



When it comes to closed government, 'It's Miller time!'

By Jim Waters

When I read Jonathan Miller's recent diatribe referring to me as "mulish" in the Kentucky Gazette, the following Biblical admonition came to mind: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Miller, finance cabinet secretary, got upset because I called the Beshear administration on the carpet for *appearing* supportive of government transparency but *doing* little to make it happen. So, as is often the case with bureaucrats who dislike operating in the sunshine, Miller resorted to bogus charges and fear mongering — childish behavior at best, unproductive at worst.

He alleged that my view of government transparency would wind up making public the names of participants in the Witness Protection Program and Social Security numbers. But Secretary of State Trey Grayson has published his office's expenditures online for several months now; so far, no reports have surfaced of criminal canaries being "outed."

Miller then made the bogus claim that my criticism of the Beshear administration is rooted in partisan politics. But those who have been paying attention know: this column is among the most nonpartisan in the commonwealth. When he was Democratic Party chairman and clawing his way up the bureaucratic food chain, Miller spoke as a partisan and thought as a partisan. But now that he's a cabinet secretary, he should file away his partisan ploys and focus on what best serves the public.

But Miller never offered much evidence that he finds thrilling the possibility of Kentuckians finding out how their tax dollars get spent. He didn't support proposed transparency-in-government legislation offered by Rep. Jim DeCesare during the 2008 legislative session. The bill didn't even get a hearing in the House. Where was Miller? Where was the governor?

Oh, yeah, DeCesare is a Republican. But his bill offered a chance for serious bipartisanship on an issue people really care about. Instead, Miller and his fellow Democrats in the House saw fit to deny DeCesare a legislative victory — and residents more open government, sooner rather than later.

Who's calling who partisan, Mr. Miller?

The secretary claims I want state government to "immediately put a listing of all government spending without careful review and analysis." That's code for "careful hiding and sanitizing."

The secretary thinks the information about how *your* money gets spent needs the "review and analysis" of Miller and his fellow bureaucrats. I, however, have great confidence that hard-working Kentucky taxpayers can perform their own adequate "review and analysis."

My own "review and analysis" of Miller's attack is that it offers a classic *modus operandi* for slowing down progress: detract from the real issues, minimize urgency, review, send it to another committee to "take a look" at it, etc., etc., etc.

He himself has consistently shown resistance to open government.

As state treasurer, Miller denied open-records requests for unclaimed property funds and gave a 400-percent raise and questionable promotion to a top aide, Rebecca Brooke Parker, who accompanied him on a taxpayer-funded junket to Las Vegas. Miller said at the time he couldn't recall her presence.

More transparency would help solve these kinds of mysteries. Post expenditures online, such as Parker's, and neither Miller nor taxpayers would have to rely on a partisan's memory!

Taxpayers of all political stripes should demand that Beshear's administration put information on state expenditures, contracts and payrolls online — just like New York is doing at www.throughny.net.

Let the taxpayers of Kentucky get online and find out for themselves how much money was spent by the state Transportation Department, whose driveways got paved, which roads got four lanes that only needed two and who benefited from the contracts.

Who knows what else might turn up among such unfiltered, un-reviewed, un-analyzed information?

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