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By The Washington Times

Wednesday, August 15, 2007

Driving in Virginia

On Monday, Henrico County Circuit Judge L.A. Harris Jr. ruled that the civil remedial fees imposed only on Virginia drivers are constitutional ("Circuit judge upholds abuser fees for drivers," Metropolitan, yesterday). According to the article, Chief Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Duncan P. Reid thinks it is "responsible to single out Virginia drivers because they are responsible for most of the damage to local roads."

Though traffic in other parts of the state may be made up heavily of in-state drivers, the traffic on Virginia highways in the Washington metropolitan area is not. Every day, drivers from Maryland, the District and West Virginia descend onto Virginia roads to get to their places of employment. Judge Harris's ruling has opened the door for selective enforcement on Virginia roads in that police may overlook out-of-state drivers in hopes of obtaining more revenue by choosing the in-state driver.

Though that does not absolve a Virginia driver from obeying the law, it is nonetheless discriminatory in that Virginia residents are forced to pay more than drivers from other states, who, like Virginians, are residents of the United States. It would appear, however, that Virginia license plates have become today's "scarlet letter" for easy identification of potential cash cows.

The 14th Amendment to the Constitution guarantees us equal protection under the law. A reckless driver is a reckless driver — period. Every reckless driver should face the same monetary fine, regardless of which state a reckless driver calls home.

ROBERT E. ASHLEY

Centreville, Va.

The FDA's approach

This is in response to Henry Miller's Sunday Commentary column on the Food and Drug Administration's proposal to regulate transgenic animals as "new animal drugs" as a way of regulating food products derived from such animals ("Biotech to bring home the bacon?").

FDA's proposed approach is at odds with its more appropriate, rational and well-performing regulation of foods derived through biotechnology under its authority to regulate food. The animal drug regulation approach likely would be complex, arbitrary and dilatory, thereby denying the benefits of the new technology to consumers.

Moreover, it opens the door to FDA's future regulation of whole animals used for medical or food benefit for example, seeing-eye dogs regulated as medical devices.

Finally, FDA's proposed regulation of an entire transgenic animal as a new animal drug (instead of simply regulating the food products derived from it) may add to FDA's difficulty in completing the required National Environmental Policy Act's environmental impact statement and defending it against those who oppose food derived from transgenic animals.

JOHN J. COHRSEN

Arlington

When at war...

The recent legislation to authorize wiretapping of foreign calls is essential to track possible terrorist plots, but it does not go far enough. According to the editorial "FISA and the kook fringe" (Monday), retroactive liability protection is still needed to protect cooperating companies from possible lawsuits. Because most foreign calls are routed through U.S. switches, the ability to intercept such calls is imperative. If the interception of a single call passing through U.S. networks would prevent a potential terrorist attack, that in itself is sufficient reason to update current FISA laws to maximize our surveillance capability.

I hope the president will square off with the Democrats when Congress returns next month. Defending our national security is not an option, especially in time of war.

BRIAN STUCKEY

Denver

A speed-limit solution

Charles Heimach writes that driving 75 mph in a 55 mph zone on Interstate 395 is the norm because the police let it happen ("Fast cash, unsafe highways," Letters, Monday). He is, right of course, in stating that drivers are safer if they go with the flow and exceed the speed limit to avoid creating a traffic hazard as big trucks and cars jockey around behind them.

His solution, however, deserves criticism. He would have numerous police cars roaming the highways at 55 mph as pacers to deter speeders. I think the police should be chasing criminals instead of cruising the highways at leisure.

The solution is obvious. Have the speed limit established by the traffic-engineering standard of 85 percent of the running speed. I have some traffic-engineering experience and would guess the 85 percent speed to be somewhere around 65 mph without the benefit of an actual speed study. If this is done, we will see extreme speeders slow down and a more uniform speed pattern emerge. The 55 mph limit was established by Congress, in its wisdom, to preserve fuel during the 1970s Arab oil embargo. It was a political move at the time and a dumb idea then. It makes no sense now.

ALI F. SEVIN

Fort Washington

Disappointed in Bush

Thanks to Lawrence Kogan for standing on the wall to watch against globalists and their never-ending efforts to steal away our sovereignty and rights in his column "LOST and found" (Commentary, Aug. 8).

As a Republican who voted for President Bush, I am truly disappointed that he has turned out to be a globalist first and an American second. He is pushing on every front to empower global capitalists in their desire for cheap labor and resources, less regulation, and maximum power and wealth. I see the current immigration debacle and the Law of the Sea Treaty initiatives as symptoms of the same illness that ultimately could be terminal to our nation. Although I support the war on terror and our troops' valiant accomplishments, I sadly believe the president's motivation was not so much to protect America, the nation, as to protect the global economy and capitalists who have vested interests in the demise of nationalism.

TERRI ENDICOTT

Burke

Old dinner habits die hard

In his letter "Our genocidal enemies" (Tuesday), Moorthy Muthuswamy says: "There are Muslim Milosevics in the Middle East and in South Asia, and they have no difficulty dining with our leaders and even are considered 'partners' in the war on terror."

Milosevic was not in the same league as the Muslim "genocidal enemies." And why is there still a place of honor at the West's dining table for certain "partners in the war on terror" who are defaulting? Then again, the United States did cozy up in the past to those who would come to haunt them on September 11. Old habits die hard.

LIZ MILANOVICH

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