



## Courage abounds in face of pessimistic polls

By Jim Waters

Pessimism about our commonwealth and country comes much easier these days than optimism.

There's certainly plenty to be down about. The economy is tanking. We're mired in war in the Middle East and radicals who know little – and care even less – about the Constitution have seized power in Washington.

In Kentucky, the unemployment rate is higher than the nation's. Our leaders in Frankfort allow the feds to trample our rights. A [pension crisis](#) threatens to bankrupt the state's economy. And our faltering education system is failing another generation.

Americans are more concerned than I've ever known. Most are frustrated. Some are angry.

A recent [CBS News/New York Times Poll](#) shows 60 percent of respondents think the country is headed in the wrong direction, and 82 percent are dissatisfied – 48 percent “very” much so – with the economy.

Polling is much better at chronicling defeat than capturing the scent of courage.

But courage abounds in the commonwealth.

Two young Kentuckians wrote about courage in two of the best essays submitted by more than 50,000 participants in the [Bill of Rights Institute's](#) “Being an American Essay Contest.”

Cody Franklin, a freshman homeschooler from Knott County, and Tyler Vanover, a junior at Whitley County High School, cited the valor of the patriots who signed the Declaration of Independence under threat of arrest and death. Franklin also wrote about the courage of a World War II veteran whom he interviewed. The vet fought in the Battle of the Bulge at the tender age of 18.

Franklin said he wanted “to be counted as one who will follow these great examples and pledge ‘my life, my fortune, and my sacred honor’ for liberty.”

This young man's essay is just another reason for optimism about America's future.

And polls can't quantify the courage displayed by the editor of a small daily newspaper who exposes corruption and serves her community by speaking truth to power.

For four years, Corbin Times-Tribune editor Samantha Swindler has left corruption in southeastern Kentucky no place to hide. She's also exposed overpaid school bureaucrats who have led a party of failure at the expense of a generation of students.

Polls don't herald two out of 138 legislators who do the right thing.

Rep. Jim Wayne, D-Louisville, and Rep. Melvin Henley, D-Murray, [returned more than \\$2,500](#) in wages and expenses received for this year's special legislative session. They said it was wrong to profit from the Legislature's policies of procrastination.

Pollsters also often fail to capture the courage of the Tea Party movement.

So, come out to what might turn into the largest tea party in Kentucky's history on July 10 at 5 p.m. at the state capitol in Frankfort. You'll see what the polls miss: Hardworking, taxpaying middle-class Americans who are creating lasting change.

"This (Tea Party movement) is in contrast to other recent protests, like the anti-war movement, which collapsed not because we ceased to be at war, but merely because the Democrats took power," wrote conservative blogger John Hawkins. "If Republicans take charge and don't address the deficit, the Tea Partiers could very easily turn from their best friends into their worst enemies."

Only "time will tell" whether the Tea Party will reshape America's political climate for the better, Hawkins said. "(But) the fact that so many Americans are on the streets trying to pull it off is a good omen for this country's future," he said.

Courage may not rise as easily as pessimistic poll numbers. But as young Vanover wrote in his essay, it's the tool with which we can "fight these dilemmas" and "we can conquer them."

It is, as he writes, that through which "all things are possible."

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