

## THE CHRONICLE

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### OUR OPINION

## Look locally for lessons

**Elyria case might lead Lorain to think twice about giving unions a bidding advantage**

A history lesson from Elyria is in order before Lorain City Council gives unionized contractors an advantage in bidding on city projects.

Not to be didactic about it, Elyria Mayor Bill Grace escaped a political pickle when a judge ruled in 2001 that City Council had acted illegally in adopting a so-called project labor agreement for reconstruction of City Hall.

The ruling allowed Grace to scrap the labor agreement and seek a second round of bids on the grounds that the city needed to save time and avoid further legal entanglements. That way, Grace and the city avoided having to single out for rejection the low bids of contractors that refused to go along with the agreement's requirement that it use union labor. Its bids were more than \$600,000 lower than bids submitted by union contractors, a savings to taxpayers that Grace would have had to justify forgoing.

Lorain is weighing an ordinance that would obligate its mayor to evaluate, for every public contract or construction project, whether he should negotiate a project labor agreement with the North Central Ohio Building and Construction Trades Council and its affiliated local unions.

Union supporters argue that such agreements help ensure that local workers get jobs and that the work is of high quality. They deny that the agreements drive up costs.

Elyria's experience suggests otherwise.

Only one nonunion company submitted a first-round bid on the City Hall project. Three submitted bids in the second round. Two of those three were the low bids. In addition, every union contractor that submitted a first-round bid submitted a lower bid in the second round.

Yes, labor unions have lot of clout in Lorain, but the city can't afford to stroke them if it means higher costs to taxpayers. Its first obligation is to provide services at a cost the community can bear.

Project labor agreements will not help Lorain meet that obligation.

### OTHER OPINIONS

## Death penalty should be killed

The wrongful execution of a man in Texas is just the latest case that argues against the use of the death penalty.

Claude Howard Jones was executed in December 2000 after being convicted of murdering a liquor store clerk during a robbery. Prosecutors argued that Jones shot the clerk using a gun owned by Timothy Jordan, while a third man waited in a pickup. Jordan testified against Jones and received a reduced sentence.

The other key evidence used at trial to convict Jones involved hair samples collected by police at the crime



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Molnar's dissent was illogical, reckless

On Nov. 15, Councilwoman Anne Molnar cast the single no vote on an ordinance passed by Lorain City Council to upgrade the radio communications infrastructure of the Lorain Police Department. The upgrade is not optional and has been mandated by the Federal Communications Commission. The ordinance established that the upgrade would be funded by federal grant money and Safety Forces Action Plan funds left over from previous renovations of the Lorain Police Department. This ensured that the general fund would not be strained any further and the city would be in compliance with a federal mandate.

Molnar qualified her dissent by saying, "I know they need it but they have cell phones and other forms of communication in their cruiser." She did not propose an alternate means to pay for this federally mandated upgrade. Her illogical dissent was reckless in regard to the lives of the police officers and residents of Lorain. Not only is the current radio system *not* in compliance with federal guidelines, it is an officer safety issue that places lives in danger. More often than not, officers in different parts of the city cannot hear each other over the radio. This poses a danger to their safety when they are calling for assistance but no one can hear them. Officers do not have the luxury of calling for assistance on their personal cell phones when they are chasing a suspect who may be armed and no one can hear their radio calls for help.

KYLE GELENIUS  
Lorain

*Gelenius is the president-elect of Lorain Fraternal Order of Police.*

#### Police used dangerous method to remove explosives

In San Diego County, a man was virtually running a bomb factory out of his house. With explosives, powders and other chemicals, local authorities deem the property most effectively destroyed by fire. Authorities think that it would be too dangerous to continue investigating and removing the explosives from the house. How can you go about getting rid of chemical explosives by fire? In a suburban neighborhood the possibilities of destroying surrounding structures and endangering residents are too great. Dangerous fumes would very likely be sent into the air. If the authorities know for a fact that there are explosives in the house, they should have some safer method of removal than to burn it.

CHRIS FALLON  
Elyria

#### Fine smokers who litter

I think a fine should be imposed on cigarette butt litterers.

WANDA M. JURCO  
North Ridgeville

#### Christmas trees to soldiers are a blessing

A Christmas tree means a lot to a child, and adults also, especially those in the military service. There is one today inside a canvas tent in Afghanistan. One of its occupants is Capt. Tim Raburn, chaplain with the 101st Airborne. The little tree is about a foot high with two or three presents around it. He is my grandson-in-law.

He grew up in Kenya and attended school for 13 years there as his missionary parents served there. He finished college and seminary, married,

and he and his wife, Jennifer, little ones: Dylan, 4, and Jord

They miss their daddy so much speaking to Santa Claus, Dylan just want to make sure my daddy a present, I don't want anything

This is a picture of many service families serving our nation. The price being paid by the children, wives, parents and service people many of us probably never think about. Do you realize how much the 4-year-old boy misses his father? What a price.

What a comfort it is for Dylan to be able to see the little Christmas tree in his dad's tent by e-mail. Sometime when the angel spoke to the shepherd in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago, the angel told Zachariah, Mary Joseph also not to be afraid.

GUY

#### Letters to the editor guidelines

The Chronicle-Telegram welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are edited for brevity, accuracy and clarity.

Letters should be 250 words or less. Letters with more than 250 words will be edited to approximately the required length.

Include your signature, full name and telephone number for verification purposes.

BY MAIL: Editorial Page Editor, Chronicle-Telegram, Box 4010, Lorain, OH 44036

BY FAX: 329-7282. Attention: Editorial Page Editor.

BY E-MAIL (preferred): letters@chroniclet.com.

## Complaining about train noise reflects a victim's frame of mind

There was a time in our country's past when the sound of a train whistle echoing across the night to a distant, isolated farmhouse was the sound of romance, excitement and exotic destinations. Now it's just sound, less evocative and more intrusive the closer you are to the tracks. The people who live on or close to



JOHN COLE

that that subsidy doesn't come out of your back pocket. Your hard-earned tax dollar is allowing someone to sit at a dinner table without being interrupted by train whistles.

This convenient and familiar notion of victimhood is a virus