



## The Birmingham News

### Letters, faxes, and e-mail

Saturday, September 30, 2006

#### **Proposals would protect families, kids:**

Alabamians will have a unique opportunity in the upcoming 2007 legislative sessions to support legislative efforts to strengthen families.

The 2007 Alabama Legislature will be presented two bills that, based on 30 years of research and recent divorce statistics, may reduce Alabama's divorce rate (eighth highest in the nation) by 50 percent and, if a divorce does happen, provide the children of divorce equal access to both parents.

Under existing Alabama law, courts can enter a final judgment of divorce 30 days from the date of the filing of the summons and complaint. The Alabama Marriage Reconciliation Act would amend the existing law related to divorce filings when minor children are a product of the marriage, by requiring a 365-day waiting period before a final judgment of divorce could be entered.

The Shared Parenting Bill would ensure children in divorce and custody situations have equal access to both their parents. It also would require a comprehensive parenting plan that could be deemed a "pre-conflict resolution."

These are part of an ongoing effort to strengthen Alabama families and to ensure children have both their parents in their lives. After all, aren't our children worth it?

Alan Rusmiser

Homewood

#### **Better ways to discipline than hitting:**

Recently, while I was waiting in line at a fast-food restaurant, I witnessed a mother disciplining her child.

The child, who was no more than 2 years old, had merely knocked over a plastic "wet floor" cone. After yanking the child literally off the floor by one hand, the mother proceeded to deliver a series of fast, hard swats to the child. I was somehow able to keep from slapping the woman (although the thought was tempting) and simply stood there feeling sorry for the child, while my anger grew.

I am sure there are those who still (unfortunately) buy into the spare-the-rod philosophy, but in this age of civilized thought, it blows my mind that anyone could possibly think physically punishing a child even remotely makes sense.

I would urge any parent or caregiver to take 10 seconds to breathe and think before punishing a child. Yes, we must teach and discipline our children, but there are certainly better ways than hitting.

Frank Thompson

Southside

#### **Many factors can affect gas mileage:**

In reply to the letter "Driving 55 mph would fix problem," the national speed limit of 55 mph of several years ago did, in fact, save a little gas. However, cars of today are better than they were in the 1970s and '80s.

In those days, I drove a Chevy Nova with a 5.7-liter engine and a three-speed, automatic transmission. Try as best I could, I could only get a little over 24 mpg.

Now when we drive to the beach, I average 33.4 mpg. I now drive a Buick Park Avenue with a 3.8-liter engine.

Without getting too technical, gas mileage is largely a function of engine size, the number of gears in the transmission, tire pressure, quality of the gas used, how one drives and speed.

Ask the dealer you purchased your car from how to get the best mileage, and then tune your car from there. Keeping your car properly tuned, checking tire pressure every other time you fill the gas tank and paying attention to good driving habits should save more gas than a 55-mph speed limit.

Perhaps we all could get better gas mileage if we asked our members of Congress to mandate automobile manufacturers to produce even more fuel-efficient vehicles.

W. Dave Holder

Highland Park

**Chapman's arrest appalling:**

It is appalling that bounty hunter Duane "Dog" Chapman has been arrested by U.S. marshals and brought before a U.S. federal judge on charges brought by the Mexican government. Where was the Mexican government when Andrew Luster fled to Mexico after being convicted of raping three women? Why did we not receive cooperation then?

If Mexico had not proved to be a safe haven for scumbags like that, Chapman would not have had to do his job and bring Luster back to the United States. Because of Chapman, Luster is serving a 124-year sentence for drugging and raping three separate women and videotaping his crimes.

Additionally, how could we, as a nation, be the beneficiaries of Chapman's apprehension of Luster, and then hand him over for that very act? Either we must protect Chapman and his methods of bringing the bad guys to justice, or we must send Luster and Chapman back to Mexico.

End this hypocrisy, stand up for justice and stand up for our citizens. Don't allow Chapman to be extradited to Mexico.

J. Edward Daniel

Cahaba Heights

**Billboard ruins downtown image:**

I am writing about an offensive billboard on Interstate 20/59 just south of the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex. I think the billboard gives a bad and immature face to our city.

As you come into our wonderful city, you look at the tall and beautiful buildings, and then you start looking at the billboards. When you come across a billboard that says "I pooted," it ruins the wonderful sight.

I think this sign should be removed because of its offensive remark. Perhaps the city can do something about this.

Ben Laws

Homewood

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