



Edwin Feulner



## Law of the Sea Treaty should be beached

This year a Democratic majority took power on Capitol Hill. But new leadership has done nothing to address an old problem: Lawmakers racing to pass bills they haven't actually read.

Recall the Senate's ill-fated immigration reform bill last spring? Senators didn't bother to hold committee hearings on the measure. Had they done so, they'd have realized it would have granted amnesty to millions of illegal aliens. Robert Rector of The Heritage Foundation did read the bill and calculated it would cost taxpayers \$2.6 trillion.

That bill died without a vote because the more senators learned about it, the less they liked it.

That raises the question, "Are lawmakers paying attention?" Because sometimes even a proposal that's been around forever manages to crawl forward without anyone seeming to have read it.

Consider the Law of the Sea Treaty. President Reagan first scuttled LOST back in 1982 because it would have hurt American sovereignty. But President Clinton brought it back in the 1990s, and the treaty's been floating around Capitol Hill ever since. Now, mistakenly, the Bush administration has endorsed LOST, and the full Senate may soon consider it.

But in 25 years, has anybody bothered to look beyond the title? Experts should have known that LOST would create a bureaucratic International Seabed Authority with the power to regulate trade, exploration and mining in the world's oceans.

This authority would basically be an aquatic United Nations of the sea (indeed, LOST is a U.N. convention). Except, instead of issuing toothless condemnations of the U.S., this authority would have the actual power to thwart American interests. For example, the treaty would give environmental activists the power to bring action against the U.S. for violating the Kyoto Protocol, even though the Senate never ratified that accord and senators sensibly made it clear they wouldn't agree to Kyoto if it would harm American economic interests.

But LOST wouldn't stop even at the water's edge. During a recent Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) asked State Department Legal Adviser John Bellinger III whether the treaty would cover pollution from land-based sources. "We've worked our way through the treaty. We are confident that pollution from land-based sources would not be subject to the jurisdiction of the tribunals or arbitral panels," Bellinger assured the committee.

But Vitter seems to have, amazingly enough, read LOST. "I would point you to Section 6, Article 213, page 176, which is about enforcement with respect to pollution from land-based sources," the senator said. "It seems to me the very title of that article at least sets up a prima facie case that your statement isn't correct."

Indeed, Vitter -- not the State Department lawyer who's supposed to be the expert on this treaty -- is correct. The treaty insists that any country that signs it will be required to pass "laws and regulations to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment from or through the atmosphere."

The problem is that once the Senate ratifies a treaty, we're bound by the entire thing, not just those parts we agree with. That's a point that came up recently during Supreme Court arguments in *Medellin v. Texas*. Our country "accepted the authority of this tribunal and to be bound to follow its decision," Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said. A treaty thus supersedes state laws.

Our republican form of government requires lawmakers who carefully consider the consequences of every law they pass and every treaty they approve. Senators should take a few hours to actually read the Law of the Sea Treaty before they put it to a vote. If they do, there's little doubt this bad proposal will be beached.

Ed Feulner is president of The Heritage Foundation.

## Letters

### Fix bus routes now

I think out-of-town children are picked up too early and dropped off too late by our school district's busing system. I know this has been a sore topic for many years, and since Kempner has finally been promised a new school, the inadequate transportation has not been an issue this year. But we still have the rest of this school year and all of next year before the new school is scheduled to be finished.

I feel the solution is simple: Why not use some of the bond money now to purchase new or used buses, hire more bus drivers and make more bus routes? I say these three things are a simple solution; maybe not cheap but simple.

We have the bond money, and I'm hoping these three things are being planned on for when our new school is built, so why not do it now? That way when the Kempner school is built, the district already will have the extra buses and bus drivers needed to accommodate it.

Stacy Richardson  
Kempner



## Our entitlement society

This has to be the Entitlement Age, because nobody I know of would call it the Age of Common Sense.

You take these two, I suppose you call them, ideals — entitlement to blessings and benefits on the one hand and shrewd appraisal of the way life works -- and you find, I think, they match poorly, if at all.

Take the driver's license flap — the one that arose when Hillary Clinton couldn't or wouldn't come out and say what she thought about New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer's proposal for the issuance of driver's licenses to illegal aliens. From the media Mrs. Clinton took a drubbing. She wouldn't say yes and she wouldn't say no, calling into question her credentials for taking charge of the world's still, despite reverses, No. 1 nation.

Put the lady's electoral prospects to the side. A matter worth more extensive chewing is the inability, wherever it exists, to shut off the driver's license argument on account of the sheer unacceptability of such a notion — i.e., bestowing an entitlement of citizenship on non-citizens.

Let us see why this might be so. We could venture that in general you don't acquire privileges in consequence of being somewhere you aren't supposed to be. If anything, you acquire liabilities. Your job is to rectify the situation rather than reshape it to your own tastes.

Plenty of good arguments exist for rectifying and redrafting immigration policies that presently help no one — those who come illegally, those in whose midst they take root. Is a grant of driver's licenses to violators of the law — which is what illegal immigrants are — an instrument of rectification? Or is it, far likelier, a white flag of abject surrender? Surrender to what? To the notion that racial politics disoblige America from making everyone in America play by the rules established for all.

Common sense tries to interject a couple of points: First, that when illegal immigrants start to receive the entitlements of citizenship, such as the legal right to drive a motor vehicle, it won't be long before they demand, or someone does it for them, new and enhanced benefits. Second, that when you start to break down the urgent distinctions between citizenship and non-citizenship, you debase and trivialize the former. Third, that it's just plain bad policy to break rules

William Murchison



when you don't have to. That's the voice, I say, of common sense: the apprehension of what works and what doesn't work; what one deserves and another doesn't. Common sense says that, even in situations where the maintenance of law is imperfect, you don't engender respect for law by rewarding transgressors.

Ah. But that's common sense — a commodity that modern politics instructs us not to worry about when large voting blocs want something, or think they do.

Group entitlement — this I want, so gimme — rests upon an assumption of inherent rights. Thus, I may not be here legally, but look how hard I work, and what if — here's the kicker — some day I get to vote?

The privileges and immunities of citizenship formerly got conferred after some exertion on the part of the newly arrived. It's been a long time since exertion cut much ice with policymakers more intent on playing ethnic politics than with insisting on some degree of performance prior to the conferral of rights. Not even in the public schools is there much sense of a duty, an overriding necessity, to perform on tests in order to qualify for advancement.

As for a driver's license, and what the possession of one signifies in terms of personal responsibility — shall we just acknowledge that responsibility isn't the point in New York; that vote-courting and vote-counting is the point?

The present value of denying a request for the automatic fruits of citizenship or the proofs of personal responsibility is so low you have to stoop to notice it. Of course, the New York Democrats can always make it lower, with a little help from the voters.

William Murchison is a columnist with Creators Syndicate.

## Gone is family friendly TV

For years now, primetime television fare has offered a steady diet of comedies that depend on sexual innuendo and situations for laughs, crime dramas that make the world seem like it's filled with sadistic predators and pervers, often within our own homes, and cable "news" programs that spend as much time dissecting the bizarre antics of this week's celebrity bad girl (or boy) as they do covering real news.

But avoiding objectionable material has become more difficult, despite V-chips, which allow parents to control access to certain programs. And one of the more toxic areas is now the ads.

Not only do commercials try to use sex to sell everything from automobiles to soap, it seems half the ads on TV are marketing sex itself in the form of sex-enhancing drugs. There's no avoiding the ads, no matter how careful you are with selecting your programming.

You can block "Desperate Housewives" or "Sex in the City" reruns, but what do you do about the ads in family programs — like Major League Baseball? I was astonished at what aired between innings in the National League Championship Series between the Colorado Rockies and Arizona Diamondbacks, for example. The usual impotence drugs led the pack, as they do for most sports programming. I wonder how many kids out there turn to Dad to explain what "ED" stands for.

Then there were the liquor ads. And since the game aired on cable, these were for hard liquor, not just the usual beer commercials. No matter what messages the advertisers tack on to "drink responsibly," pushing alcohol consumption to young audiences is destructive.

But the worst offender during the NLCS was by far Levi's. Remember when the company used to sell its blue jeans with rugged cowboys outfitted in its signature 501 style denims? Now the emphasis isn't how sturdy the pants are but how quickly randy couples can get out of them. The NLCS Levi's ad featured a series of young couples, some appearing to be teenagers, ripping off their shirts as they moved toward each other to reveal yet another hot guy or gal underneath. That is until the last couple embrace, bare-torsoed and wearing only their Levi's.

And it's not just sex, drugs and alcohol that offend

Linda Chavez



decency. Many ads are horrifying enough for adults, much less kids. Around Halloween there's the usual release of the latest slasher film ad to frighten all ages, plus the gruesome images used to advertise network shows like "Bones," the various "CSI" and "Law and Order" incarnations, "Close to Home" or others.

Networks plug their own shows relentlessly, as do the supposedly advertising-free premium channels. If you happen to subscribe to channels like HBO because you're a fan of a particular series (in my case, "The Wire," which may be the best drama ever produced for television), you can be watching something unobjectionable only to have soft-core porn flash on screen in the form of a promotion for another network show.

Even the program guides that list channel offerings can be a challenge. You may block offensive programs or channels, but just perusing the on-screen guide for something decent to watch can be a minefield. Recently, the PG animated movie "Happy Feet" aired right before "Cathouse," which the guide helpfully describes as a documentary on "the Moonlite Bunny Ranch ... a legal brothel in Nevada." And if you're looking for entertainment after 10 p.m., you'll find listings for shows like "Real Sex," "Sin City Diaries" or the latest HBO affront, "Katie Morgan on Sex Toys."

You don't have to be a child or even have children in your home to find this intrusion of Hollywood values into your living room troublesome. But unless you're willing to throw out your TV set altogether, there doesn't seem much you can do about it.

Linda Chavez is the author of "An Unlikely Conservative: The Transformation of an Ex-Liberal" and a columnist with Creators Syndicate.

David Limbaugh



## Transcendent themes in book: Rescuing Sprite

A good friend of mine, who died several years ago from diabetes-related complications, once said to me, "Show me a dog lover, and I'll show you a good person." I'm sure there are many exceptions to this adage, but the principle it expresses couldn't be more applicable to my close friend Mark Levin, whose new book, "Rescuing Sprite," makes poignantly clear.

Mark was about to write a completely different book when the death of his dog, Sprite, turned his world upside down. Mark was devastated by Sprite's death and was forced to switch gears.

He said, "You'll probably think I'm crazy, but I feel compelled to write a book about Sprite now and need to put the other book on hold."

At first, I was stunned because I believed his other book needed to be written. I also couldn't imagine how he could fill a book's worth of pages with stories about a dog — no matter how much I shared his love for canines.

It didn't take more than a few conversations with Mark to realize how important it was that he write this book, and I became immediately enthusiastic about the project. Given the depth and range of Mark's feelings and his immense popularity with his radio audience, I knew the book would be a huge success. Little did I know at the time just how powerful it would be.

The book is deeply moving on a number of levels and will enrich the lives of all who read it. Every dog lover in the world should have a copy of it. That said, I must tell you the book is about so much more than one man's loving relationship with his dogs. Don't get me wrong. It's the best pet book I've ever read. But its themes are transcendent.

It is primarily a love story between man and dog, but also between husband and wife, parents and children, family and neighbors, dog owners and caregivers, people and their communities, and dogs and other dogs in the family. It contains more life lessons in each chapter than any handful of similar books.

As you prepare to read it, understand that it will tap into your deepest emotions, stir your soul and provoke thoughtful reflection about the things — and beings — that matter most.

It is a story about joy and suffering, enrichment and loss, bewilderment and thanksgiving and selfless love. It is about affection, loyalty, empathy, companionship, intense reflection, self-doubt, tormenting guilt and finding peace with life's most difficult and agonizing experiences and decisions.

I am convinced one of the main things that drew Mark so close to Sprite was their parallel paths: Mark had recently experienced and was still plagued by a life-threatening heart condition when Sprite entered his and his family's life. Unbeknownst to the Levins, Sprite was much older than they had thought and began manifesting major health problems almost from day one.

The Levins' heart-wrenching realization that Sprite wouldn't have much more time on Earth, I believe, quickened their feelings for him and made them appreciate him and their other dog, Pepsi, that much more. This, coupled with Mark's own problems, caused Mark to deal more with his own mortality and to rearrange his priorities, placing his family and friends above all other things. "No time on Earth is long enough to share with those we love or to prepare our hearts for good-bye." And, "Career and financial goals are important, material acquisitions are necessary, but taking stock in life's little pleasures is the most satisfying experience of all."

Sprite touched Mark in a way he'd never been touched before and taught him more about life than he could adequately express. "Sprite touched my heart and opened my soul. I would swear he was an angel."

Mark describes how Sprite's handling of his own suffering — his buoyant and unflagging spirit — was inspirational and instructive to him. "He had such grace and dignity, despite all he had been through. I learned so much from him: about myself, about life and about class." As much heartbreak as Mark and his family endured over Sprite for such a short 26 months, they wouldn't trade it for the world.

Mark emphasizes throughout the book his conviction that as much as human beings do for their dogs, they get much more in return. "There is nothing like the loyalty and love dogs have for their families. Nothing." Brushing aside the suggestion that we are God's gift to dogs, he says, "In the end, we humans are the lucky ones."

David Limbaugh is a writer, author and attorney. His twice-weekly column is distributed by Creators Syndicate.

## From the Bible

"And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God;

Whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another."

Job 19:25-27