

ATTACHMENT O: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR FROM THE *SACRAMENTO BEE*

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Letters to the Editor Honoring Cesar Chavez

Published 6:11 a.m. PDT Friday, April 19, 2002

Re "Marching on," March 31: In 1993, Mayor Joe Serna Jr. persuaded the City Council to make Sacramento the first major city in America to create an official paid municipal holiday honoring Cesar Chavez on his March 31 birthday, seven years before the Legislature and governor acted similarly for the state.

In 1997, after a process reflecting communitywide consensus, Serna and the council also renamed Plaza Park across the street from City Hall as Cesar Chavez Plaza.

In 2000, with both public and private funding, the city commissioned a heroic bronze statue of Cesar for the plaza. In 2001, after a community vote, the Sacramento City Unified School District dedicated its new Cesar E. Chavez Intermediate School in south Sacramento.

The United Farm Workers and the Chavez family are deeply grateful for the love and respect the people of Sacramento have shown for Cesar since his passing. We do not believe it is necessary to change the name of Broadway.

- Rosalinda Guillen, Sacramento
National Vice President, Legislative and Political Director, United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO

In defense of DentiCal

Re "DentiCal is a bad joke," Your Views, March 29: Susan McLean HeBert contended that almost no dentists in the state would see Denti-Cal beneficiaries.

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California has the largest Medicaid program in the nation and provides a very comprehensive range of dental services to more than 1.5 million children and adults each year. In particular, Denti-Cal offers a broad range of dental services to adults, although many states offer only emergency services to this age group. California also has one of the highest rates of dentist participation in the nation, with about 46 percent participating.

HeBert also referred to the fact that Denti-Cal held a number of "Town Hall" meetings last year "in an attempt to quell widespread anger about \ inadequacy," but that no action had been taken. Those meetings were a collaborative effort between the California Department of Health Services and the California Dental Association. Many valuable suggestions resulted from those meetings, and the Denti-Cal program is actively pursuing a number of them.

The results of the meetings were summarized in a report that will be available in a few weeks on the Web site of the California Dental Assn. (www.cda.org).

- Diana M. Bontá, Sacramento
Director, Department of Health Services

Treating substance abuse

Re "This Rx for HMOs is bad medicine," Forum, April 14: Daniel Weintraub's use of my SB 599 as evidence that the Legislature is going overboard in mandating health care coverage by HMO's was factually wrong and deserved more than a standard retraction as a postscript in a subsequent column.

Weintraub alleged that SB 599 would mandate that health plans cover treatment for caffeine-related disorders. In fact, my bill specifically excludes caffeine-related disorders.

SB 599 would require health care plans to provide comprehensive coverage for the treatment of serious substance abuse and addiction disorders. Substance abuse treatment is one of the most cost-effective health interventions available. Kaiser Health (which already provides substance abuse treatment for its members) recently released a study showing treatment pays for itself within 18 months through reduced in-hospital care and emergency room visits.

Untreated alcohol and drug abuse significantly contributes to increased health costs associated with liver disease, cardiac or vascular disease, stroke, seizure disorders, Hepatitis C and traumatic injuries that are all substantially increased when substance abuse is present.

- Sen. Wesley Chesbro, Sacramento
D-Arcata

DAs aren't inept

Re "Child support blunder," Our Views, April 4: The first inference in the editorial was that somehow district attorneys who "failed to do their job" are to blame for the federal penalties California faces. Nothing could be further from the truth. The penalties are based solely upon California's inability to develop a single statewide computer system, a responsibility exclusively of the state, and over which the district attorneys had no control.

While the editorial said "the reform (of taking away the responsibility of child-support collection from the district attorneys and creating a new state agency) has worked," there have been conflicting news accounts of whether that is accurate. One thing is not arguable: The state has pumped much more money into the child-support programs at the county level than it ever did when the district attorneys had the duty.

Finally, The Bee referred to "inept county DAs." In Shasta County, where the family support division doesn't transfer away from the district attorney until July 1, child-support collections increased 50 percent during the past four years, and we are a further 10 percent ahead so far this year. In addition, customer service has dramatically improved. These improvements are representative of gains made across the state by "inept DAs."

- Gregory W. Scott, Redding
District Attorney, Shasta County

Violent dogs

Why are violent dogs allowed to be in our neighborhoods as "pets"? A few months ago, I narrowly escaped an attack by a pit bull in Curtis Park. I escaped only because a driver in a car passing by saw the imposing animal and allowed me to get into her car.

Why should our safety be left to luck? Dog attacks are indiscriminate. What we do know is that some dog breeds are predisposed to violence and that as long as they are allowed to live in our neighborhoods as "pets," there will be another attack.

Why are these dogs allowed to roam our streets terrorizing or, worse, attacking and killing people? Who and what can protect us from these violent dog attacks?

- Rita Cameron Wedding, Sacramento

> Max, our well-behaved senior German shepherd insists on his daily walk to Seeley Park. Recently on our morning walk we saw a woman playing with a large dog. We were about 20 feet away and Max was on a leash. All of a sudden the dog tore into Max, mauling him seriously. The woman refused to talk to me, hustled her dog into her car, and sped away.

About 10 days later the same thing happened, but this time I got her license number and two witnesses. I called animal control and was asked if the offending dog was still there. Since the answer was no, I was informed that nothing could be done. A visit to the Auburn Boulevard Sheriff's substation and a talk with a deputy also ended in failure. They don't handle animal control matters.

Bottom line here: There is a dangerous dog out there with a negligent owner, and no one wants to do anything about it. Next time it may be someone's child.

Well, I tried.

-Rudy Schafer, Sacramento

Big Brother targets Fido

The article "Camera aids animal control officers," April 9, was interesting in that it reveals how every aspect of our lives is being recorded on video surveillance cameras -- even the lives of our pets.

The article reports on breakthroughs in animal control in Tehama County, where a shortage of resources is a problem that requires devising new ways to cite irresponsible pet owners who must be coerced into complying with animal control regulations.

While it is important for every county to find a way to deal with the problem of irresponsible pet owners, I am not sure if I am comfortable with video surveillance of neighborhoods. I think most people can easily identify the most irresponsible pet owners in their neighborhoods. Why not set up an anonymous tip hotline, or assign a community relations officer to deal directly with residents and neighborhoods to enlist their help to locate animals that are inadequately controlled?

- Jill Schwinn, Roseville

Punishing dogs

Re "Ex-show dogs the victims in abuse case," April 3: Instead of having a chance for a new loving home, these allegedly abused dogs are being punished for a crime they did not commit.

I am a volunteer for the Sacramento County animal shelter, and I see this much too often: dogs placed at the county in "protective custody" because of their owners' trouble with the law. Protective custody is nothing more than being caged with all the other homeless animals. They must ensure this "punishment" for months, and now sadly, years.

The human did the crime, but the animals suffer.

- Terri Conde-Ortiz, Citrus Heights

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Dogs vs. people in parks

Re "Collared by rangers, dog lovers unleash effort to stay in parkway," May 20: R.E. Graswich's column reported that "dog lovers" are organizing to argue that Sacramento County should loosen enforcement of the leash law on the American River Parkway to allow their canines to "wander unencumbered." I am a frequent user of the parkway for running, biking and walking. I have also been bitten by an off-leash German shepherd while running.

I always ask the owners of off-leash dogs to put their dogs on a leash, and they always refuse. Their responses have ranged from, "My dog is under control and wouldn't hurt anyone," to belligerence and wanting to fight with me over my request.

Unleashed dogs can dart across the trail, endangering bicyclists; approach and intimidate those of us who are dog-phobic; chase and frighten wildlife; and potentially attack, maim or kill adults or children, as happens far too often in our society.

The parkway can be for people and pets as long as the pets are leashed. The welfare and safety of people and parkway wildlife must come before the luxury of dogs running free.

The Sacramento Board of Supervisors should keep and enforce the leash law.

- Gary Kell, Gold River

Re "Some parkway users believe dogs are best kept on a leash," R.E. Graswich, May 27: I love dogs and know that most dog owners are responsible people, but there is a percentage of dog owners who don't control their dogs, and these dogs can be dangerous.

During the 16 years I have been walking in the parkway, I have been threatened, knocked down and badly scratched by dogs illegally off-leash. I have seen herons, rabbits and ducks attacked and even killed by off-leash dogs.

This is not the fault of the dogs, which are simply following their instincts, but how would we feel if a small child were mauled; an old person were knocked down and badly injured; a bicyclist were charged by a dog, thrown off and killed?

The environmental damage caused by off-leash dogs can be considerable; the human cost, tragic.

- Mary Mackey, Sacramento



This story is taken from [northeast](#) at sacbee.com.

Letters

Owner recounts dog park attack

- (*Published June 23, 2002*)

Editor:

Don't think for a minute - or in our case even a few seconds - that your dog is safe.

The friendly confines of the enclosed dog park invite a type of pet owner they are supposed to deter. The park promotes behavioral requirements and canine health standards that are not enforced and are adhered to by few.

Some think the park is a better place for their untrained aggressive dog to run loose than their own neighborhood.

Some think the park is a good place to "test the waters" of dog socialization. You get a false sense of security thinking other dog owners are responsible because you are.

Think again. In a matter of seconds, our 13-pound corgi mix, Newman, was in the jaws of a female pit bull cross.

In what seemed like hours, five adults managed to separate the dogs in less than a minute. The damage was done. Newman's neck and stomach were ripped open. Without hesitation, we rushed Newman to the emergency veterinary hospital.

On our way to the car, one of the owners of the attack dog said, "Please come (back) so I can get your name and pay the vet bill."

After dropping off Newman and my wife, I returned to the Phoenix Dog Park in Fair Oaks 25 minutes later and found it empty.

-- Rick Daschner, Roseville

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This story is taken from [opinion](#) at sacbee.com.

Letters to the editor

Mixing dogs and horses

Sacramento Bee - (*Published July 17, 2002*)

Re "Unleashing a controversy," editorial, July 2: My husband and I ride our horses on the American River Parkway. A horse is a "flight" animal and usually if approached by a running dog will attempt to "flee." If the rider is good or lucky enough to prevent this, then the horse will kick at the dog. So far, we've been lucky.

I love dogs, and have had Dobermans and Rottweilers, among others. All my dogs had extensive obedience training. Some were shown in AKC obedience trials (all off-leash) and received Companion Dog certificates. These dogs would be excellent candidates to run loose, but I would never do that.

I have always said that if a dog causes my horse to spook, and I get hurt, I will file a lawsuit if I can find the dog owner. If the county allows dogs to run free and a horseback rider, bicyclist or jogger is injured, there will be no need to find the owner. Instead, the county will be sued -- with good reason.

- **Donna Peck, Orangevale**

Many responsible dog owners have been working very hard to establish an area in the floodplain of the American River at Paradise Beach. We want the top of the levee excluded from the off-leash area and special hours so that dogs will not interact with the majority of the people who use the area.

We are committed to helping park rangers police the proposed area and to report both "bad" dogs and "bad" people. We do realize that even at the present time with the existing leash laws there are "bad" dogs and "bad" people, but think that with the proposed off-leash pilot project responsible dog owners will be even more vigilant in reporting them to the proper authorities.

- **Judy Kerri, Sacramento**

As the owner of three dogs, I know that it is very pleasant to be able to let the dogs have a free run. I am also the owner and rider of two horses.

As a rider of the American River trails, I have had several bad experiences with dogs off-leash. A dog can become very aggressive toward a horse or just scare the horse. Either situation is dangerous for the rider and can be deadly for the dog.

I am not a bike rider, but imagine having a dog dart in front of you or your child as you speed down the trail.

Not all dog owners respect the rights of others, nor can they control their dogs. Dogs off-leash should never be permitted in a multiple-use area. A fenced in off-leash park is the appropriate place for the dogs to run free. This is both safer for the dog and for the general public.

- Carol Shoemaker, Orangevale

People overlook the great benefits of unleashing dogs in parkways. Hotels will fill with out-of-town lawyers specializing in dog-bite cases. Downtown cafés will enjoy visits from jurors called to sit on dog-bite trials. Television, newspaper and billboard advertising by dog-bite attorneys will soar. Ambulance crews, emergency care providers and long-term rehabilitation centers also could see an increase in business.

Locals once bitten will have millions in settlement money to reinvest in the local economy. Insurance companies will hire more attorneys, dog behavior experts and claims adjusters.

But after the local government agencies (taxpayers) pay their share of these claims, there won't be enough money to maintain our parkways or purchase new parks. I'm sure they could justify cuts in Animal Control.

- Nancy Moran, Elverta

Hanging out with big dogs

Re "Post-mauling backlash: Service dogs become swept up into hysteria," June 30: Diana Griego Erwin suggests that the "backlash was inevitable; overreaction, expected." Not so. Both were incited, orchestrated and manipulated by The Bee to increase profits by heightening big-dog hysteria. (Why else was the Wisconsin child killed by dogs 2,069 miles from here the only American child's death reported on by The Bee on Feb. 16?)

The Bee's not about to report: "In the latest of many such daily incidents, Rottweilers and pit bulls ran loose among dozens of Sacramentans at dog parks, but no one was killed or even frightened." That wouldn't sell newspapers.

But shouldn't The Bee occasionally mention the more than 40,000 Rottweilers and 13,000 Doberman pinschers registered with the American Kennel Club or the 3,500 Presa Canarios in the United States that don't hurt anyone?

- Gary Sawyer, Sacramento

Kimball's other feats

I noted the passing July 8 of Ward Kimball, whom Walt Disney called "the only genius I know." The Bee's obituary ("Ward Kimball, master of Disney animation," July 10) had a fine synopsis of his many accomplishments as an illustrator for Disney.

Ward accomplished many other things during his lifetime as well. He was the founder, trombone player and leader man of one of the greatest two-beat jazz bands ever to play a note, the Firehouse Five Plus Two. My wife and I caught that band in 1962 at "Dixieland at Disneyland" on one of their regular gigs at the Golden Horseshoe in that famed amusement park. We fell in love with Dixieland jazz and so did thousands of others. Dixieland at Disneyland was a forerunner of the Sacramento Jazz Jubilee. The great George Probert was the soprano sax man of the Firehouse Five Plus Two and he regularly plays the jubilee in Sacramento.

Ward also was a huge rail fan. He built a full-scale railroad on his ranch in Southern California named the Grizzly Flats RR. Also, Disneyland is completely refurbishing an old engine for display and use there. It has been named the "Ward Kimball."

- Richard Colby, Yuba City

Patient rights vs. HMOs

Re "HMO arbitration," letter, July 6: The Civil Justice Association's defense of Miguel Contreras comes as no surprise. Contreras, leader of the Los Angeles County Labor Federation, recently helped kill a bill designed to protect patients harmed by HMO negligence.

The self-named "civil justice" association is neither "civil" nor "just." A cursory look at the group's membership shows its true colors: HMOs, Philip Morris, pharmaceutical companies and PG&E, to name a few.

It is important to note that the only organization to defend Contreras' actions is a trade group whose sole mission is to limit corporate liability. This is the very same organization that has worked to shield health insurers from accountability when they harm patients.

- Jerry Flanagan, Placerville
Consumer Advocate, Foundation For Taxpayer and Consumer Rights

Health care and state budget

Re "Poll: Spare health care from big cuts," July 10: The poll that the California HealthCare Foundation distributed to legislators underscores the importance of health programs to the state, particularly people with disabilities and low-income residents.

Many people with disabilities live on fixed incomes and don't have the money to pay for private insurance to help defray the medical costs. They rely on the Medi-Cal program, which provides them the care they need to live independently in the community.

With cuts to health programs, we could see even more doctors staying away from taking on Medi-Cal patients. Where does that leave people with disabilities? Either heading to emergency rooms -- draining those much-needed resources -- or heading into nursing homes, a purgatory fraught with abuses and horror stories and even more expense.

On paper, health care may seem an easy cut, but in the long run, it's going to cost more in dollars and result in more people being institutionalized. We cannot afford this "cut."

- Patricia Yeager, Sacramento

Director, California Foundation for Independent Living Centers

California's taxes

Re "It's time for would-be budget cutters to get real," Op-Ed, July 11: Daniel Weintraub's comments are very informative. At first blush, it looks as if we're desperate for a tax increase. Weintraub apparently supports this.

But in 2000, California ranked 15th among the 50 states in revenue, and 14th in spending, per capita. We collected \$600 more than the national average. That's per nose, per year (www.census.gov/govs/state/00rank.html). Dollar for dollar, we spent more than any other state. We have problems, but undertaxing and underspending are not among them.

Perhaps we should blame Weintraub's employer more than anyone else. The Bee's springtime tear-jerker stories, excessively profiling the sad social targets of every proposed cut, exacerbate the problem. Example: "Child care subsidy at risk," April 21.

The Bee makes good money whining about, and often defeating, such cuts. Come July, they make more profit complaining about the budget deficit.

Since the USS Maine exploded, I doubt any paper has enjoyed such a good racket.

- Morgan K. Freeberg, Folsom

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