

Letters to the Editor

Commissioners should curb taxes

To the Editor:
It didn't take very long for the tax and spend liberal Commissioner Team of Schwank and Gajewski to burden Berks Countians with a tax hike. The two commissioners quickly demonstrated their lack of knowledge, fortitude, common sense and experience necessary to repair Berks budget problems without tax increases.
Berks Countians know that the standard liberal answer for all problems is to raise taxes. In other words - punish us for their failings.
Over 10,000 workers/homeowners lost their jobs recently in Berks, and many stand ready to lose their homes if yet another property tax increase. Families will cut back. Elderly on fixed incomes must choose between medication, heat, electric, water or taxes.
This new and onerous tax burden placed upon the shoulders of seniors

and Berks families by Schwank and Gajewski is shameful. Working men and women know what to do when their checkbooks are not balanced. They make tough choices, spending is curbed, and some purchases are just postponed.
It has long been recognized that lower taxes promote job growth, stimulate the economy and bring more revenue into government. John F. Kennedy achieved growth goals in this way in the 60s, and Ronald Reagan did the same in the 80s. Anyone with common sense knows that lower taxes and smaller government promote growth, prosperity and a better life for all.
Berks has an abundance of assets waiting to be utilized. The greatest of these assets are its people - industrious, educated and skilled. They deserve Commissioners of the same caliber.
**Pat Davis
Oley, Pa.**



Biehl's facts unsubstantiated

To the Editor:
In response to Larry Biehl's editorial dated Jan. 13, I continue to shirk in horror at his unabashed commentary based on brazen unsubstantiated facts and constructed only to elicit an emotional firestorm. Biehl must be reminded that President Woodrow Wilson's great hope to make a world truly "safe for democracy" was condemned and emasculated by a Republican Senate who voted against the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations. It would appear Republicans of old are no different than Republicans of anew - both creatures driven by paranoia and suspicion, unable to coexist with other countries as a world community.
With the League of Nations not even comparable to the United Nations (U.N.), it is disingenuous of the U.S. (Neo-Con Republican/Conservatives) to criticize the U.N., (specifically Secretary Annan) with whom they share responsibility because the U.N. "Oil for Food" program was under security Council oversight. Dag Hammarskjold, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, said people need to "stop thinking of the United Nations as a weird Picasso abstraction and see it as a drawing they made themselves." The U.N. will be as effective only as its member states allow it to be.
The Neo-Con right feels the U.N. is a threat and international law is unacceptable. The Bush Administration has rejected Kyoto, The Geneva conventions and all other international laws in promoting its illegal march to enrich the corporate elite.
Larry should realize and remember that one is innocent until proven guilty (or do Tom DeLay and his cronies want to delete this too?), and his column is full of unfounded accusations which have not been substantiated. Between

1964 and 2003, every contract for humanitarian purchase was circulated to the U.S. and Britain, which had asked to see them and were in the best position to see anything improper. Was France a major beneficiary of "oil for food" contracts? The French contract accounted for 8 percent of the total. Forty one percent of the money from this program passed through the American J.P. Morgan Chase Bank. Moreover, 8 percent of the Iraqi oil was imported by France compared with 44.5 percent by the U.S. - the #1 importer by all comparison. Lastly, the all important Iraqi oil ministry records were in the hands of Ahmed Chalabi. This man has been discredited by the U.S. and whose involvement may taint any viable investigation.
There may very well be corruption, malfeasance and graft in the U.N. "Oil for Food" Program, but these activities are not absent from any large bureaucratic undertaking: take the present Iraqi war for instance. Halliburton and its subsidiaries have bilked and defrauded the American taxpayer out of millions of dollars.
The real disappointment with Biehl's column is the notion that one wrong makes another wrong right. Somehow he and his neo-con buddies believe that if corruption in the "Oil for Food" Program is legally proved, it justifies the Bush war debacle in Iraq. He even, still to this day, tries to link Iraq to Al Qaeda and condone this miserable waste in monetary, material, and human resources in this war. If the average American cannot see this Republican ruse and deception, now is the time to start before the Social Security FICTION begins!
**Samuel S. Yoder
Richmond Township, Pa.**



Mandy's Musings
Mandy Zerr
Climbing the Hill
I've been feeling old lately. I recently celebrated my 25th birthday and it's getting to me.
My only comfort comes from those of you reading this and rolling your eyes because you are way older than me. You only wish you were 25! Heck, you'd settle for 30!
So the fact that I make you feel old is a big consolation and I thank you for it.
I admit the sensible side of me realizes that, in people years, 25 isn't old. In fact, on my birthday I felt completely at one with my age.
But then I came to work. Work-

related stress will age anyone beyond their years, but I was actually at peace with the world. Until I realized I was old enough to be in the *Hamburg Area Item's* Early Files.
For the unfamiliar, the Early Files are a look back at what happened in a certain week in history. It starts with 25 years ago.
It was then I realized that 25 years is a long time ago, a whole quarter of a century ago.
You could fill several books with what has changed since 1980, both on a societal and individual level. I'm sure everybody's lives have changed dramatically over the years. I, for one, couldn't even eat solid foods 25 years ago.
All this got me to thinking, which is probably my worst habit.
If I were a 25-year-old car, nobody would think twice about dropping me off in a junk yard. If I were a hair cut, I'd need a serious makeover. If I were a

marriage, I'd have a 50 percent chance of being a divorce. If I were a dog, I'd probably be dead.
This forced me to take stock of my life. What have I done with my 25 years? Who and where will I be in another quarter-century?
I thought about it for a minute, but I was distracted by the fact that I'd be 50 in 25 years. I decided not to think about it anymore.
So now I'm trying to forget my age. It's only a number, right? My goal is to forget by the time I hit 30. Because let's be honest, if I'm freaking out now, how will I be in five years? In the face of 30, 25 is bliss.
Besides, I still feel too young for some things, like children, marriage, death.
They're all the same really.
**Contact Mandy Zerr at
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Adams Apples
Charlie Adams
Thick and Thin
Thick head, thin hair. A numb skull? This discourse is not about a person that is regarded as stupid. It's about baldness. I'm not going to criticize baldness because a balding minister once assured me that there is a religious reason for baldness.
He told me that God in His infinite wisdom created millions and millions of heads, and those he was a bit ashamed of He covered with hair. Proof

that God has a sense of humor?
A few years ago I wrote a column called "A Numb Skull." It was a discourse on the ludicrous claim that I am getting bald. This is to update the reputed inaccuracy. When a guy tells you getting bald is "no big deal," you can bet it's a BIG DEAL.
"Numb" is defined as being deprived of the power to feel - dead or asleep. "Skull" means the bony framework of your head, the cranium, the brain-case.
Though my hair may be a bit strained, it's not dead. I alter the parting of the tinted filament on my noggin just a bit wider than most guys. I hereby dispute the aforementioned charge that I am getting bald.
There has been absolutely no increase or additional loss of the pigmented gray growing on my epidermis. In other words, "I ain't losing any more hair!"
Okay, so it's gray - but it's still there. I don't want to split hairs, or get into your hair, but I do want to defend the bareheads of the world, the unadorned destitute of hair.
We all know that our lives are a succession of gains and losses. We lose a little on top and gain around the middle. So alright already, I'm experiencing a bit of both - but only a bit.
When I told an old buddy of mine that split hairs do present a problem, he agreed, "Tell me about it - mine split years ago."
The best thing for a slightly bald, well-rounded guy is to be a sensible headed guy. I'd like to think I'd be all of that.
My original column was prompted by something my dear wife observed, "Charles, you are getting thin on top." She considered that to be her gentle way of telling me I'm losing my hair and getting a shiny top. (Who wants fat hair anyway?)
Having disavowed this assertion, I secretly examined the wiry strands of my immaculate coiffure in our three-

way bathroom mirror. "Ye gads, horrors! She's right. It is thinning out up there. What do I do now?"
Hey, I'm crowding 81-years-old. Who gives a shrug?
My wife, like all women, is lucky. They seldom get bald. However, a definite thinning frequently occurs as they advance in years.
Occasionally a woman exhibiting the physical characteristics of age will counter the loss of hair by wearing their undulated curls shorter. Most will claim it's merely a convenient way to avoid dealing with long hair.
Heck, I was forced to do that back in my Navy days. Even my crewcuts had to be thinned out. "Those were the days my friend; I thought they'd never end."
Maybe if I were to continue to incur further loss of my gossamer locks, I'll call a guy I know that makes great rug. It might just be that a brown hairpiece could take 10 years off my looks (or make me look 10 years sillier. I wouldn't want to-pay for that.).
On second thought, a can of that spray junk they advertise on television might work, or maybe not. OR, I'll start wearing a cap all the time. Yeah, that's what I'll do!
Finally I thought: "Why not ask a dermatologist how I can avoid falling hair?"
He said, "Stand back out of the way."
My wife generally gets the last word. "Charles, you always had such wavy hair. Now it's just waving goodbye dear."
After I'm gone my "numb skull" will be nothing more than a "death head."
Bald - shmald, who cares? I'm not about to lose any more hair (or sleep) by worrying about losing hair. I told my dear wife, "Hair doesn't grow on a busy street."
I'm out of here. I have the appointment with that guy that makes those great Periwig hairpieces.
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Welcome to my Mind
Christopher J. Barnes
Career Day
Career Day is something, yet again, I was never introduced to in my grade school years. It's a great tool, though, in the premature era of finding one's self - which can sometimes take an eternity.
How could any student not benefit from hearing real-life war stories from doctors, astronauts, police men (and women), lawyers, veterinarians, professional skateboarders or symphony conductors?
It runs the gamut of different responsibilities, qualifications, duties and privileges of many jobs from the workforce. Above all, it can introduce a young mind to a path possibly not considered before - which, in some circumstances, can pose a serious problem.
Consider a recent Career Day way over in San Francisco, where a returning speaker advised middle school students that they could earn a good living as strippers and exotic dancers.
William Fried is the man's name - I'm unclear of his game, but for some

reason, it was that unusual type of advice he offered to *eighth-graders*.
USA Today reported that Fried described stripping as a "lucrative career move for girls, since it can offer \$250,000 or more, depending on their bust size."
What's more confusing - the fact that he was A. a popular speaker from previous years at the school; B. that he considers this to be appropriate discussion in a public institution, let alone middle school; or C. the fact that Palo Alto school officials are *merely reconsidering* his return at a future Career Day.
Is there room for discussion?
If anyone would enter our fine area schools and recommend a provocative profession, then warn that their salary would be based on breast size, he or she would be exiled from the state.
Fried, the president of Foster City's Precision Selling, a management consulting firm, has been giving his presentation, "The Secret of a Happy Life," for three years.
He counsels students to experiment with a variety of interests until they discover their "life's purpose - something they love and excel in."
I'm not seeing the connection - eighth-graders looking for their life's destination...something that they love...taking off their clothes for perverted strangers.

It doesn't take Elmo or Grover to tell you something doesn't belong in that group. I would go out on a limb to say most women who enter the stripping profession either had a rough childhood, lacked parental attention or crave some sort of companionship that to dance exotically fills that void.
But let it up to them. If that's the "occupation" a young lady wishes to master, more power to them, I suppose.
There's no way, however, any eighth-grader should be advised that such a profession could be the proper way of life.
The middle-schoolers of today aren't the same middle-schoolers of yesteryear. They're growing up faster - both physically and mentally. Hopefully, they'll do so at their own pace, but when a Career Day speaker reminds students that the bigger the chest, the bigger the check - it's time for the psychologist who's speaking down the hall to make an emergency session.
Chris Barnes is the editor of The Free Press and The Saucon News. He can be reached at tjp@berksmontnews.com.

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