaining the dress and the Cuban.

There is, I concede, one major difference here, that being that the mistakes of our current president may not have to be explained to all of our children, because some of them will have lost their lives before a plausible explanation can be proffered.

### Election backlash colors column

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 In regard to Kenton Robinson's April 1 column, "Cost of war too high for one little girl," where does he get his information?

President George W. Bush "chose to forego diplomacy"? If we hadn't wasted time with the United Nations, this war would be over now.

And ties to al-Qaida were established before the war and further strengthened with the discovery of the al-Qaida training camp in northern Iraq.

Our troops are not using civilians

as human shields; blame the Iraqi's for the mounting civilian casualties.

All in all, Mr. Robinson, get over your hatred for President Bush and grasp the fact that your liberal icon Al Gore was not elected (thank God).

**Richard Andrzejcik  
 Simsbury**

### How dare we jeopardize children's lives?

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 Kenton Robinson writes with eloquence the words that I was unable to form when I saw the picture of the Marine and the little girl (The Day, April 1).

It brought me to tears and made me extremely angry that our nation is waging war for such questionable reasons. Not only are we putting the lives of young American men and women at risk, but also the lives of innocent Iraqis, both children and adults.

I pray for these lives each day, as I hope others do as well.

**Margaret C. McDermott  
 Rehoboth, Dela.**

### Pay more to attract more nurses

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 Beth Dufresne's Feb. 7 column, "Manlier name could be one way to recruit more male nurses," is cute, but impractical.

There is no reason to change the name "nurse." Nursing is a unique and richly rewarding profession. Medics do not have anywhere near the training required to become a registered nurse.

As our population of older adults rises, the nursing shortage only gets worse. This is true worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, by the year 2010 the nursing shortage will be at an all-time high. Fewer nurses are entering the field while thousands are retiring or leaving altogether.

Nursing recruitment is needed. First, we need more nursing school programs. Also, we need a seamless education system between schools. The same core nursing courses should be taught at all nursing schools; thus, transfer between programs would be smooth.

The final key element to attracting more nurses is money. If you want to attract more people to the field of nursing, offer free or reduced tuition. Sure, it will cost the state money, but health-care access is essential to the health of the public. Without nurses, who are the largest group of licensed health professionals nationally that provide care, access will be denied and the public will suffer.

**Matthew A. Glas, R.N.  
 Mystic**

### Day provides mom war glimpse of daughter

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 I viewed The Day's April 2 article online, "Women wear the pants in sub tender's deck division," about the USS Emory S. Land. My daughter, Elizabeth Leavitt, was pictured in the article. I have not seen her since July 30, 2002, which was the day she left to go overseas.

I am writing this with such gratitude. To be able to see a picture of my daughter and her shipmates means more than words can express. Thank you for not forgetting about our children fighting this war with Iraq.

I am grateful that the citizens of the United States have not forgotten about our children.

### Hamilton helped families to connect

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 As the parent of a sailor aboard USS Providence (SSN719) I appreciate The Day's Robert Hamilton for his articles describing the job the young men aboard that boat are doing. My son's mother and I are somewhat used to being out of contact with him for extended periods of time and have come to accept the cryptic nature of the "Silent Service."

Nevertheless, your articles have helped his family and friends understand/experience a little of his life on deployment — the stress, skill, companionship, patriotism, and dedication to duty and the Navy. Your articles helped us to feel more connected with our son and his shipmates.

Our son awakened us at 1 a.m. this morning with a phone call stating that the boat was going back to "work" and that most likely it would be a while before we heard from him.

My understanding is that Mr. Hamilton and photographer Tim Cook are moving on to another assignment. Well done with this one.

**Rick Gildehaus  
 Murphysboro, Ill.**

### City came together to help family

**To the Editor of The Day:**  
 Last November, a working Norwich family who were expecting twins needed to have their roof repaired had approached our department, the City of Norwich Social Services, for help. We typically cannot help in such a great and costly endeavor and know of no existing resources to help families with this type of problem.

The family was losing money hand over fist due to heating costs, literally going through the roof. The roof was leaking badly and, in addition, their homeowner's insurance was scheduled to drop their policy due to the disrepair of the roof.

The problem was, however, mentioned to Dime Bank, which has always looked for ways to be a partner with the community and to help where help is needed. The bank itself donated \$500. The Sunrise Rotary Club was also approached and was able to donate another \$500. The Greater Norwich Family Support Team, a program run out of our Youth and Family Services, added \$500.

Still shy on cash, the Dime Savings Bank employees reached deep into their pockets and came up with another \$800.

We then called Norwich Tech who offered the labor of their students in the carpentry class at a nominal fee to assist on the project. This gave the students an opportunity for some hands on training.

We greatly appreciate the efforts, donations and concern of all of the above. No way could a social service agency alone have assisted this family in getting the roof repaired.

Sometimes it does take a whole village.

**Beverly Goulet  
 Norwich**

The writer is the director of Norwich Department of Social Services.

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