

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Student aid an investment in our future

To the editor: All the silly political games being played today have a cost. The problem is the impact might not be known for years, maybe decades. By then the group of incompetents who created the mess won't be around to be held accountable.

Higher education is one such issue. Affordable student loans and aid are harder to come by, while the cost of a higher education has become ridiculously expensive. And all along the way those in power – both at universities and in government – are looking out for personal agendas before the greater good.

I went to college in the early 1980s. Most of my friends at that time relied on student loans and grants. Those who "maxed out" owed about \$10,000 when they graduated. It was a lot of money then, but it was possible to pay back. These people had a fighting chance after they graduated.

Those students are now turning 50. And guess what: Some of those who relied on essentially 100 percent government funding have nice houses and good jobs. They serve their communities and contribute to the greater good.

And, wow, do they pay taxes.

What if that money hadn't been available in 1982? And what if the cost of tuition was so high that they took a pass on college?

I'm not talking about some manipulated statistic. I am saying that I know, by name, many people who would not be contributing at such a high level NOW had they not been given a break THEN.

It sure turned out good for everyone.

Pete Kennedy

Waukesha

Attack on gun rights is attack on liberty

To the editor: Mr. Larry Sheets' retort to my analysis of his rant of April 24 further misrepresents the Second Amendment, objects to information without sources, and makes a direct, offensive and unwarranted personal attack on those who understand the importance of our civil liberties.

Legal and historical analysis of the Second Amendment is well-documented and easily found online. The relationship of the dependent "militia clause" to the independent "keep and bear arms" clause is well-documented.

As to his "90 percent," a Pew Research poll (an organization that is not pro-self-defense) found after the Senate defeated the Manchin-Toomey "gun control" bill, that 47 percent of Americans are disappointed the bill failed, while 32 percent describe themselves as "very happy" or "relieved." The Pew Center discredits his figure.

My 60 percent number of crimes committed by previously convicted persons may have been a little off. The Washington Times reported that only 56 percent of those convicted of violent crimes in urban areas from 1990-2002 had previous convictions. My bad. Other sources report the numbers differently.

Suicideology.org says about half of U.S. suicides are committed with firearms and exceed killings by 45 percent, comparing numbers in a Wall Street Journal interactive table (wsj.com), whose numbers appear to include legitimate shootings by police and private citizens. The Office for Economic Cooperation and Development (oecd.org) charts suicides from 1960 to 2007 for OECD nations. The U.S. was the sixth lowest, with the most liberal gun laws. Their data show the U.S. is 34th lowest of all nations. Parse the numbers however you will; suicides occur at those rates regardless of laws restricting guns, and mustn't be confused with felonious assault. Anti-self-defense advocates conflate those numbers to inflate felonious use of firearms.

Mr. Sheets misdirected attention from the bombs of the Boston murderers, toward instruments they acquired contrary to federal and state laws. Their guns were not for the purpose of mass murder. Upon being uncovered they used guns to kill those attempting to apprehend them. Reasoning minds see the difference.

Mr. Sheets makes a crass attack on civil libertarians, portraying them as unfeeling toward victims. That is the lowest, most despicable form of libel typical of those who cannot argue factually. Really. We should expect better in the forum of ideas. While I'm reasonably sure Mr. Sheets is sincere in his belief that anti-civil-libertarian infringements will reduce murder, I cannot accept his choice to so shamefully speak of those who differ with him.

It is said that everyone is entitled to their own opinion. I don't completely agree, but I assert that they are not entitled to their own, false, "facts."

Jan Gerstner

Delafield

Prevention starts at home

To the editor: As educators and members of the Waukesha County Drug Free Communities Coalition, we are often asked, "How early can drug abuse prevention begin?"

It is never too early. Nurturing babies and toddlers can lay the foundation for drug abuse prevention. Playing with babies, toddlers, and all children is important. Establishing family time, including regular dinners and game night, will positively impact the foundation for the teen years and beyond.

Another proactive approach is to connect with your child's emotions. Name the emotion and then help him or her develop coping skills. For instance, instead of saying, "stop crying," say, "I know you are so sad." Help the child feel comforted before redirecting the behavior. A good message for children to learn is that all feelings, but not all behaviors, are OK.

Modeling the appropriate use of prescription and over-the-counter drug use is also important. Let children and teenagers observe approaches other than medication to soothe hurts, such as resting to cope with a headache. Talk openly about news stories involving the negative consequences of drug and alcohol abuse to increase the awareness of those dangers.

For further information on drug abuse prevention, consult with drugfree.org and/or the Waukesha Drug Free Communities Coalition Web page at www.waukeshacounty.gov/dfc.

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