



# Viewpoint & Opinion

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be." — Thomas Jefferson

## Letters to the Editor

Deadline for letters to the editor is 4 p.m. on Thursday. All letters and faxes must include your name, residential address and a daytime phone number. Addresses and phone numbers will not be published, but are needed for verification of authenticity. Please keep your letters to 300 words or less.

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### Success & the eye of the beholder

The AJ schools state ranking is misleading! I am amazed by the sensational reporting of the *AJ News* on this subject. If Apache Junction schools are going to ever be considered worthwhile, national recognition of any kind would be the standard to achieve.

It seems to me with the standing of Arizona schools on the national basis usually lowest funded and under-performing any recognition looks good. The one problem is the graduates must go compete with students on a national stage.

I am encouraged AJ schools seem to have improved to climb to the top of the step stool and hope one day they may climb on the extension ladder!

Elliott E. Fisher, Apache Junction

### Redistricting

The recent vote to approve the expenditure of \$14,500+ in tax payer dollars to fight a law approved by both our Legislature and Governor does not make sense to me. Although there are a number of issues with HB2101 moving Pinal County to five Supervisors in 2011, I believe our efforts and dollars are best spent preparing to move forward. The DOJ (Department of Justice) will do their job according to the law. Hiring outside counsel will neither change the HB2101 nor change DOJ policy.

We must focus our efforts on progress and avoid the temptation to engage in political battles at taxpayer expense.

Bryan Martyn, Gold Canyon  
Pinal County Supervisor-District 2

### Rising health care costs

I retired 4 years ago and the company I worked for covered part of my health insurance as they do for all retirees and I paid a portion as well. In four years time the cost to me has more than doubled. I assume it doubled for my company as well.

My hope is that health care reform will be to slow down these increases. Why would anyone be against that? Something needs to be done.

David Rouse, Apache Junction

### Money vs. Pets

The A.J. shelter is low on money to care for the animals in their facility. A couple of weeks ago they put down (euthanized) all of the cats in the place due to overcrowding and the spread of a respiratory disease. They did not have the medication needed to treat them so, they are now part of the land fill. Today, when I was there cleaning the cats, I was told there is one (1) bag of litter for 24+ cats which has to last until a shipment on Wednesday. And, again, there is no high protein kitten food.

A volunteer who had been driving dogs to the Humane Society in Phoenix is no longer doing it as the city does not want to pay for the gas in the Animal Control Truck. The truck can accommodate at least 4 dogs safely.

Maybe you are asking why the city should pay for these animals? All the money brought in by the Shelter goes into the general fund — the money from licenses (dog and kennel), fees from vaccinations given, quarantine fees, euthanasia and body disposal fees and the adoption fees. Staff and volunteers also purchase needed items out of their own pockets. The public donates towels to clean and make beds for the cats, blankets for the dogs. Only unopened bags of cat or dog food can be used to feed the animals.

Other things that can be donated are large containers of: Bleach, Laundry Detergent, Paper Towels, Dryer Sheets, Liquid Softener, Litter, Baking Soda (deodorize litter pans) and money donations specifically for the animals (vaccines and other medications). or gas credit cards to get the dogs transported to the Humane Society.

Please help save these animals' lives. Think of ways your mobile home park or business can raise money to help these companion animals stay safe and healthy till they are adopted.

Myrna Burdick, Volunteer  
Apache Junction

### Differing opinion

I was pleased to note the response to my letter to the editor in the most recent AJ/GC NEWS about nitwits in DC and health-care reform. Vince Desio, the respondent to my letter, falls into a couple of traps the current administration uses, as did the previous administration, that can lead to a different understanding of the problem than mine.

I personally don't rely on facts or representations from the United Nations as being accurate or factual. The United States is not one of the good guys according to them and the World Health Organization wouldn't give us a good ranking no matter what the situation. From my training I have

found that if I don't know what data went into the reported facts their net value is zero, they are filed, but not quoted. Let me give an example of what I mean. It was recently reported, in a national publication of note, that the city of Phoenix was rated as one of the best cities to live in within the United States. Great news until you find out the crime statistics for the city of Phoenix were not taken into account when this rating was made. Interesting methodology used here.

Now we are told by Vince to get the insurance companies out of the business of insuring our health and let the government do it for us. This would take the profit component out of the cost equation. Of course it should be noted the US Postal system, a government run monopoly, has operated in the red for years to the tune of multi-billions of dollars worth of indebtedness. Should I mention the government run Amtrak rail system which is in the same situation as the US Postal Service? Just two examples of many poorly run government agencies/programs.

I note that Vince alludes to obscene profits made by the insurance companies and they've got their fingerprints all over this program. The talking heads on TV news, and government when it suits their need, always quotes industry profits as dollars worth of profit and not as a percentage. Profit is the result of money invested verses money returned on that investment. In industry it's called: "Return on Investment" (ROI). Now, if you look at the ROI for industries like health-care insurance companies and the Exxons of the world you will find it is less than the ROI for the Walmarts of the world. Is this obscene? I don't think so.

Vince also asked if my taxes have in fact gone up. In each of the twenty-two years I have lived here my personal property tax has gone up and that's a matter of public record. Was the increase based on the appreciating value of my home, yes, that's part of the reason, but lets not forget the ever expanding county budget and local school budget requirements. With no revenue source in the county, other than personal property, what else could keep the county government and schools running? Keep in mind the county and state can't print money like the feds. With the federal government now spending money like they had an endless supply how does Vince figure our taxes won't go up to pay for this wasted government take-over effort? Common sense tells us our taxes will indeed go up if the tax-and-spend situation in DC is not stopped. I think of a DC nitwit cartoon character with a giant smile on it's face and the bubble over it's head reads: "Gotcha".

Vince indicates the sour economic situation we are in has turned around and all will be goodness from now on. The cash for clunkers program and stimulus packages have all done their thing and we're finally heading in the right direction, as in, out of this economic recession. When one can get something for nothing, like cash for clunkers, of course there will be takers coming out of the woodwork. Has this gotten us out

## The News Opinion Poll

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**Last Week's Results:** Question: In your opinion, who is most trustworthy to administer the nation's health care — the U.S. government or insurance corporations?

U.S. Government  45.9%

Insurance Corporations  54.1%

**This Week's Question:** Do you believe the health care reform bill before Congress provides for "Death Panels" to euthanize patients? Yes  No

of the recession, I think not. This may, in the long run, be just a blip in the longer road to recovery. And then I ask myself, how many buyer of these cars/trucks, purchased on the cash for clunkers program, will default on the loan for their new vehicles? And guess who's paying for these people to get the cash for their clunkers and pays again to pick up the pieces if they default? Tag, we taxpayers are it.

Recovery from this recession, by the respondent reckoning, I think can be equated to the counting of chickens before the eggs hatch. I reckon there are more tough times ahead, so, let's slow this reckless government spending binge and apply some common sense. I'm sure the unemployed, who wish to get back to work, would agree with this approach.

Tom Andrews, Apache Junction

### Hi Chuck

I just wanted to personally thank you and the *AJ News* for supporting The Will2Walk Foundation and our upcoming Golf Tournament. Because of the *AJ News* articles, the First Annual Will2Walk Open is "SOLD OUT." We have received payment and team confirmation for the whole field of 144 players. Without your help and the *AJ News*, I don't believe the results would have been the same. So once again, on behalf of The Will2Walk Foundation and myself, THANK-YOU!!!

We are still pounding the pavement for sponsors and volunteers for the event. If you hear of anyone interested in

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## Kollenborn's Chronicles

Read the Chronicles archive at [www.SuperstitionMountain.info](http://www.SuperstitionMountain.info)

### Our Desert Lands

By Tom Kollenborn  
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The Superstition Wilderness Area and the desert that surrounds it is a vast region of a delicately balanced eco-system. There is no eco-system in the world more fragile than a desert environment except for the high latitude tundra. Humankind has for centuries played a major role impacting the Upper Sonoran Desert.

The various Native American groups have used the region for several thousand years in subsistence hunting and gathering modes. Their use of these fragile ecosystems mildly impacted them. Many of the ancient archaeological sites found in the area today are a mute testimony to the existence of these cultures. The ancient sites are rapidly disappearing as the desert continues to be developed. Most development allows no desert greenbelts at all for minimal survival of fauna and flora in the Sonoran Desert, unless you want to call a golf course a greenbelt. It is a tragic sacrifice for what we get in return. Our gift in return is more air pollution, more traffic, more water quality problems and more crime.

Early prospectors searched for mineral wealth in these mountains long before the tales and myths of lost gold and treasure emerged. There is some evidence that suggests early Mexican prospectors from Sonora and along the Gila River may have entered the region of Superstition Mountains as early as 1799.



The first American miners penetrated the area about 1863. These were small parties of prospectors coming down from the Bradshaw Mountains near Prescott during the winter months. Once silver was discovered in the Pinal Mountains in late 1860's the Anglo-American population began to grow in the area. The miners and prospectors were soon followed by the cattlemen. The early years of the cattle barons were totally unregulated. Thousands of cattle roamed the canyons and mountains of the Superstition Wilderness Area.

One of the earliest of the cattlemen was Robert A. Irion. He arrived in the area with a herd about 1878 from Wyoming. His ranch was located half-way between Miami and Superior at what we call Sutton's Summit today. Irion brought beef on the hoof to feed the miners at Globe and the Silver King. He was followed by other cattlemen like Jack Fraser, Ed Horrell and W.J. Clemans. Fraser started his herd with three hundred

head of cattle won in a poker game at the Silver King Hotel. When Fraser sold out to W.J. Clemans in 1909, more than 5,000 head of cattle roamed the Superstition range. All of this activity severely impacted the fragile Sonoran Desert ecosystem. Regulated grazing was introduced to the Superstition Wilderness with the formation of the Tonto Preserve in 1909. The purpose of the preserve was to protect the watershed of the Salt River drainage system rather than the fragile ecosystem of the Sonoran Desert. The creators of the Salt River Drainage Basin feared overgrazing would cause severe soil erosion therefore destroy the drainage basin planned for natural runoff. When Roosevelt Dam was completed in March of 1911 the Salt River had finally been controlled. Flooding was prevented along the river. Water storage for the Salt River Valley was then reality.

After the turn of the century and the death of Jacob Waltz, of Lost Dutchman fame, hundreds of treasure hunters, gold



Tom Kollenborn

prospectors, and promoters searched the area for gold. Their efforts produced several books and a few permanent scars on the land. Their unique history still survives to this day, but in reality did little damage to the Sonoran Desert. Those permanent scars are now monuments to the determination and tenacity of those who searched for gold and treasure, right or wrong.

The cattlemen, prospectors, miners, and treasure trove hunters for more than a hundred and twenty years have impacted the Superstition Wilderness Area. The hundreds of holes produced by these people not only scared the landscape but also created dangerous pitfalls for the innocent or novice adventurer. Their many trails lead from one place to another and then to now where.

During the mid-1960's the wilderness received yet another kind of human impact. The impact caused by the recreationist. This group fell into two large categories, the hikers and horsemen. The overuse and the improvement of the trail system for these recreational users created a critical management problem for forest service. These new trail systems impacted the terrain to such a degree the trails

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