OPINION

SEND YOUR LETTERS
Mail: 2205 N. Bedell Ave.; Del Rio, TX 78840
E-mail: newsroom@delrionewsherald.com

EDITORIAL

Obama made right choice

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

The world's leadership is thick with bullies, strongmen and demagogues, but Russia's Vladimir Putin is in a league of his own. Thuggish, vain and egocentric, Putin is a product of the worst of the old Soviet Union – the feared KGB – and it shows.

Putin richly deserves a public comeuppance, and President Barack Obama has rightly given him one by canceling a planned bilateral summit in Moscow with the Russian leader prior to the G-20 meeting scheduled for early September in the czarist capital city of St. Petersburg.

Is this about Putin's handling of the Edward Snowden matter? No doubt. But the list of significant U.S. grievances with the Russian strongman is not merely public relations. It's also about harrowing geopolitics.

Starting with Syria and the Middle East, Russia's behavior in the Syrian civil war has been utterly unworthy of a nation that lays claim to status as a world power.

Putin has cynically manipulated the situation in his nation's most important client state, precipitating a potential calamity in neighboring Jordan and across the Middle East.

Putin's behavior harkens back to the Cold War era that reasonable people had hoped was finished. For his part, the president has drawn a needed line in the sand that confronts Putin the bully while leaving room for cooperation in areas where that is possible. Going to Moscow for summitry with Vladimir Putin would have been spun as triumph for the thug and weakness on the American president's part.

We're glad Obama canceled. Putin's actions have consequences.

ANOTHER VIEW

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Del Rio Hospital Board called out for hiring practices around CEO

To the Editor:

Leaders of The Border Organization are asking the Del Rio Hospital Board to call a special meeting in order to nullify their vote to hire the hospital's chief executive officer immediately.

TBO leaders believe that the vote was conducted in an invalid manner.

The vote was taken by a so-called secret ballot. They did not have to sign their names to the ballots they cast; for all we know, the vote could have been fixed. There is a reason that a public board must take a public vote.

TBO leaders believe that the people of the community have a right to know how the people they elected to represent them voted on this important issue. All the more so given that the vote negated the present management contract with Methodist Healthcare System.

Furthermore, at least two members of the board have stated that Methodist Healthcare System has mismanaged the hospital. Given that when Methodist took over the management of the hospital, it was several million dollars in debt, and now is several million dollars in the black.

The undisclosed accusations do not seem plausible according to the undeniable financial facts. In a conversation with a representative from the Methodist Healthcare System with TBO leaders, the representative said he knew of no such concerns nor has the board brought any such concerns to his attention.

TBO leader Arturo Castro said, "If there has been mismanagement, then we want to know what these issues are. Furthermore, we believe that Methodist Healthcare System should have the right to respond to these accusations. We don't live in Russia. In this country, we have a right to face our accusers. If there are issues, then we want to know what they are, and we believe that Methodist should be given an opportunity to respond to these accusations."

The Border Organization is a nonprofit organization that does not endorse or support candidates for public office, political parties or political philosophies.

Its purpose is the development of community leaders that organize the people of the community around issues that affect the common welfare. Such is an issue regarding the hospital board's vote, primarily the secrecy, unspecified accusations, and the political innuendo the secret vote has created.

Signed,
Sandra C. Fuentes
Co-Chair, The Border Organization

LETTERS POLICY

◆ **BASICS:** No more than 400 words; limit of 10 names in 'thank you' letters. No anonymous letters; first and last name required. All letters edited for style, grammar, length and civility.

◆ **SEND TO:** Del Rio News-Herald; Letters to the Editor; 2205 Bedell; Del Rio, TX 78840 or newsroom@delrionewsherald.com

◆ **Questions?** Call Diana R. Fuentes at (830) 703-3020.

COLUMN

Road woes become a pothole for Perry

Dave McNeely

Gov. Rick Perry, apparently running for president again, went to New Orleans last Saturday to talk to a RedState blogging group – to whom he'd announced in 2011 his last presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, to out-conservative other Republican hopefuls, he wanted the Texas Legislature to give him bragging rights for tight-fistedness.

Perry had told legislators to fix transportation, but not with logical methods like raising the motor fuels tax or larger fees on heavy trucks.

The gas tax was last hiked a nickel in 1991, to 20 cents a gallon. It would have to be 34.3 cents a gallon today to have the same buying power.

Under threat of Perry's veto, that 20-cent tax today is worth in 11.7 cents in 1991 dollars. Meanwhile, cars get many more miles per gallon.

So, solve a money problem, Perry had said, without new taxes or fees. Perry's feigned conservatism has forced legislators to rely on toll roads, or highway bonds – far more expensive over time.

That legislators finally came up Monday with just over a quarter of a loaf is more a credit to their inventiveness than Perry's leadership.

When a slightly different version had gotten just 84 of the necessary 100 to achieve a two-thirds vote in the House at the close of the second special session a week earlier, House Speaker Joe Straus released a rare critical statement saying a growing number of House members agreed that it was "a Band-Aid over a pothole."

"In the end, you still have a pothole and you've spent a lot of money without solving the fundamental problem," the usually tight-lipped Straus said. "Legislators know that Texas needs a much more comprehensive approach to funding our growing state's growing transportation needs, and another 30-day special session will not change that."

But Perry scolded the House, and ignored pleas from exhausted lawmakers, in session since January, to give them a rest.

"A plan was on the table that would have taken a significant step toward improving our roads and highways using existing revenue," Perry's statement said. "Inaction is a Washington-style attempt to kick a can down the road – but everybody in Texas knows we're rapidly running out of roads to kick that can down."

That legislators succeeded in passing the cobbled-together proposal in a slightly different form in a whirlwind effort Monday is more attributable to their sheer interest in finally getting some time off, after meeting for seven months straight, than fondness for the Band-Aid.

"I'm frustrated," Rep. Drew Darby, R-San Angelo, had said as the second special session fizzled to a close, "because we've been given marching orders and rules that prevent us from actually fixing the problem."

But Monday, after a lot of back-and-forth churning, the House and Senate managed to agree on a convoluted proposal that diverts part of the oil and gas tax money that goes into the state's Rainy Day Fund to transportation.

To avoid directly taking money out of the fund, which requires a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate, key legislators chose to amend the set-up for the fund – its real name is the Economic Stabilization Fund --- in the Texas Constitution

That also took a two-thirds vote in each chamber, and will require voters to approve the proposal l in the Nov. 4, 2014, general election for it to take effect.

There are two parts of the proposal. Senate Joint Resolution 1 is the constitutional amendment proposal. House Bill 1 is the implementing legislation, to put the measure into effect if voters agree next year. The Legislature would have to re-approve the diversion in 2025 in order for it to continue.

The proposal will produce an estimated $1.2 billion a year – just 30 percent of the way to making up the $4 billion transportation annual addition that the executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation says is necessary just to keep Texas' mobility from deteriorating further.

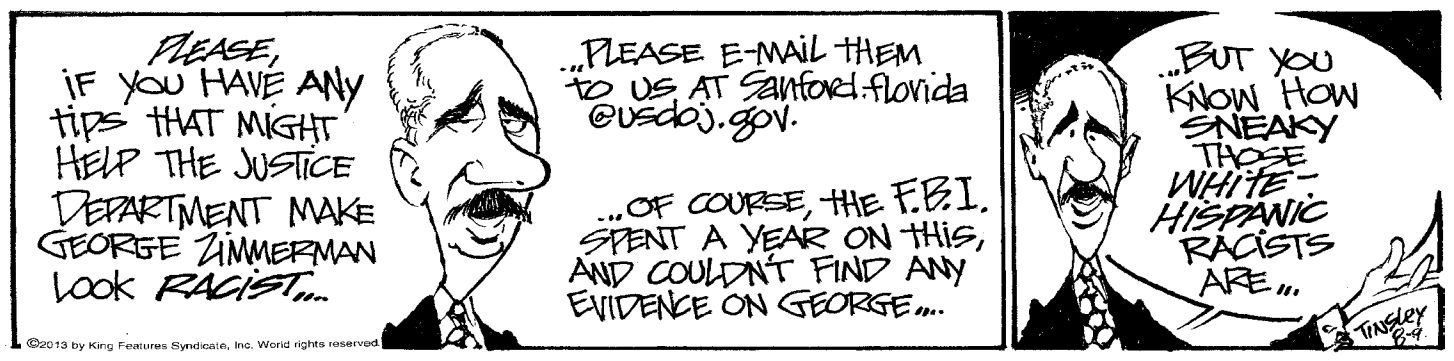
The TxDOT executive director, Phil Wilson, is no spend-crazy bureaucrat. After a decade on the staff of former Republican U.S. Sen. Phil Gramm, he was on Perry's staff for years. As deputy chief of staff, Wilson oversaw the governor's initiatives on economic development and job creation. Perry appointed him Texas secretary of state in 2007.

So, while Perry has been running around the country begging businesses to come to Texas, Wilson has been pleading for more funding so they and everyone already here can get around.

Late Monday night, the House concurred with Senate in the final result, with more than a two-thirds vote in each chamber. The Legislature adjourned and everyone went home.

OK voters – it's up to you. We never told you it was going to be easy.

MALLARD FILMORE



CONTACT YOUR LAWMAKER

PRESIDENT
Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20500
202-456-1111
comments@whitehouse.gov

SENATOR
John Cornyn
370 Russell Senate Office
Washington, D.C., 20500
202-224-2934
online@cornyn.senate.gov

SENATOR
Ted Cruz
Dirksen Senate Office
Building, Suite SDB-40B
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-5922

GOVERNOR
Rick Perry
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711
512-463-2000
online
@governor.state.tx.us

U.S. CONGRESS
Pete P. Gallego
431 Cannon House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-4511
PeteTX23@mail.house.gov

TEXAS HOUSE
Poncho Nevárez
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768
(512) 463-0566
poncho.nevarez@
house.state.tx.us

TEXAS SENATE
Carlos I. Uresti
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas, 78711
512-463-0119
carlos.uresti@
senate.state.tx.us

COUNTY JUDGE
Laura Allen
400 Pecan St.
Del Rio, Texas, 78840
830-774-7501
lallen@valverdecounty.org

MAYOR
Roberto Fernandez
109 W. Broadway St.
Del Rio, Texas, 78840
830-774-8558
mayor@cityofdelrio.com