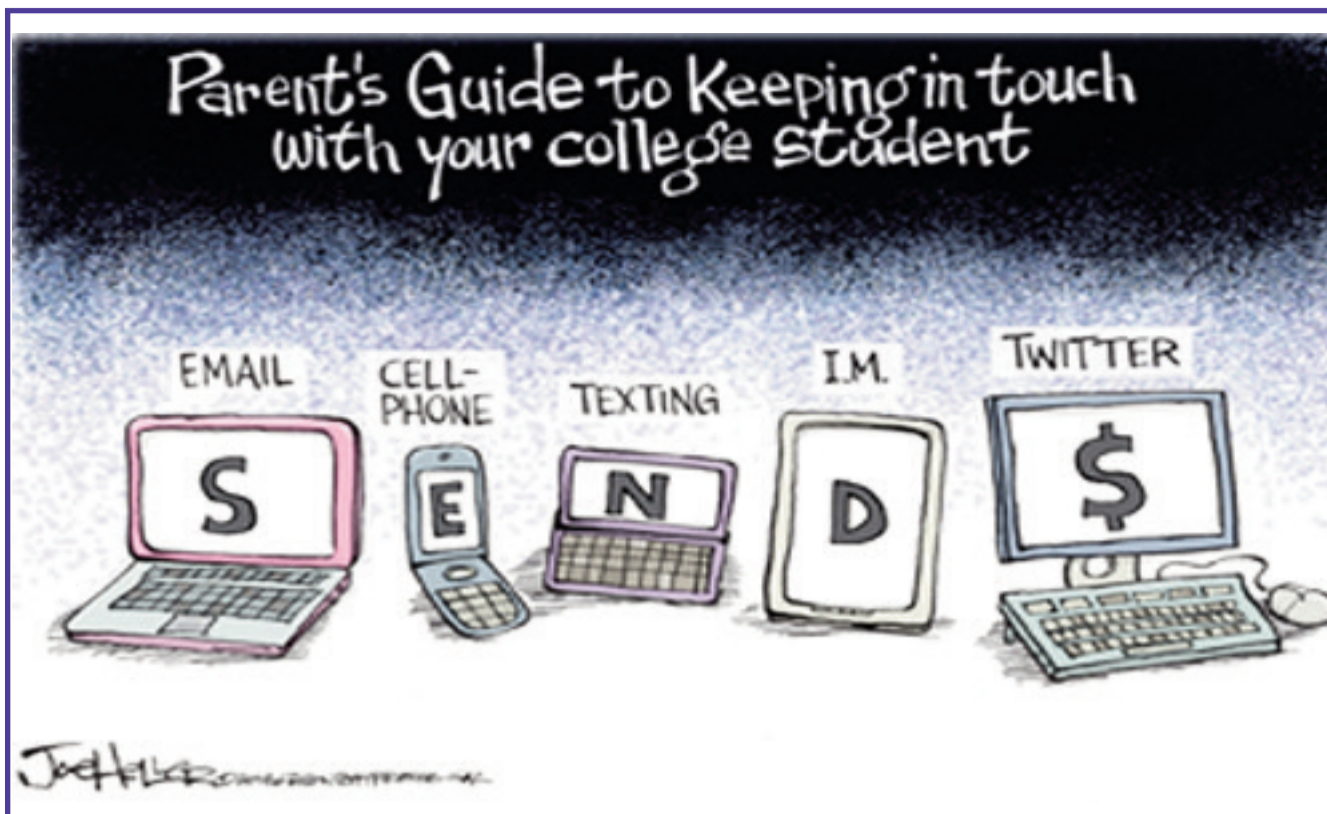


LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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We encourage you to submit letters with both positive and constructive criticism that may help bring about positive change in our community.

Please send to:
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Iraq-An End or an Escalation?

Texas Straight Talk

Rep. Ron Paul, M.D. | Columnist
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE (R-TEXAS)

Amid much fanfare last week, the last supposed "combat" troops left Iraq as the administration touted the beginning of the end of the Iraq War and a change in the role of the United States in that country. Considering the continued public frustration with the war effort, and with the growing laundry list of broken promises, this was merely another one of the administration's operations in political maneuvering and semantics in order to convince an increasingly war-weary public that the Iraq War is at last ending. However, military officials confirm that we are committed to intervention in that country for years to come, and our operations have in fact, changed minimally, if really at all.

After eight long draining years, I have to wonder if our government even understands what it is to end a war anymore. The end of a war, to most people, means all the troops come home, out of harm's way. It means we stop killing people and getting killed. It means we stop sending troops and armed personnel over and draining our treasury for military operations in that foreign land. But much like the infamous "mission accomplished" moment of the last administration, this "end" of the war also means none of those things.

50,000 US troops remain in Iraq, and they are still receiving combat pay. One soldier was killed in



Basra just last Sunday, after the supposed end of combat operations, and the same day 5,000 men and women of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Hood were deployed to Iraq. Their mission will be anything but desk duty. Among other things they will accompany the Iraqi military on dangerous patrols, continue to be involved in the hunt for terrorists, and provide air support for the Iraqi military. They should be receiving combat pay, because they will be serving a combat role!

Of course the number of private contractors - who perform many of the same roles as troops, but for a lot more money - is expected to double. So this is a funny way of ending combat operations in Iraq. We are still meddling in their affairs and we are still putting our men and women in danger, and we are still spending money we don't have. This looks more like an escalation than a draw-down to me!

The ongoing war in Iraq takes place against a backdrop of economic crisis at home, as fresh numbers

indicate that our economic situation is as bad as ever, and getting worse! Our foreign policy is based on an illusion: that we are actually paying for it. What we are doing is borrowing and printing the money to maintain our presence overseas.

Americans are seeing the cost of this irresponsible approach as our economic decline continues. Unemployed Americans have been questioning a policy that ships hundreds of billions of dollars overseas while their own communities crumble and their frustration is growing. An end to this type of foreign policy is way overdue.

A return to the traditional American foreign policy of active private engagement and non-interventionism is the only alternative that can restore our moral and fiscal health.

Your Letters

I am writing about the new proposed park at the location near The Shoppes of North Village, which is being referred to as The East Side Park.

The City Parks Dept. currently takes care of approximately 1500 acres of parks in this city which includes the Parkway boulevard System. The Parks Dept. was cutting the grass every 7 days, but because they are stretched so thin this year they started cutting it every 8 days to save money. Per capita we have the 3rd largest amount of parks to

take care of in the State.

In December the city purchased a hill of several acres that used to have a fort on it for \$85,000. Just a few months ago we purchased 17 acres along the riverfront for about \$170,000 so we can expand the Riverfront Park. Now Buchanan County is offering to give the City approximately 32 acres of land just north of The Shoppes.

As proposed, the city will lease approximately 8 acres of that land to the YMCA for \$1 per year for 50 years. The city will put in the infrastructure (sewers, utilities and streets), The YMCA is putting approximately \$380,000 towards that and the city will pay the rest which including the New East Side Park will cost St. Joseph a minimum of \$1,100,000.

I am the Chair of the Parks Board and all six members signed a memo stating: At a time when City budgets have been reduced, with no alleviation in sight, is this something the City and Parks and Recreation can accomplish? We are questioning the feasibility and timing of this additional site.

Our streets are crumbling, our jobs are disappearing and our tax base is dwindling.

Please call me and your City Council Members and let us know how you feel. I personally don't think it's the right time for new park but I represent you and will vote your will.

P.J. Kovac
3rd District Councilmember
Chair of the Parks and Rec Board.



THE SAINT JOSEPH TELEGRAPH
(USPS 009376)

is published weekly, except between Christmas and New Years days, for \$30.00/year plus \$2.24 sales tax in Buchanan, Andrew and DeKalb Counties; \$39.77 elsewhere in Missouri; and \$45/year outside Missouri (NO REFUNDS) by Mike A. Bozarth, 202 Blake Street, St. Joseph, MO 64504. Periodical postage paid at St. Joseph, Missouri. Since Jan 22, 2009 Internet Subscriptions are free by sending your request to info@stjtelegraph.com

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
THE SAINT JOSEPH TELEGRAPH
202 Blake Street
St. Joseph, MO 64504-1249
Phone (816) 248-1686

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