



Bluegrass Beacon

BY JIM WATERS

Redeeming qualities offer Kentuckians some freedom

By Jim Waters

It's time for my first edition of Kentucky's "Liberty's Lovers and Losers," previously known as "Freedom's Friends and Foes."

I changed the name to allow for some that might change their "sprit."

Just because a public official makes a boneheaded move should not relegate them forever to the equivalent of carrying the mark of Cain by wearing the label of a foe of freedom.

Adlai Stevenson said, "For my part I believe in the forgiveness of sin and the redemption of ignorance."

I agree.

Politicians seem to come with a gene that makes them prone to offering a nonsensical policy position one day that forces freedom to take a step back, but then redeem themselves the next day with a policy that courageously advances it.

Some recent examples of both:

Liberty Losers: *Health nannies employing government's power to dictate personal health habits and restaurant smoking policies.*

Glasgow's "Chief Health Nanny" is Dr. Melissa Walton-Shirley, a cardiologist leading the charge for a government-imposed smoking ban in her town. Her recent comments in a Q&A with the Glasgow Daily Times shows she's more than willing – almost eager – to erode our liberties to get her way.

Walton-Shirley believes government policy should replace personal responsibility and "trumps" individual liberty and property rights.

What if Walton-Shirley would channel her passion toward defending our freedoms and the Constitution? She shows little enthusiasm for those lofty ideals.

You're breaking my heart, doctor.

Liberty Losers: *Elected officials who avoid tough issues.*

The Hopkins County Fiscal Court recently voted to request the county's health department to investigate the smoking-ban issue and bring suggestions back to the court on how to proceed. Instead, county health bureaucrats decided to create and enforce a countywide ban.

These *non-elected* health nannies did an end run around the people chosen by voters to make those decisions. They must be stopped.

In the meantime, some local officials located their copies of the Constitution.

"They apparently talked to someone in the state health department before proceeding with this," said county Judge Donald Carroll, who mildly opposes this tactic. "I'd rather the elected officials do this."

So would our Founding Fathers, judge. Only they would do so with a little more fervor.

Liberty Lovers: *Fiscally responsible judges.*

Kentucky's new Supreme Court Chief Justice John D. Minton requested that Crit Luallen, state auditor, evaluate an ongoing plan to spend \$880 million on 65 new judicial centers throughout the state. Plus, he wants to post spending for each judicial center project on the Administrative Office of the Courts' Web site.

Hail to His Honor!

Minton is an excellent jurist with a stellar reputation for fairness and judicial integrity. But getting someone who's willing to let the taxpayers see what they're getting for their money? That's priceless.

Maybe we'll discover why the state is spending \$19 million to build a 65,000 square-foot justice center in Boyd County in far-eastern Kentucky — population of only 49,371, down .8 percent since 2000 — while the price tag for the Boone County judicial center in one of the fastest growing areas of the state costs nearly \$4 million less.

Liberty Lovers: *Governors who lead.*

I've been pretty hard on Gov. Steve Beshear lately for his policy follies, but I also

believe he's done some things right.

After I criticized the administration in this column for dragging its feet in getting the state's checkbook online, Frankfort announced that by January 2009, hardworking Kentucky taxpayers finally will be able to see online financial transactions involving their tax dollars.

The governor gets credit — and with that higher approval ratings — for providing the needed leadership to make this a government not only “of, by and for the people,” but more accessible to them as well.

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