



Stumbo's road rage paved with bad intentions

By Jim Waters

House Speaker Rep. Greg Stumbo committed the biggest gaffe of the 2010 legislative session when he stonewalled money for crumbling roads and schools in districts of lawmakers who voted against legislation that would raise taxes and increase the state's debt.

The speaker's playing a dangerous game of political retribution with legislators who opposed [House Bill 530](#), a "revenue enhancing" bill that denies small businesses a tax break needed to finish capital projects and give unemployed Kentuckians jobs.

After the vote, Stumbo, D-Prestonsburg, removed every school construction, water and sewer project created by \$2.2 billion worth of new debt in the proposed budget from the 36 districts of lawmakers who voted against the bill. The spending plan includes \$685 million for repairing dilapidated schools and \$169 million for water and sewer projects. Road projects scheduled for groundbreaking during the next two years in those districts also got pushed back — some by as much as six years.

Statesmanship died. Partisanship ruled the day.

Rep. Jim DeCesare, R-Bowling Green, called it "truly unfortunate that the House Majority Leadership deems it appropriate to use the budget and the road plan as tools to reward political compliance."

Legislators who politically disagreed with Stumbo voted based on feedback from constituents and the dictates of their consciences. Some probably didn't care for the fact that Stumbo's spending plan would result in a record-high 7.43 percent of the budget being consumed with debt payments.

I wonder how this attempt to exact and enforce a "pay-to-play" political philosophy — practiced for years in Chicago and now in the White House — will go over in Kentucky communities where schools with sewer water standing in their classrooms get denied money because of some political catfight in Frankfort.

As I write this, House Bill 530 has passed the House and the Senate is working on proposals to pave over the budget potholes created by Stumbo, which should again make us intensely grateful for our Founding Fathers' commitment to provide checks and balances on government's power.

I hope the speaker doesn't think he can get away with playing the politics of bullying now practiced by the resident of public housing at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. If so, he suffers from the kind of politically divisive dementia displayed increasingly by the current administration and their best buddy, U.S. House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi.

Due to an apparent lapse of constitutional memory, Pelosi, a San Francisco Democrat, now proposes foisting the fed's health care fraud on Americans by ignoring [Article 1, Section 7 of the Constitution](#) that requires a bill to "have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate" before becoming law.

Pelosi knows the whole health care “mess,” as the Wall Street Journal opined, is so unpopular that she’s trying to keep House legislators from being forced to go on the record in voting to support the “Cornhusker Kickback” and other special-interest bribes added to the most detested bill in American history.

No wonder comedian Steve Allen thought that our government system of checks and balances is where “the mafia and crooked businessmen make out checks, and the politicians and other compromised officials improve their bank balances.”

I wonder: “If Stumbo thought he could bypass the Senate like Pelosi is attempting to do and get away with it, would he?” Fortunately, for students in crumbling schools, the question is moot.

[Kentucky’s Constitution](#) requires that when the House and Senate pass different versions of a bill, a conference committee meets to address differences.

If a compromise can’t be reached, the bill dies — an appropriate end to both Pelosi’s health care fiasco and Stumbo’s politically unhealthy and outrageous proposal.

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