

## Staking out the moral high ground?

**Fourth District's Tea Party majority seems to ignore that Desjarlais is forever in the swamp**

**By Emily Weathers Kennedy**

My husband and I recently had a discussion. It's probably one that many readers have had with their significant others, family, or friends at some point or another involving hypotheticals and opinions.

He asked me if I thought someone's public behavior were necessarily affected if that person had questionable moral character. In other words, he wanted to know if I thought someone with a track record of cheating on and/or lying to his or her spouse could be trusted to make sound judgments as an elected official.

"You mean Bill Clinton, right?" I asked him, weary already of this subject. "Well, if you're going to throw him in why not include JFK, Franklin Roosevelt, and Thomas Jefferson? Can you honestly say that their transgressions hurt their performances in office?" I knew I had him. These former presidents are highly regarded, according to historians, their records mostly beyond reproach. Even Bill Clinton's tenure in office has withstood the test of public opinion after his indiscretion with a White House intern, especially with a robust economy and huge budget surplus to cap off his term.

My husband was struggling with the notion. He said he did not trust someone in office who had betrayed his family, though he realized great presidents had done this very thing. Deeper into the discussion, I realized he was troubled about the results of the Fourth District primary in Tennessee. He could not believe that Scott Desjarlais' voters gave him a shot for a third term in office. This is one politician whose supporters baffle me as well.

With a nod to religion, the far right wing of the Republican party often calls the high ground, portraying themselves and their candidates as morally superior. After all, a party that supports gay marriage and Roe vs. Wade must be standing on the shifting sand of morality, so the thinking goes. Yet, even moderate Republicans are

being whacked with the bat of their shrill rhetoric. Lamar Alexander, a reasonable and traditional Republican with a track record for leadership in this state and in the nation and world, lost in Maury County simply because the local Tea Party labeled him as gun-hating, Obama-loving sinner.

Republican Scott DeJarlais' indiscretions are public record. He admitted having eight affairs, encouraged a lover to get an abortion, and used a gun to intimidate his first wife. He was reprimanded and fined by the Tennessee Board of Medical Examiners in May for having sex with patients (before he was in office), a behavior that though not illegal, is highly unethical. So, why did 73% of voters in rural Franklin County, for example, choose to reelect DeJarlais with his personal issues? DeJarlais claims it is because Tennesseans trust him in Washington. Indeed, people interviewed have said that they trust him as the known against the unknown to vote the way they want him to vote.

While I respect my husband's struggle with this topic, I myself do not judge a candidate based on personal indiscretions. For the most part, I wish the media would respect the private lives of politicians and let them keep their bedroom secrets.

But those who call the moral high ground should think twice before proclaiming superiority. If DeJarlais prostrated himself and said a million times, "I'm sorry," it still does not make him a person with sound moral judgment or good sense. It really only makes him a politician who will say anything to get ardent conservatives behind him. And obviously, they will fall in line so long as he tows the Tea Party line.

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## Hensley . . . Continued from A-4

parking lot law to include all vehicles lawfully possessed by the permit holder with the exception of government or business owned vehicles. This legislation ensures that incidental exposure of a firearm during the course of securing that firearm in a locked vehicle does not violate state law with regards to having a firearm in a locked vehicle on an employer's parking lot.

The second law declares that a handgun carry permit holder transporting or storing a firearm does not violate state law if the gun is observed by another person or security device during the ordinary course of the person securing the firearm in their automobile.

Similarly, legislation I sponsored was approved clarifying the intent of the 2013 Safe Commute law and making the bill uniform across the state.

**Second Amendment Rights / Handgun Permits** -- The General Assembly adopted legislation to allow for a handgun carry permit holder to change their address with the state online if they so choose to ease the process.

Another bill passed this year to help make the handgun permit process easier by lengthening the time in which a handgun carry permit is valid from four to five years, with expiration on the holder's birthdate. It provides that in the future the permit will align with the holder's driver's license renewal expiration date to ease the process.

The new law also provides that a person who is on active duty or has been honorably discharged from the armed forces or who is currently serving in the National Guard has to pay only that portion of the initial handgun carry permit fee that is necessary to conduct a criminal history record check.

## Tyrades . . . Continued from A-4

programs. Look for every occurrence of "Oh, baby, baby" to wind up as "Oh, twins!"

The format magnanimously gives an artist twice as much of the intangible asset "exposure," but of course it also gives twice as much exposure to the OTHER artists competing for consumers' limited dollars. Those doggone "level playing fields" -- they'll make your head spin faster than a 78 r.p.m. record.

One industry figure brags, "A lot of listeners won't even notice what they're missing." That may be true enough (my wife's grandfather once felt neglected as church organist and bet himself he could slip a secular song into his repertoire, before launching into a slower arrangement of "Roll Out The Barrel" that never raised an eyebrow), but it's an insult to the more discerning listeners.

And what caliber of sponsors will these "won't even notice" stations attract? ("Don't even think about shopping anywhere except Murphy Motors. And don't think about the air bags, anti-lock brakes or alarm systems, either. You'll sleep better.")

We really are not set up to handle the inevitable social upheaval

if the QuickHitz format succeeds. Romance will suffer ("Listen, honey, they're playing our -- never mind"), concert roadies will be replaced with split-second NASCAR pit crews and underemployed musicians will wander the streets with signs proclaiming, "Will perform self-indulgent guitar solos for food -- as long as it's food that doesn't mess with my diverticulitis diet, dude."

## Commissioner Chris Jackson re-appointed State Director for national organization

Lawrence County Commissioner Chris D. Jackson has been re-appointed the State Director for Tennessee for the Young Elected Officials Network, a national organization made up of elected officials between the age of 18 and 35. The organization said said that Jackson was selected again as State Director because he has demonstrated the characteristics and attitude to be a leader amongst his peers and to champion the efforts of young elected officials in Tennessee. He was first appointed to this role in 2013. The organization's mission is to unite and support leaders under the age of 35 who share a passion for public service and building progressive and sustainable 21st Century communities. The organization assists young elected officials by providing opportunities for officials to exchange ideas, network with like-minded elected officials, develop leadership skills, and connect with policy development organizations and think tanks.

Jackson, who represents the 2nd District area of Loretto, was first elected to the county commission in 2006 at the age of 19, becoming one of the youngest elected officials in the country and in the history of Tennessee. He was subsequently re-elected in 2010 and 2014. While in office, he has worked diligently on issues that are vital to Lawrence County's current and future success including economic development, education, public safety, infrastructure and ethics in government.

"It is a true honor to be selected again as the State Director of the Young Elected Officials Network for the State of Tennessee," Jackson said of his re-appointment. The issues

that our county, state and nation face are complex and will take real leadership from our next generation to solve. I am proud to be leading this group of young elected officials who are not interested in partisanship, but rather solving real problems for the people we represent."

Jackson said continuing to serve in this position will also benefit Lawrence County. "Serving in this capacity will not only benefit the people of my district but our county as a whole. Relationships in government are vital to success and this organization has contacts across the country, in all branches of government. Having these contacts as readily available I will be a plus when it comes to issues that county government may need help on in the future."

Jackson is a graduate of the University of North Alabama and active member of the Loretto Lions Club where he serves as vice president. He is secretary of the South Lawrence Economic Development Association. He is married to the former Kailea Daniels of Leoma.



SUMMERTOWN LIONS CLUB President (and newly-elected District Attorney General) Brent Cooper (Right) presented a \$1,250 donation to the Summertown Lions Club. Accepting the donation is Club Treasurer Howard Kitter (left).

## Concerned about an issue? Let them hear from you . . .

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