

Editorial

Vander Plaats, King threaten Iowa's judiciary

The mere existence of Iowans for Freedom blows our minds. We have no idea what would possess people to start an organization with the goal of rescinding equal legal treatment for a particular minority, especially under the pretense of judicial reform.

We're not sure if we're ashamed of or sorry for the Iowans endorsing these actions — they've either been completely misled regarding the intended usage of the retention vote or knowingly choose to subsidize state-wide discrimination. Either way, there is no benevolent agenda behind what Bob Vander Plaats and Steve King are trying to accomplish — sowing the seeds of bigotry to reap the vote of their like-minded constituents.

Well, not Vander Plaats; nobody voted for him. Incumbent King, however, has recently sent letters to Iowa news organizations urging folks to oust the Iowa Supreme Court. Keep in mind, folks — the Supreme Court didn't wave some magical wand and create new LGBT-friendly legislation. It upheld a district court ruling that said denying marriage licenses based on sexual orientation not only violates the equal protection clause of the Iowa Constitution, but that doing so is of no significant governmental interest.

The oh-so-eloquent King remarked that this would turn Iowa into a "gay marriage mecca," stating, "[When] judges usurp the letter of the Constitution and the Code of Iowa to suit their whim, they must be removed from office."

He's also used colorful language in describing our justices — "rogue," "elitist" and "out of touch" — words we never hear from the right-wing spin machine.

The disservice is that Iowa's system is hardly broken, at least according to the experts. During a recent stop in Des Moines, former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor sang the praises of the system we use to appoint our judges. The retention vote exists as a means to counteract politicization or corruption of the bench — precisely what Vander Plaats and LGBT rights opponents are doing with their crusade.

Thankfully, a who's-who of Iowa politicians, including former Gov. Rob Ray (R), former Lt. Gov. Art Leu and Christie Vilsack have responded with Fair Courts for Us.

The group's co-chairman, Republican Dan Moore, stated, "It's important for people to understand that voting 'yes' to retain the justices is a vote to keep politics out of our courts. Iowa's court system is respected and highly ranked nationally for its fairness and impartiality."

Another group — Iowans for Fair & Impartial Courts — has also been formed. Spokesman Norman Kaunt had this to say: "Iowa's courts are rated one of the most fair and impartial in the country. This is the first time Iowa has had special interests and major campaign donations involved in a judicial retention election. This kind of campaign can push judges to consider the political implications of their rulings as opposed to limiting themselves to the application of the law to the facts of a case brought before them. This, in turn, can subvert citizens' belief in whether judges can be fair and impartial."

We recognize the need for equal rights among all persons, regardless of race, religion or sexual orientation, a point of view we share with the Iowa Supreme Court. We don't see their ruling as an attempt to legislate from the bench, but, rather, to retain a semblance of equity within our state.

If King, Vander Plaats and others insist on continuing their charade, we're more than happy to call it like it is. We sincerely hope you'll join us on Nov. 2 in voting "yes" on retention.

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Games

Would you survive?



By Rick.Hanton@iowastatedaily.com

Zombie game encourages disaster preparedness, as well as efforts to have fun

I got a message the other day on Facebook from a friend who I helped a few years ago to set up an ISU freeze on Central Campus. She was inviting me to join a few hundred other ISU students in an event happening at the end of this month, a "Zombie Invasion!" The game goes a little something like this: Beginning on Homecoming weekend — Oct. 29 — participants will each begin wearing a red bandana visibly on their body to show that they are human, not zombies. A single person will also have a green bandana on. They are the zombie.

The zombies can tag non-zombies to turn them into zombies, thus increasing the zombie population exponentially. But zombies who don't tag anyone within a week of being turned into a zombie die of starvation and are out of the game.

The object, of course, is to survive the invasion. There are also more important rules about what areas on campus are on- and off-limits for the game that can be found on the Facebook event, which currently hosts about 450 confirmed participants.

I think this game should be a ton of fun for participants, as evidenced by its continued success at other colleges across the country and around the world.

The game was actually started by a group of students at Goucher College in Maryland back in 2005 and usually goes by the name "Humans vs. Zombies" on the Internet.

Five years after the Goucher students began formulating official rules, there is now an official Humans vs. Zombies website, wiki, and forums hosted by Gnarwhal Studios, a small company formed by the original Goucher College students.

They even provide the ability for game organizers to set up a website to keep an active tally of who is still a human and who has turned into a zombie.

So, why play a game with human-eating zombies? Well, because it seems that a lot of us today like zombies.

In recent years, movie producers have found them to be excellent movie antagonists, as they don't exist — to my knowledge — in reality, but they are intensely scary and inherently evil in a sense. Zombies

have been featured in movies like "Resident Evil," "28 Days Later," "I Am Legend" and my personal favorite at the moment: "Zombieland," which was featured prominently during last year's Kaleidoquiz trivia contest.

It is easy to picture yourself as an everyday "hero" survivor in a zombie-infested world, which makes a zombie invasion so much fun to think about, read about or watch movies about.

But let's be frank. What would we do if zombies really attacked Iowa State? Well, likely only the well-prepared would survive. That's why I would advise students to check out groups like the Zombie Squad, whose slogan is "We Make Dead Things Deader" or the "Zombie Preparedness Initiative" knowledge-base. Actually a friend of mine who is a grad student at Iowa State recently designed a website called Zombie Strategies with lots of Google Maps integration to help people plan their zombie survival plan.

The university could make preparations

for the zombie apocalypse too, just like Doug Johnson at the University of Florida, who last year posted a detailed plan for zombie attack on UF's e-Learning Support Services website alongside plans for hurricanes and pandemic diseases. Notably, university officials took down Johnson's overzealous zombie plan that included official forms to declare why and how employees killed infected co-workers after it showed up in local news, but you can still check it out online.

In reality, while a lot of zombie-preparedness groups are fun to check out and have some fun with, many do serve a useful real-world purpose.

For instance, while the Zombie Squad's armored anti-zombie vehicles and protective body armor are pretty cool, the group focuses its chapters on doing charity work and disaster preparation education. They host food drives, blood drives, educational clinics and ham radio networks that serve the community in the name of being prepared for a zombie attack.

We could all learn something from these groups about hoping for the best and being prepared for the worst, especially in light of all of the flooding that seems to happen every few years outside our front door in Ames.

It is also good to ponder whether humans could mistakenly create some kind of virus that might turn people into zombies and how we can prevent such a disaster from happening.

But in the end, I'm just happy that zombies have taken on such a pivotal role in today's society and will be excited to see what transpires when the zombie apocalypse hits Iowa State on Oct. 29.



Courtesy photo: Kenny Louie/Flickr

Technology

Evaluate your interactions



By Curtis.Powers@iowastatedaily.com

Put larger focus on people, less on technology

Neil Postman once said, "Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice. The result is that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death."

If you are not familiar with Postman, I encourage you to read his book, "Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business."

It was one of the most formative books I read as an undergraduate.

The book was published in 1985, the year after George Orwell had predicted Big Brother would have taken over.

He thought Orwell was wrong.

On the other hand, he thought Aldous Huxley, author of "Brave New World," was right.

His foreword is particularly

revealing.

In it he states, "But in Huxley's vision, no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think."

"What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one ...

"Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy and the centrifugal bumblepuppy ...

"In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us."

Even though that was written 25 years ago, Postman's message is still relevant today. His main argument was that we need to think through how new technology will change the way we think, learn, etc.

We shouldn't just passively

accept new technology and assume it will make our lives better.

Often, there are hidden, unintended consequences to new technology.

Take for instance the e-book. Studies have shown that reading an e-book on an e-reader like a Kindle is vastly different from reading a regular old book.

People tend to skim the text more, read slower and not be able to remember what they read as well.

I don't remember everything Postman talked about in his book. However, I do remember one part that caused me to change the way I lived.

So back in the 1980s, he was primarily concerned with the television's effect on people.

In one section, I think he wanted you to think as an anthropologist and ask yourself this question.

If you came into your place of living, what would you say is very important to you based on the way your furniture and other things were set up?

In most cases, as was mine, the television is the center point of the room. Everything is based around it.

Therefore, the television is more important to you than say, people are.

This struck me so much that I decided to change around the furniture in my living room at the time to become more people-centered.

Eventually, I decided to forgo having a television altogether because of that idea and the fact that I generally wasted a lot of time watching shows I didn't actually want to watch. I just couldn't turn away because it was like a drug to me.

It was probably one of the better decisions I've made in my life. When I compare my actions in the presence of a TV and in a context without one, there is a drastic difference.

For instance, I don't think I would be married to my wife today if I hadn't made that move. It's that big of a difference.

So I want to encourage you to evaluate the technology you interact with.

How does it affect your life? Maybe even ask if you need to take a break from it.

Who knows, maybe then you'll actually have to time to meet a future mate.