



Bluegrass Beacon

BY JIM WATERS

Out of 'site,' out of mind?

By Jim Waters

The more hard-working Americans learn about what government elites have planned for them as far as health-care goes, the more they dislike it. And they have expressed it in a very forceful way.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., calls those speaking out “un-American.” Actually, they serve as a great example of what “American” means.

When citizens perceive a threat to freedom – foreign or domestic – they have the responsibility to confront it. And what’s now happening confirms Samuel Adams statement: “It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brush fires in the minds of men.”

I wonder what Pelosi might say about this founding father’s endorsement of an “irate” minority.

In Adams’ day, Paul Revere carried via horseback from town to town the warning about threats posed by the British. Today, advanced Web technology replaces Revere’s horse as the primary carrier of information from tea party to tea party.

For example, the Bluegrass Institute’s new Web site called FreedomKentucky.org recognizes Adams’ admonition that at times it’s necessary for a minority to “set brushfires in the minds of men.”

The institute created FreedomKentucky.org, but it really belongs to every concerned Kentuckian. It’s the virtual equivalent of a town square, where residents used to make important decisions and shared new information they spread through the entire community.

In the same way, FreedomKentucky.org gives residents a place to gather, so they can get information that allows them to hold political representatives accountable. The site’s information adds Technicolor to the events going on in Frankfort, at city hall or the school district’s central office. It allows “viewers” to see details not available in black and white.

For example, Corbin residents can now find the city’s checkbook online. Vendors and the amounts they collected are now available, allowing Corbin citizens to help ensure government spends tax dollars wisely. Eventually the checkbooks for all 176 school districts and all communities also will be available.

FreedomKentucky.org allows residents to share with all other Kentuckians – including lawmakers, agency officials, reporters and bloggers – what’s happening in their communities. This kind of transparency helps keep government honest.

On the Web site, this happens with:

- Public records requests. The site includes an easy-to-use guide on how to file a request.
- Video from local meetings, including from town-hall forums and government.
- The research and analysis of others, including comments from reputable blog sites.
- Newspaper articles, which are a great way to add meaningful information and analysis of issues involving taxes, economic development, labor and education gaps.

Speaking of gaps, FreedomKentucky.org director Logan Morford said the site helps residents bridge the intimidating gulf between how they want government to serve them and what politicians and bureaucrats really do.

“People view government as this entity that exists beyond them, when in reality we have every right to be a part of that process and know what’s going on,” Morford said. “It’s our government and our hard-earned tax dollars that fund it.”

This is the second Web site created by the institute that brings the kind of transparency that public entities often promise but don’t deliver in a timely and user-friendly format.

In 2006, KentuckyVotes.org went live, revealing that Kentucky legislators missed 2,999 total votes during the 30-day 2005 session. But an amazing thing happened after the issue became the talk of this virtual public square: The number of missed votes dropped by a whopping 54 percent during the next two years.

What else might an “irate” and informed cadre of patriotic Web users find if they are willing to give – as well as receive – vital information to start those brush fires?

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