

WTE: It was not a "lesson in government"

It was an example of exercising a constitutional right

A recent WTE column on their Opinion Page, as often is the case, was riddled with errors.

Reed or Mike wrote about the recent unsuccessful petition drive.

They did get it right when they wrote that we are a representative democracy - meaning that we elect others to make decisions on our behalf. But, they got it wrong when they stated: "It is not a direct democracy where residents get input on every action or even actions deemed as 'important'."

That's exactly the action undertaken by the petition drive. The only way residents do get input on "actions deemed as important" is through a petition and referendum. The Cheyenne city government found a devious way around that provision with the downtown parking garage which surely would have been defeated at the polls, but actions taken by ordinance can be challenged by residents. Not by posting anonymously to the forum provided by the WTE and not by showing up at a public meeting to criticize actions taken by the governing body. You may as well stand on your porch and yell into the Wyoming wind. Your voice will be there but no one will hear it or, if they do hear it, they won't pay any attention to what you say or write.

And, a petition drive is not only about forcing an election on a questionable decision. A successful petition drive will likely seldom result in an election because the weak-kneed group that passed the ordinance or made the law will likely capitulate and repeal it without a popular vote.

The WTE made an assumption about why more voters did not sign the petition. They assumed that supporters would track down the signature gatherers to sign the petition. That's not how it works. It just isn't that easy. They also wrote in that editorial validation for "the six who were re-elected by large margins a year ago." First, not all six incumbent city council members sought re-election in 2008. Tom Segrave did not. And Pete Laybourn was defeated in his pursuit of a second term. "Large margin" is an arbitrary term. Patrick Collins did not win by that large a margin over unknown Sara Landstrom. And, in Ward 1, Kurt Zunker did not finish that far behind the winners.

Reed / Mike also opined that "the main supporters of the petition were not even city residents." Don't where they came up with that. One of the organizers is a non-city resident. And, obviously, with 2,105 valid signatures out of 3,509 on the petitions, most "supporters" were city residents and registered voters.

The dumbest thing written in that editorial was: "To demand a direct say in council action is to show ignorance of how government works."

What the petition organizers did was not ignorance but knowledge in how government works. It is the WTE that is ignorant of how government works and they prove it every election by knowingly and deliberately violating state campaign laws. Residents have a constitutional right to attempt a petition drive to bring such an ordinance to a public vote. This drive was unsuccessful but the next one may see a different result.

Thanksgiving 2009

For the first time in many years, most of my immediate family were in the same place at Thanksgiving. Having but two daughters who have provided my wife and I with five nearly perfect grandchildren, we still seldom have the chance to celebrate holidays together.

So, when our older daughter and her husband, who remain in Minnesota, invited us to spend Thanksgiving with them at a ski resort area house they were renting for a week over the Thanksgiving holiday, we quickly accepted even though it would mean I'd have to get more done before leaving town and hope the daily didn't provide too much irresistible fodder in my absence.

My lineage is "big family." My maternal grandparents had ten children, including my mother and my paternal grandparents had eight children, including my dad. Most of those eighteen had large families and the next generation had smaller families but there are so many of them that the numbers have just exploded. I don't know if it's a characteristic of big families or just ours but we didn't sit

around a lot talking about how thankful we were. We knew what we knew and didn't much care what others thought of our lack of outward expression. We were thankful for a lot of things but never felt the need to share the list with others.

To tell you the truth, that hasn't changed much with me over the years. I will tell you I have had a healthy life and I'm thankful for that. Losing my mother when she was 53, my oldest brother when he was 50, my co-best friend and brother-in-law when he was 50, and my next older brother when he was 41, I will tell you I am thankful for my longevity and health.

Leaving aside the rest of my personal family thankful feelings, I am thankful that I live in a country where I can publish my words without fear of anything more than some not liking them. And I am thankful I am at a place in life that I can do what I do - whether anyone else likes it or not.

And, I was very thankful that all of my cell except my younger daughter were together for three days over Thanksgiving. It doesn't get much better than that.



vs.



The smart money is on Coke.

Costco, in what could be just a publicity stunt, has announced that they will not sell Coke products from their warehouse outlets. There seems to be an issue of "pricing." Costco has taken a public position that they want to offer their paying customers the best possible price and Coke obviously won't play along with them by conceding to Costco.

So, they, Costco, has announced they will stop selling Coke. After their huge supply of Coke products sell through.

If they were sincere, they could have shipped the pallets full of Coke products back and not paid for them when the invoices came due.

And, if Costco is anything like Sam's Club, their soft drink prices are nothing to write home about anyway. In spite of pocketing millions of dollars in membership fees, Coke and Pepsi products are almost always cheaper at the national grocery chains.

But what better way to try to convince your customers that you will fight the 500 lb canary if that's what it takes to get you the lowest prices? Horse feathers. Costco could have handled this disagreement about pricing in private. They

preferred, in today's difficult national economy, to announce their minor dispute to the world. Looks almost suspicious, doesn't it?

Speaking of suspicious business behavior, how about the Burger King franchisees "lawsuit" against the franchisor concerning \$1 double cheeseburgers?

A cynical customer might wonder if this is an effective way to promote a product without the normal advertising costs. To "file" a lawsuit costs just a few bucks - a national advertising campaign costs millions. The franchisees "beef" is that the franchisor is conducting an advertising campaign that sets the price of a double cheeseburger at less than it costs to produce them. They're losing money on every double cheeseburger sold. Right.

Analysts believe the campaign is profitable and drives traffic to the floundering Burger King chain joints. Franchisees did not want to add the double cheeseburger to its Value Menu at \$1.00 when it normally sells for \$1.89 - \$2.39. So?

It does seem a very effective ploy to get customers to believe this item is worth so much more than they're being asked to pay for it. Who can resist? After a few weeks of advertising about the lawsuit, it will quietly be dropped.

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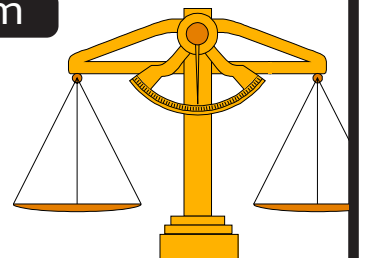


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