

COLUMN

Learned lessons for young moms

Now that two of my three kiddoes have flown the nest, I am finding I have time to reflect, something I never dreamed of when they were toddlers.



CATHY KRAFVE
Checklist Charlie

well take one because I am probably going to be up all night with a sick child anyway.

■ Anything embarrassing I do, will happen in front of my children and, before the day is over, be repeated to the last person on earth I want to know about it.

■ I can get revenge because I will still be telling embarrassing stories about them when they are 20.

After I turn 50, the revenge principle expires because by then I will be too forgetful to remember which child did what.

■ That all those pictures of the first and second child will still be in a drawer when number three comes along, but by then I will be too engrossed in the joy of the moment to even care.

■ That all those hours I was going to spend looking back over the pictures of my children when they were small are going to be spent instead on my grandchildren.

That when I finally get a spare moment, I'll be saying, "Now who are the people in this picture? Are you sure that young woman was me?" and "My goodness, you all looked alike when you were babies!"

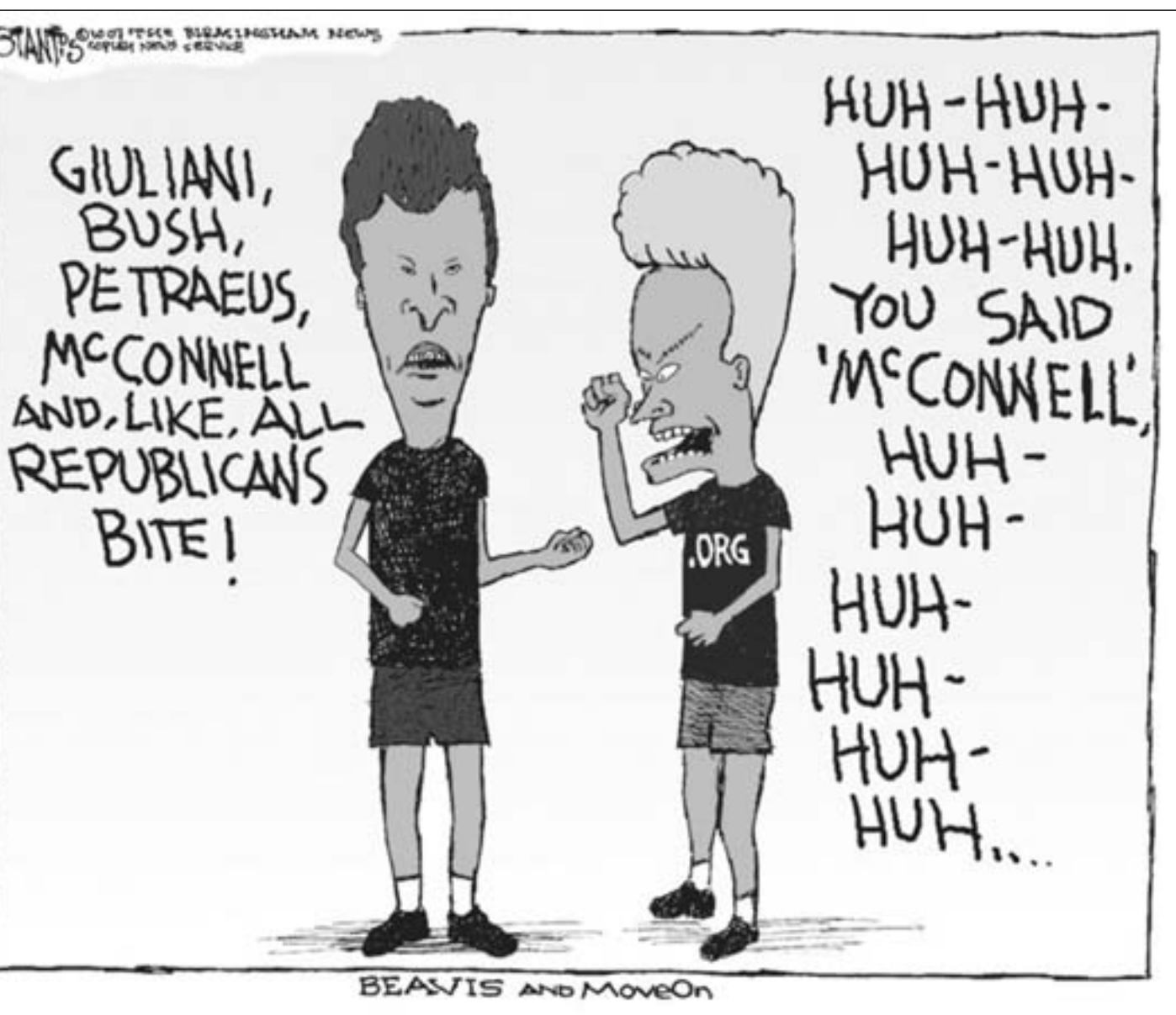
■ That being old and soft and gray is a small price to pay for a lifetime spent with children.

After all, we're going to get old anyway, right?

So, to all those moms who are in the toddler years, keep up the good work.

It is back-breaking, fast-paced, exhausting work interspersed with brief quiet moments of divine bliss.

■ **Cathy Primer Krafve, aka Checklist Charlie, lives in East Texas with her family and when she grows up, she hopes to be a grandmother. She can be reached at CaeKrafve2@aol.com.**



COLUMN

Good, bad, ugly on toll road issue

Earlier this year, I wrote a guest column describing the problems surrounding private equity toll projects as they relate to Texas transportation policy.

Specifically, the column outlined how partnering with private companies could result in a transportation monopoly.

During the 80th Legislative Session, Texas lawmakers were able to avoid this dangerous situation by placing a two-year moratorium on private equity toll projects.

However, we now face an even more dangerous transportation scenario: forcing Texas taxpayers to pay tolls on roads they have already bought and paid for.

The Good

Utilizing tolls to build new roads, or even to add additional lanes to current roads, is an innovative strategy that allows our infrastructure to keep pace with our growing population and transportation demand.

Current state fuel taxes hardly cover the cost of maintaining current roads, much less building new ones, so a justifiable need exists for toll projects.

There is a huge difference, however, between using tolls to pay for new projects and tolling hardworking Texas taxpayers for roads they have already purchased with their tax dollars.

The Bad

In 2005, legislators realized that previous legislation had granted the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) the authorization to toll existing roads - roads Texas taxpayers have already built with their tax dollars.

ROBERT NICHOLS

State Senator



At that time, they attempted to pass new legislation banning the practice, but the bill died in the House committee.

Therefore, legislators wishing to protect taxpayers had to settle for a compromise that would only allow TxDOT to toll existing lanes with the approval of local voters.

In 2007, I filed SB 1268 which would have prohibited the conversion of existing lanes to toll roads.

With the support of Lt. Governor David Dewhurst, the bill passed the Senate unanimously, but it again died in the House committee.

Because legislation prohibiting the conversion of existing lanes to toll roads continues to die in House committee, the compromise reached in 2005 continues to serve as state policy.

This means members of a specific community could vote to toll existing roads coming into and out of their community - tolls they will very rarely have to pay unless they leave their community, but that will obstruct the free flow of commerce and put our state at a competitive disadvantage to other states in our region like Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Louisiana.

The Ugly

As if the current situation is not bad enough, TxDOT now wants to expand its authority to toll existing interstate highways (highways we have already paid for with tax dollars) by "buying" them from the federal government so they can convert them to toll roads.

That's right, TXDOT wants to use Texas taxpayer dollars to purchase federal highways that Texas taxpayers paid to build and then charge Texans a toll to continue driving on them.

According to my calculation, this equals triple taxation.

Thankfully, U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison passed an amendment placing a one-year moratorium on TxDOT's ability to enact this plan, but we are not out of danger yet.

Hutchison's amendment must survive a conference committee where numerous parties will try to remove it from the legislation before it becomes law.

The Solution

As we have in so many other circumstances, it is time for Texas citizens to step up and demand this unfair policy be stopped.

Please contact your representatives in Washington, DC and ask them to support Senator Hutchison's amendment, and when the state legislature reconvenes in January 2009, I will work with other members to permanently end this unfair policy statewide.

■ **Senator Robert Nichols represents Texas Senate District 3. He is a retired engineer and former Texas Transportation Commissioner.**

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