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## EDITORIAL

# ‘Walk a Mile’ event raises awareness of important issues

Human nature is to not think about unpleasant things. Not a lot of people want to think about issues like domestic violence, sexual assault or sex trafficking. That’s what makes events like the “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes” rally at College of Coastal Georgia on Thursday so important.

The genius behind the event is that it wraps a funny premise around an important cause. The images of men like towering Coastal Georgia men’s basketball coach Jesse Watkins squeezing his feet into a pair of red high heels and walking around the campus are humorous.

Dozens of men embraced the event, donning high heels to show their support while others marched with signs for the cause. “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes” is an international event that aims to stop rape, sexual assault and gender violence.

While the event was light-hearted, the stats surrounding the event were not. Andrea Belton, volunteer coordinator and community prevention specialist at the Connie Smith Rape Crisis Center in Brunswick, said it’s estimated a person is sexually assaulted every 98 seconds.

The situation is exasperated by a lack of resources for victims.

Belton said for the 159 counties in the state, there are only 31 rape crisis centers and only five are full service.

We are lucky to have one of those in Glynn County, but the state needs to do a better job of making sure more resources are available to victims.

The event also drew attention to a little-discussed topic — sex trafficking. If we are going to reduce the number of victims for any of these problems, it’s important for the community to educate itself on the signs that one of these crimes is being committed.

“We can’t stop anything if we don’t know what to look for,” said Judi Riccio, executive director of Faithful Love, which is an organization that reaches out to women in the community who are victims of sex trafficking.

“It’s important that we know the signs of domestic violence, of intimate partner violence, of sex trafficking.”

Along the path that the participants walked were 149 red shoes that marked 149 people killed in the state due to domestic violence. With some education, hopefully we can help reduce that number as well as the number of those affected by sexual assault and sex trafficking.

## COLUMN / REG MURPHY



# How secure are voters’ ballots in Georgia?

“Georgia is one of only five states that rely solely on the machines. Ours is an antiquated 2002 electronic system.”

I voted early this week—or did I? Where did the vote end up? I don’t know. Hopefully in the official Glynn County vote totals, but there is no way to check it.

The Georgia voting system has no backup to the touchscreen. If it is compromised, either intentionally or by breakdown, votes could easily end up in the wrong column.

Let’s revisit the trip to the St. Simons polling place on Monday, three weeks and a day before Election Day:

The early voting place stands shoulder to shoulder with the island police station. Early in the morning, voters were lined out into the parking lot, demonstrating just how energized people are to cast ballots in these elections.

Instead of being as eager as voters, the touchscreen machines were slow, casting the first doubt that this is the best system. Diligent poll workers called in an IT specialist, and the machines worked better.

By the time Lady Diana and I arrived, the line had cleared and nobody was waiting to present a driver’s license and begin the process. We touched the X’s for our candidates, hit the Cast Your Ballot button and hoped the votes were recorded correctly.

Wearing the peachy I Voted badges, we ventured outside. Good citizens doing the right thing. (Remember how oldtimers used to say, “vote early and often?” We didn’t.)

Nobody can be certain the tally on that machine is accurate. Again, there is no backup.

Consider the consequences of that. If there is a contested election, which happens often, or a suspected breach or tampering attempt, it is impossible to verify the election outcome.

Suspicious minds might recall a quip attributed to the former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger: “Just because you are paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t after you.”

Georgia is one of only five states that rely solely on the machines. Ours is an antiquated 2002 electronic system. (Louisiana, South Carolina, New Jersey and Delaware don’t have backup, either.)

Three bills were introduced in the Georgia General Assembly recently to modify the system to produce paper backup, but they died aborning.

Secretary of State Brian Kemp (and now the Republican candidate for governor) has reassured voters that the system is “secure.” He has resisted earlier claims that it is rickety.

Still, reports last week suggested that 19 states, including Georgia, are subject to attack from outside our borders and that hackers have gained some voter information. Curious mailings from China addressed to state governments may have been attempts to insert malware to gain more personal information, experts said.

If hackers from foreign governments have gained access to state voting records — and that could lead to breaching the firewalls erected to keep personal information from being accessed — who knows what comes next.

We already know that Wikileaks received hacked emails from Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign and leaked them. From where? We are not sure. Russia bought space on Facebook, Twitter and other social platforms to sew election discord.

If the internet is that vulnerable to bad actors, it seems almost certain they could contaminate touchscreens to record inaccurate

vote totals on Georgia screens.

And there are 27,000 of those screens in use across the state this election season.

U.S. District Judge Amy Totenberg turned down a request from concerned citizens on Sept. 17 to have the state switch to paper ballots for the Nov. 6 election, but she had sharp words for state officials.

Timing seemed to be everything to Totenberg. She said that “voter frustration and disaffection from the voting process” would be the result if a hasty change had to be made or the election date was moved to another time.

State officials “had buried their heads in the sand” in failing to act to shore up the safety of the ballot earlier, the federal judge said.

One alternative to relying on the touchscreen to record your vote is to use absentee voting. That has to be done on paper. And in this election, record numbers of Georgians are casting their ballots by mail.

There was a time when Georgia was notorious for election fraud. In Telfair County in the 1970s, the voter rolls contained the names of 34 people — apparently taken from their gravestones.

That, by the way, was on paper ballots.

But far more seriously, the 2018 elections carry graver weight. For the first time in Georgia history, a black woman is challenging the very man who has control of the state’s election machinery.

Kemp says the system is secure. Stacey Abrams says it is suspect. Take your choice.

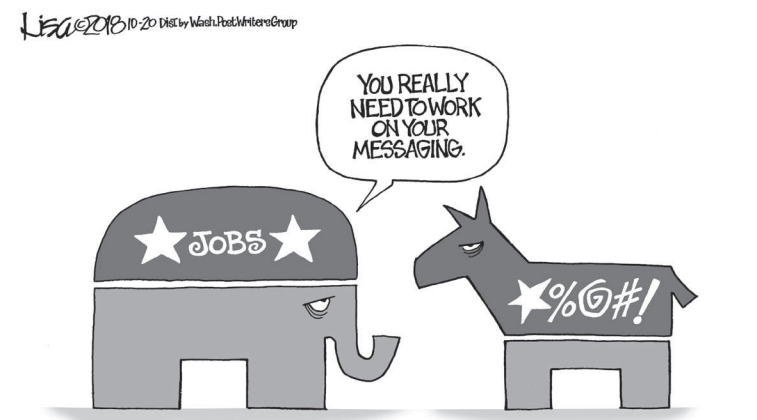
*Reg Murphy, a St. Simons Island resident, is a former publisher of the San Francisco Examiner and the Baltimore Sun.*

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## OTHER VIEWS / MIKE LESTER



## LISA BENSON



## ELECTION POLICY

Letters to the editor sent to The News from candidates for public office will not be published prior to the Nov. 6 general election. Letters regarding candidates will be accepted, but must be received by no later than Monday, Oct. 29, so that letters may be published by Saturday, Nov. 3.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send letters on topics of general interest to readers in Southeast Georgia by:  
Mail Letters to the Editor,  
The Brunswick News, 3011 Altama Ave., Brunswick GA 31520  
Email: editor@thebrunswicknews.com Fax: 912-280-0926  
Letters should be no more than 250 words in length and may be edited for clarity. Letter writers will be limited to one letter every two weeks  
You must include your name, address and phone number.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Letters describing Abrams rally not accurate

I’d like to address several falsehoods in letters published Thursday by Ms. Hall and Ms. Holmes, regarding Tuesday’s rally for Stacey Abrams, which I attended.

Both letters claimed there were no U.S. flags present at the rally — this is false. The stage on which Ms. Abrams spoke was lined with U.S. flags and were visible to anyone actually present at the rally. At one point, her supporters began chanting “Stacey! Stacey!” and she stopped us and changed the chant to: “Georgia! Georgia!” This was audible to anyone in the vicinity of the rally. Ms. Abrams does not see her campaign as about herself or any individual, but about making the government of our great state serve all Georgians.

Ms. Holmes’ letter also repeated a recently popular falsehood — that Ms. Abrams believes undocumented immigrants should be able to vote. Ms. Abrams’ own words on this issue speak for themselves: “I am a lawyer by training, and I have fought for voting rights and I have never in my life suggested that anyone who’s not legally registered should be allowed to cast a ballot.”

Ms. Abrams has run a positive campaign focused on the issues. I encourage us all, regardless of our political affiliation, to rise above stoking partisan flames and intentionally spreading falsehoods. Let’s stick to educating ourselves about the issues and making informed voting decisions that value people over party. For me, that leaves only one choice in the gubernatorial race. I’m proud to vote for Stacey Abrams.

**Laura Whiteside**  
St. Simons Island

### Candidate’s stance on marijuana troubling

At a recent political forum, this

question was asked of all the state legislative candidates.

“Should recreational marijuana be legal in Georgia and should the use of medical marijuana be expanded.” The medical marijuana question for both candidates was a non-issue. But on the issue of legalizing recreational marijuana, here are the answers.

Julie Jordan: “Yes, marijuana should be decriminalized. It would help with our tax base.” (Note: It must be legalized and sold.)

Don Hogan: “No, I would not support legalizing marijuana for recreational use. It is a stepping stone to harder drugs.”

In a recent video made by Julie Jordan regarding the questions at the political forum, she conveniently left her answer for the support of recreational marijuana out of the video. What does that tell you? Parents beware.

**Phil Viviani**  
St. Simons Island

### Ferry would hurt fishing on Village pier

This could be the end of fishing St. Simons and Jekyll piers. Anyone who enjoys these piers please act on this news. Stephen Williams wants to partner with Glynn County/Jekyll Island Authority to run a ferry affixed to the piers.

Fishermen are dependent on tides to put out lines, which means they can’t simply move to another part of the pier away from the boats. Boat traffic would end fishing on either pier. The Village would cease to be the adored fishing village and become something else.

The idea of a ferry is not new. Some feel it will bring business. Inevitably, it would create a parking and traffic problem. The ferry may or may not work, but what must be considered is where to run it. We lost fishing Sea Island bridge due to the G8 Summit, which we didn’t get back after the summit.

We received a small floating dock at Cascoigne Bluff in reparation.

There are marinas that exist out of harms way from the rough sea. The ocean side has been battered by hurricanes and daily rough seas would make stepping off a ferry dangerous. Marinas have parking and seem a more fitting location for a ferry than a fishing pier. Unless the idea is to no longer have a fishing pier. Don’t assume this won’t happen. It will happen if we don’t stop it. Please voice your concerns to the commissioners: <https://www.glynncounty.org/76/Board-of-Commissioners>.

**Tony Burch**  
St. Simons Island

### Board continues to ignore island residents

Recently, the the Glynn County Board of Commissioners chose to ignore those living on St. Simons Island. The BOC’s focus on growth and tax revenue led them to approve a high density row house development (to be built around Bennie’s Red Barn) without regard to its impact on overburdened roads, and water and sewer infrastructure. Are we to expect that the widening of Frederica Road is next on the agenda?

This development was approved despite the fact that the county has a newly enacted tree ordinance. The plat for the row houses was submitted without a tree plan, which didn’t matter to our board of commissioners.

Now that the board of commissioners has regulated the IPC to an advisory board, island residents have few options to preserve the character of the island and limit unbridled growth.

It is time for island residents to seek self rule. Our state representatives need to get on board by supporting legislation to let island residents control zoning.

**James Branca**  
St. Simons Island