

OPINION

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Spring has come and the legislature is going home

■ Advocate Publisher Sam D. Kennedy

It seems we can now breathe a little easier.

No, Obamacare is still not working and free for everyone, and no, you cannot keep your health care or your doctor if they don't want you.

And no, our President's fierce words and the threats of Senator McCain, and others, who just love a war, have not cowed the Russians into turning tail and surrendering. It is awful the way they interfere with their neighbors. Why can't they be nice as we are to Cuba by not recognizing them and to Central

American countries where we have been helpful by providing insurgent groups with toys like guns and rockets, not to mention CIA agents?

But life goes on and back to the good news:

Our Legislature is going home!

Legislators at home can do little damage.

I always feel better when they leave the bright lights of Music City and return to their own towns and neighborhoods, far from the noisy receptions, parties, and back-slapping. Such amenities are provided by a ratio of ten lobbyists to one of our chosen. Lobbyists are nice. They give legislators advice and comfort away from home.

They may not have waxed and grown strong but they have certainly waxed us on occasions. But they did pass a budget. That is better than our leaders in Washington. They cannot pass go.

Now all the little boys who played cowboy, who are now pushing sixty, will get to play cowboy again and strap a long forty four on their hips, and walk down the street to protect the common folk and shoot the baddies. If

we had more Democrats, we could have a shootout in the middle of downtown just before election time. That would be one way to narrow the field. Unfortunately, the only Democrat I could find in a two county area was a rank coward and did not like the odds.

They are even going to cure bad cursive writing. Good luck! Several years of dedicated effort on the part of good teachers in grammar school totally failed in my case. I can't even read my own.

Seriously, thank your friendly legislator. They take a lot of guff and remember; you elected them.

It takes a lot of nerve to run for office. Asking someone to vote for you is as tough as the task of a sixteen-year-old boy asking a girl for a date. So be nice to them and ask a legislator to lunch while he is home and you want nothing.

Income tax procrastinators, unite!

■ TYRADES!

Danny Tyree

Suddenly, I don't feel so alone.

According to the Internal Revenue Service, roughly one in five Americans file their federal and state income tax returns in the final

week before the April 15 deadline. Yes, every year, despite

my best intentions, I wind up rushing to complete my returns at the last minute. A dark cloud and a constant nagging doubt haunt the entire first quarter of every year. So why don't I do something about it?

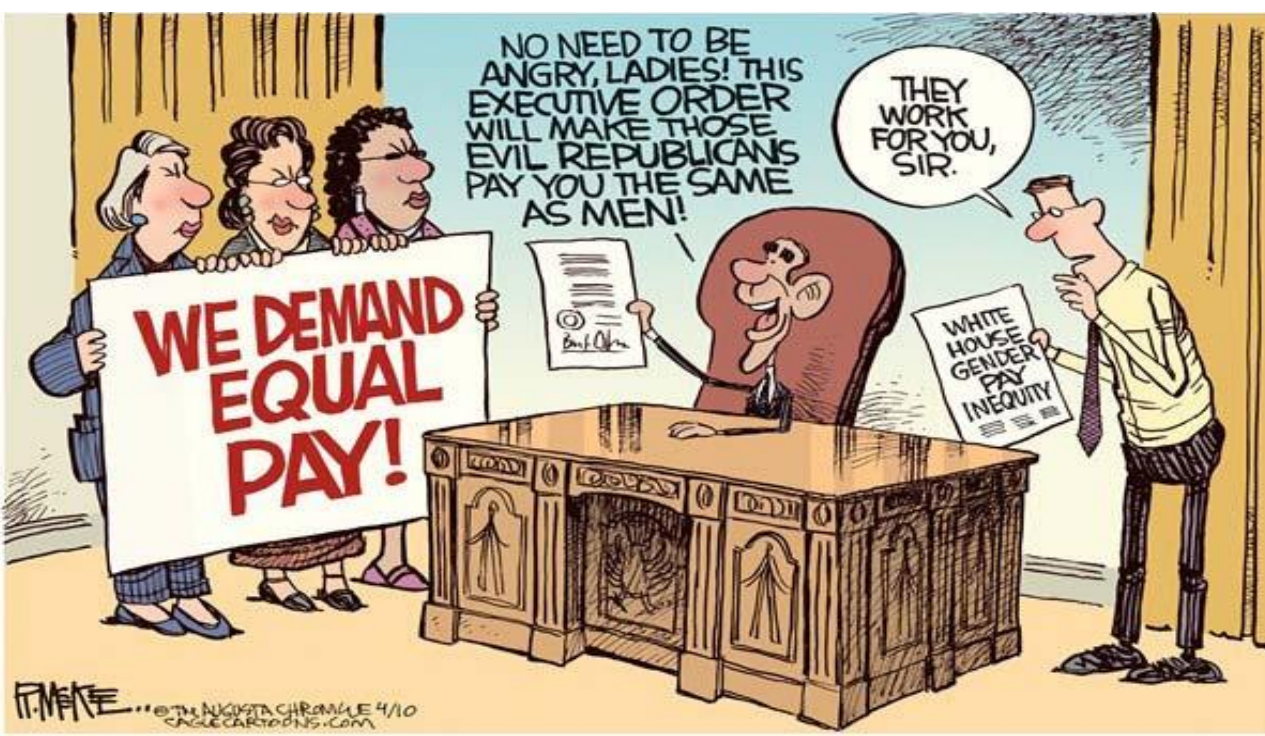
Blame a lot of it on my cockeyed optimism and adherence to one of the ugliest words in the English language: "surely." Ignoring Murphy's Law and possible power outages, computer viruses, unexpected visitors, and funerals, I tell myself, "Surely I'll get it completed tonight. And if not tonight, surely next week. And if not next week, surely next month." Then I tell myself, "Don't call me Shirley," and suddenly I'm off researching Leslie Nielsen instead of preparing my taxes.

I'm hesitant to rush my taxes because all the major web portals such as AOL keep posting tax-related tips well past the first day of spring, and I'm afraid I'll miss something if I file early. You know the articles: "Seven Surprising Expenses That Are Deductible," "10 Mistakes Not To Make Next Year" and "Did you hear the one about the priest, the rabbi and the minister who walked into a bar – and drank themselves to death because they forgot about the solar panel credit?"

I drag my feet about filing because I dread slogging through mounds of questions that might actually hide a single applicable query. I day-dream about a future with FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE for tax filing – a future in which I could ask the computer, "Do I LOOK like someone with an ex-wife who spent at least part of the tax year driving a train through a penal institution housing foreign trustees convicted of abusing nonqualified compensation plans? What? Try looking again, in this different light."

I appreciate the free software for online tax filing, but I procrastinate because I loathe the constant invitations to pay for the DELUXE package. ("Are you SURE you live at 753 Maple Street? We could double-check that for you, for a mere pittance. The planet Pluto turned down a chance to go deluxe in 2005 and look what happened

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Letters to the Editor

Does he want someone else to pay for what he wants?

To the Editor:

Abraham Lincoln was once quoted as saying of a progressive Democrat that "He can compress the most words into the smallest idea of any man I ever met." Well, maybe the man wasn't progressive at all.

I read of such a person in the *Advocate* last week, April 9, 2014. For those in the county who may have read the letter entitled "A Proud County Does Raise Taxes" have forgotten, or maybe never read, what one of the founding fathers said, to-wit: "That government is best which governs least." [Thomas Jefferson]

The people who wrote the check he mentioned, as well as the state which collected sales tax et al, don't have a source of revenue other than what they tax us.

Tennessee dodged a bullet this week

■ By Emily Weathers Kennedy

Having lunch with my mother and sister the other day in a little restaurant in the south end of the county, an interesting topic of conversation arose. My mother, no stranger to current events at 84, was interested in my take on the new gun law making news in Tennessee. I had been following it but was unsure of the technicalities of the legislation. So, seeing a friendly looking gentleman at the next table, I asked him politely if he knew of the controversy.

The man explained what the hoopla was about so that we could understand, sort of. It seems that the Tennessee Senate passed Bill 2424 by a count of 25-2 with no debate that removed the permit and training requirement to "open carry" a gun in Tennessee. The previous statute required a handgun carry permit to carry a gun either openly or concealed. This permit's prerequisites included a gun safety course taught by a certified instructor, a criminal background check, and a fee. With the new law, the permit and training requirement would have only been in place for "concealed carry."

After he finished describing the major points of the legislation, he added, "I'm not a fan of this. But," he continued, "I do believe in concealed carry."

"Why don't you like the open carry change?" I asked several times, trying to understand as he elaborated. "It would be like this," he said. "People would be bringing guns into businesses all over the place just for the show of it. Showing off is how people get killed. Suppose someone causes trouble 30 feet away from you. You pull out your gun and shoot. You will probably go to jail."

I was animated by this point. I recalled to him how I had seen a fellow bring a gun into a local fast food restaurant where my teenage daughter worked. It was slung on his hip like he was Wyatt Earp. I was disturbed—disturbed that my daughter had to see his weapon, disturbed that I had to have a nagging discomfort about gun safety as I was trying to enjoy my weekend lunch.

Then the man said, "I could be carrying a gun right now for all you know."

My mother, sister, and I looked at each other in stunned silence. I piped up, "Well, are you?"

"I carry it everywhere I go. I don't leave home without it. When I have breakfast with the locals in the mornings, most of us are packing. You just don't know it."

All I could muster was "Why? Why do you feel that you have to carry guns in this county with so little crime, especially here in this little café?"

His answer is something I suspect justifies most others' excuses. He said, "If someone is breaking into my house when I come home, I would rather be able to confront him armed than unarmed. I've had a carry permit for years."

There was my answer. People are afraid. Folks like this man believe in the imminent danger of someone out to get them, their loved ones, or their possessions. That kind of fear is bolstered by talk radio and other media outlets. He and his friends believe that if people can conceal a weapon, then robbers will hesitate before holding up stores and restaurants due to the fear of the "stand your

Were we to have less government, not more, it wouldn't cost so much and, therefore, would require less income, so that we could afford more at the local level.

It seems to me, a poor country bumpkin, that all the demand for new and higher taxes reiterates the progressive political line of the Obama Administration. The greatest increases in taxation always come from the Democrat politicians more than any other party. What great plans does the letter-writer have for the increase in revenue?

Surely, we must pay for what we need, but he seems to want someone else to pay for what he wants. Higher taxes have never attracted folks to clamber for them, nor business to rush to places which promise to tax them more. As for pride, I've heard it comes before the fall.

By the way, what happened to the extra \$300 million?

Sincerely
William B. Caudle II

ground" justification.

I applaud my lunch conversationalist for his desire that people who want to open carry weapons fall under the same scrutiny as those with concealed carry permits. He is right that the "showing off" factor could be dangerous and disconcerting at best. But I am also left with two other thoughts.

One, thinking that taking a weapon around with you in public places is somehow protective to you and detrimental to perpetrators is a naïve notion. It smacks of the frontier lawlessness mentality where every citizen can assess a crisis situation, use a gun accordingly, and not go to jail. If someone where robbing a Subway (a big if), waving your gun with bystanders in the room will as likely get people killed as diffuse the situation. You think you are reasonable and can shoot? What about the guy who passes a background check and can carry his weapon the same as you, but he's mentally ill or can't fire a shot and hit the broad side of a barn? This isn't the rootin' tootin' shootin' Wild West, after all. No one, other than law enforcement, should be able to carry guns, concealed or unconcealed, into public places. The fellow in the café above admitted that if he pulled out a gun and shot someone attempting to rob the place, he could go to jail. I can't grasp, then, why the gun in the first place?

When the founding fathers offered protection from a tyrannical government in the Second Amendment, they

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Capitol Hill Week in Review

■ State Senator

Joey Hensley MD

Senate passes legislation to protect and give more rights to victims of crime Bill aims to uphold Tennessee's death penalty law

The State Senate passed several bills this week to



protect and give more rights to crime victims, including a bill

giving victims of rape the power to keep their identity private. The action came as the nation recognized National Crime Victims' Week, an annual observance to promote victims' right and honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. Senate Bill 2254 provides that identifying information regarding the victim will be treated as confidential following a guilty plea or conviction. The information would not be open for inspection by members of the public, unless the victim waives the right to confidentiality.

The legislation is designed to be sensitive to the victims of sexual offenses and their desire to keep their identity private following the conclusion of a trial where the defendant is found guilty. It requires the district attorney general to inform the victims of their right to privacy. Nothing in the bill can be used to deny access to the public part of this file as long as the personal information is redacted.

The State Senate also passed Senate Bill 2084 this week which repeals the statute of limitations for rape, aggravated rape, rape of a child and aggravated rape of a child, as long as law enforcement or the district attorney general has been notified within three years of the offense. The Senate approved a minor House amendment on the bill on Wednesday and sent the proposal to the governor for his signature. The legislation pertains to acts committed on or after the bill's July 1, 2014 effective date and offenses committed prior to that date, as long as the statute of limitations has not expired. The current statutes of limitations range from 8 years to 15 years for rape of an adult and up to 25 years after the 18th birthday of the victim when the offense involves a child.

Sex Offender Registry -- In similar action, Senators voted to approve legislation which defines "offender against children" for purpose of the state's Sex Offender Registry as a sexual offender, violent sexual offender, or violent juvenile sexual offender if the victim in one or more of the offender's crimes was 12 years old or younger.

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16,300+ published &
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Published each Wednesday and Sunday at
121 North Military Ave., P. O. Box 308, Lawrenceburg, TN 38464
Phone # (931) 762-1726, FAX # (931) 762-7874

www.lawrencecountyadvocate.net

Capitol Hill Review: Weekly Roundup on the Hill

■ State Representative Barry Doss

In the final week of the legislative session, the House of Representatives passed Tennessee's annual budget with a 68 – 27 vote. The bill's passage was the culmination of months of tireless work crafting a fiscally responsible and balanced budget. While the \$32.4 billion budget does contain cuts due to a shortfall in projected tax revenue collections for the year, House lawmakers focused their efforts on passing a lean, well-planned budget that preserves and protects those services Tennesseans depend on across the state while also helping provide an even better environment for businesses to grow and for jobs to flourish.

Budget highlights include:

- Providing \$8.5 million in salary equity funds for the 83 lowest paid school systems across the state;
- A continued investment in jobs by providing over \$56 million to the Jobs4TN program;
- \$77 million to TennCare to handle increased enrollment;
- Increasing funding for the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Department of Intellectual and

Teacher license legislation passes with unanimous support from Representatives

■ State Representative Vance Dennis

Legislation stating a teacher's license cannot be revoked based on student test scores passed the full House of Representative this week with unanimous support from state lawmakers.



The bill, spearheaded by House Republicans, was filed in response to a recent decision by the Tennessee State Board of Education that fundamentally changed the rules of teacher licensure procedures in Tennessee.

Recently, the State Board eliminated teacher licenses based on college degrees and professional training, using instead a statistical estimate of student test scores known as the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS).

Since being approved, the change has been met with fierce opposition from teachers, parents, and school administrators from across the state.

As noted by proponents of the legislation, TVAAS scores can and often do change years after students have left teachers' classrooms, additionally citing that scores can fluctuate wildly for certain grades and subjects. The reason for the deep quirks is because TVAAS is not an absolute score, but a statistical estimate with a standard error built right in.

As in years past, House Republicans have committed to building on the successes and strengths of our students, our teachers, and our schools across Tennessee.

Cleveland group to run 1,000 Miles, raise \$50,000 for Boston Marathon victims

House Republicans salute spirit and activism of volunteers

In 1836, Davy Crockett and 65 other Tennessee men signed "an oath as volunteers" to defend and support their brothers and sisters in Texas at the Alamo. They traveled nearly a thousand miles to extend that "volunteer" support.

Now, 177 years later, 26 Tennessee men and women

Making Lawrence County competitive again

■ submitted by County Commissioner Chris Jackson

I want to commend Barry Gobble on his letter to the editor last week. While Mr. Gobble and I may have some disagreements on policy, we share a common belief that Lawrence County must fundamentally change if we are to become competitive as a county in the future.

On the issue of competitiveness, I recently had a well respected local business owner contact me and tell me a story about how he was recently interviewed by a consulting firm (who represented a prospective business) to get his opinion as to why he feels businesses should locate to Lawrence County. During the midst of their interview, the firm told the businessman that their main concern about moving to Lawrence County was our outdated schools. The consulting firm told him that when they come into a community, they can look at the schools and determine whether the community values education or not. After they make this determination, they then decide whether they want to move their families to the area and put their children in those schools.

The consulting firm told the businessman point blank that when looking at Lawrence County's school facilities, they can tell that we do not value education and do not make the needed investments to provide for a quality education. They said they can tell this because many of our school facilities are over 40 years old, dilapidated and often chopped up (not under one roof). My friends, if we are serious about being competitive in the years to come, we must change this perception that outsiders have of our community.

The truth is, we all care about our schools and the internal vitals of our school system are strong. This past year represented the third year in a row our school system has been named the top system in the region out of 16 school systems. That is quite an achievement considering that our school system is third from the bottom in terms of funds out of those 16 school systems. However, when prospective businesses visit our county, they often only do a windshield tour and do not go inside our schools to see the great work that is taking place. While we may not think the facilities matter, outside job creators do and that is the problem we face.

And it's not only our educational facilities that are making us non-competitive when recruiting jobs. It is our lack of skills in certain trades such as welding that are causing our county to suffer economically. As recently as three weeks ago, the local Career Center reported that they had over 50 welding positions open in Lawrence County but couldn't find qualified people to fill them. While our schools do have welding programs, that statistic alone tells us we need a renewed focus on improving and expanding our county's CTE and vocational courses so our students can get the skills they need to hit the ground running when they enter the workforce. Doing so would benefit the students as well as local businesses who are desperate for good workers.

Developmental Disabilities (DIDD);

- Expansion of the Turney Industrial Complex by 200 beds to help overcrowding in local jails;
- \$35.5 million to the state's Rainy Day Fund;
- Fully funding the state's pension plan, making it one of the most healthy retirement systems in the entire country;
- Preserving full funding for the state's Basic Education Program's (BEP) equity fund;
- \$31 million to continue the state's property tax freeze for seniors and disabled veterans;
- And fully funding cost of increased insurance premiums for state employees.

Representative Doss went on to say, "I am proud of what we have accomplished together this session, and completing the state's budget this early reflects the legislature's commitment to conducting its business in an efficient and effective manner. I have enjoyed working with Governor Haslam and my colleagues in the General Assembly as we continue our work to make Tennessee the number one location in the Southeast for high quality jobs. I look forward to building upon the progress we have made this session to make our state an even better place to live, work, and raise a family."

have signed another "oath as volunteers" to support their brothers and sisters involved in last year's tragic Boston Marathon bombing. This volunteer effort, which includes an epic eight day relay run starting in Cleveland, Tennessee and ending in Boston, Massachusetts, aims to raise awareness about the ongoing issues victims of the Boston bombings continue to face and presents an opportunity to raise funds to support those victims and their families.

Leaving Tennessee on April 12th, 2014 and arriving in Boston on April 20th, the twenty-six person group will be accompanied by support vehicles and will run non-stop, 24 hours a day with through eight states and over 1,000 miles, hitting multiple major metropolitan areas including Knoxville, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City. The group will also make stops in several small communities along the way, with the official halfway point being Madison, Virginia—population 210. The goal of the run is to raise \$50,000 between Tennessee and Massachusetts.

The running team has selected two charities to partner with for the run. The first organization, the *One Step Ahead Foundation*, provides support and services for those children who lost limbs when the pair of homemade pressure-cooker bombs went off at last year's Boston Marathon finish line. The second charity, *Dream Big!*, serves the underprivileged through involvement with local sporting activities. In addition, the team has received sponsorships that will cover most of the costs of the journey, with any remaining expenses being paid for by the team itself to allow 100% of donations to go to their partnering charities.

In Tennessee, the marathon group will travel through the cities of Cleveland, Lenoir City, Knoxville, Morristown, Jonesborough, and Bristol.

For generations, the people of Tennessee have answered the call to volunteer for others in need, and this is still true today all across the state.

To learn more about the fundraising effort to help the Boston Marathon victims, visit <http://runnowrelay.org/>.

With all this said, these are the reasons why I believe the proposed school building plan is so critical to our county's future success. Will the building program be the silver bullet to all of our county's problems? No. No one thing will. But we do know that it would make our county more attractive to potential industry and that it would update and expand important CTE and vocational classes that will give students the skills they need when they enter the workforce. Those facts alone should prompt us to act. Not to mention the fact that if done in a balanced and incremental way, we can do the building program without a tax increase of any kind. It is a no-brainer.

In local government, there isn't a whole lot we can do to "create jobs". The main thing we can do on economic development is to make the needed investments in our county to foster an atmosphere that gives prospective industries a reason to come to our county. They aren't just going to come on their own, especially when every other county around the state and nation are stepping up their game and becoming more competitive. We know the problems that exist in Lawrence County. It's time we fix them in a responsible manner so we can thrive in the future as we have in the past.

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Hensley . . . *Continued from A-4*

Senate Bill 2083 requires a person classified as an offender against children to remain on the Sex Offender Registry for life. The Registry is open to the public. In addition, the bill adds aggravated sexual battery to the list of offenses to place a juvenile on the Juvenile Sexual Registry. The Juvenile Registry is not open to the public, but is available to law enforcement.

The Senate also passed Senate Bill 2090 to help ensure Tennessee is not a destination for sex offenders as a result of having weaker laws than other states regarding work and residential restrictions. Tennessee law already has such restrictions for child sex offenders. This legislation prohibits any sexual offender, whose victim was an adult, from knowingly establishing a residence or to accept employment within 1,000 feet of any public, private or parochial school, licensed day care center, other child care facility, public park, playground, recreation center or athletic field available for use by the general public.

Abuse of Elderly and Disabled -- The State Senate passed legislation on Wednesday to protect elderly and adults with disabilities from abuse. Senate Bill 1852 increases punishment for adult abuse, exploitation or neglect from a Class E to a Class D felony. The move will help district attorneys prosecute the crime without having to meet the higher evidentiary standard required under the state's adult abuse laws reserved for more serious crimes.

This bill not only helps prosecutors punish offenders, but makes sure that those who have been convicted are on the Registry to prevent them from being hired elsewhere, as well as provides a forum for comprehensive look at how we can prevent abuse of our elderly and disabled.

Victims / Students -- In addition, the Senate approved legislation which grants the court broad discretion to assign a juvenile offender, whose victim attends the same school, to another school in consultation with the local education agency. Senate Bill 583 grants the court discretion to determine how best to restrict future contact of the defendant with the victim while in school or other public settings, unless the victim and his or her parents, consent to the attendance.

Tyrades . . . *Continued from A-4*

there.")

A refund isn't going to make or break my budget, and if I OWE taxes, it just makes me feel so insignificant. I start realizing that all the money my patriotic co-workers and I will ever contribute to Uncle Sam probably wouldn't pay for one good congressional junket. ("My congressman got this T-shirt – and all I got was 40 years of labor.")

Most importantly, the more I stretch out the tax season, the more leeway I'm given about household chores. For those of us in charge of the family's taxes, taking down Christmas lights, cleaning out the garage and mowing the lawn are low priorities until that tax return is filed. ("Dear, I think that's the neighbor boy's bike you've been dragging underneath the car for the past six blocks." "Tut tut. All in good time. In MY dictionary, 'amortization' comes before 'bicycle.' *Chuckle*")

Hold your heads high as you burn that midnight oil or file that extension. Straighten that stack of receipts and announce with confidence, "Surely next week Tyree will have something worth reading!"

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Tennessee. . . *Continued from A-4*

were referring to *tyranny* as they had experienced with the Crown, not the bogeyman hiding behind corners. And their weapon of defense was primarily the musket, not an AK 47 or even a 357 Magnum. You can stretch the 2nd Amendment as far as the eye can see, but you can't inject the rationale for these or any weapons being carried in restaurants or other public places.

Have your guns! For heaven's sakes *we* own guns! Just understand that gun ownership is a privilege and with that privilege comes responsibility. Legislators around the country are wasting precious taxpayer time and expense trying to chip away at gun laws that were established to protect innocent civilians and prevent shootings that are plaguing school children and others across the country.

Thank goodness we dodged a bullet on this one when it was defeated in the House this week, but at least the controversy spurred conversation among the population (if not in the Senate). Somehow, legislators must get the message that citizens deserve more protection from gun proliferation, not less.

Emily Weathers Kennedy is a freelance writer, blogger, artist, photo stylist, and decorator. Her work is online and in product catalogs and her award winning kitchen design was featured in the September 2008 issue of Better Homes & Gardens. Emily lives with her husband, 3 dogs, and 2 cats and writes from their farm in Loretto, where she was born and raised.

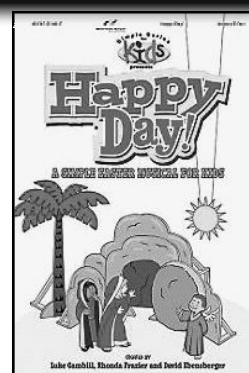
Pine Grove Baptist Church

"Serving the Master by Serving Others" "Rather serve one another in love" - Galatians 5:13b

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EGG HUNT
Saturday, April 19 • 11 a.m.



There will be lots of eggs to find, door prizes and our Praise Team will present the Easter Musical "Happy Day". Also, please join us for our Easter service on Sunday, April 20 at 11 a.m. Hope you can come!



Contact our pastor Bro. Jerry Roebuck for more info:

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EVERYONE IS INVITED!

