

4 Corners BG News and Comment for Ohio's Cradle of Education

Common Sense Where Main Meets Wooster

Bowling Green, Ohio

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An Open Letter from the Publisher

Why does the *Sentinel-Tribune* cover up the GOP scandal?

One reason that Democrats are a poor second to the Republicans in Wood County is the biased news coverage policies of the Bowling Green *Sentinel-Tribune*, which clearly favor the Republicans. It is Wood County's equivalent to the Fox News Channel.

This bias has never been more apparent than through the *Sentinel-Tribune's* coverage -- or lack of coverage -- of the Tom Noe Coin Scandal that reportedly will result in the loss of \$10 to \$12 million of the Ohio taxpayers' money.

By my unofficial count since the Toledo *Blade* first reported this scandal on April 3, 2005, the *Sentinel-Tribune* has put this story on page one only once. And that was to report a defense of the investment of state tax money in rare coins. (Ohio is the only state in the union to make this high risk investment of government funds.) The *Sentinel-Tribune's* other coverage of this scandal has been from the Associated Press and has been "buried" on inside pages where readers are less likely to notice. The *Sentinel-Tribune* apparently has yet to assign a reporter to this scandal.

Even a beginning journalism student knows that this scandal should be big news in Bowling Green and Wood County. It involves a PROMINENT citizen with LOCAL ties. Its MAGNITUDE is the entire state of Ohio and its IMPACT is on every citizen who ultimately will have to pay more taxes to make up the loss. And it just doesn't affect Tom Noe, who grew up in Bowling Green, attended BGSU, has served on the BGSU trustees.

It affects Ohio Auditor Betty Montgomery of Perrysburg, who sat on her hands for seven weeks before deciding to sort of investigate. This would be the same Betty Montgomery, who as attorney general, failed in her responsibility as an ex officio member of the State Teachers Retirement System a few years ago while the STRS lost \$1 billion on faulty investments (Enron, etc.).

It affects State Sen. Randy Gardner and State Rep. Bob Latta, who as legislators should be watchdogs of the state treasury.

Yet this scandal that puts the Republican grip on state government at risk remains virtually uncovered by the *Sentinel-Tribune*. In other words, the newspaper is covering up for the Republicans.

Why?

One reason may be that David C. Miller, editor of the *Sentinel-Tribune*, has been a Republican appointee to the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission for more than a decade, according to news reports of December 2004. Miller was reported making nearly \$50,000 a year as in a job given to him by Republican Gov. Bob Taft. In other words, the supposedly non-partisan editor of the *Sentinel-Tribune* owes the governor for his high-paying second job. No wonder Miller appears covers up for the Republicans with news coverage, or lack thereof.

It makes one wonder why Democrats, Independents and open-minded Republicans should support the *Sentinel-Tribune* and its advertisers. The *Sentinel-Tribune* is making Wood County more and more a one-party county every day.

Do something about it. Contact Thomas M. Haswell, R. Richard Morris, and Kathryn A. Haswell, the officers of the *Sentinel-Tribune*, at Box 88, Bowling Green, OH 43402 and 419-352-4611, and tell them that their readers and patrons deserve fair and objective coverage of the news.

Please let me know what you think.

Best regards, John K. Hartman, publisher, *4 Corners BG*, John.Hartman@dacor.net

What is this new publication you are reading?

4 Corners BG was founded June 1, 2005 by John K. Hartman, its publisher. Its purpose is to provide additional news and points-of-view to citizens of Bowling Green in the belief that thorough awareness of and discussion of issues makes for a better community. It will be available free at various drop-off points in Bowling Green. Patrons may support *4 Corners BG* for \$10 per issue. Ads may be purchased for \$20 per issue. Comments and submissions are welcome.

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Driving 89X: *I've got a closed mind on open forums*

By John K. Hartman

Originally published in the Toledo *Free Press*, May 25, 2005

Open forum.

Town meeting.

Public hearing.

These are the techniques that the ruling class uses to find out what we, the people, are thinking.

What gets me stirred up is that more often than not they wind up being gimmicks that enable the powers that be to become even more powerful, sometimes at we the people's expense.

On April 11 I did what a good citizen should do. I attended open sessions held by two prominent northwest Ohio politicians.

In the afternoon at the lovely historic Grand Rapids Town Hall, I attended U.S. Rep. Paul Gillmor's Town Meeting. It was one of four sessions held in towns in Gillmor's 16-county district of 600,000-plus people.

About fifty people attended of which about 25 were not staffers, public officials or reporters.

Gillmor was 19 minutes late to the session scheduled to begin at 3:30 and last one hour. He talked for 13 minutes before taking questions. 36 minutes later he exited, having to catch a plane. The public got 60 percent of the time it was promised to question him.

Most of the questions were softballs (easy) and Gillmor breezed through them. Nobody asked whether or not he supported beleaguered House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. I was going to, but deferred to citizens with personal concerns about retirement benefits and medical insurance.

Gillmor waxed unchallenged about the wisdom of offering private accounts to younger Social Security participants. He described how the stock market pays better than savings certificates over time, omitting the stock market crash of 1929 and big drops in 1987 and 2000.

If Gillmor had stayed the full hour, I think I could have gotten in my question.

His aids furiously took notes. Re-election requires staying on top of the issues and finding clever ways to finesse them.

Asked about blocking factory farms in Wood County, Gillmor offered no help, saying it was a state issue. A plausible way to avoid a controversial question, no doubt anticipated.

That evening I journeyed to the fifth floor conference room of the Wood County Office Building in Bowling Green. State Sen. Randy Gardner, who represents 330,000 folks in northwest Ohio, was holding a public hearing on state budget issues. The state is \$5 billion or so short and libraries, public schools, public colleges and universities, and health agencies among others are screaming about projected draconian cuts. The leaders of these local agencies went through the same humiliating squeeze two years ago.

It started 5 minutes late, but Gardner made very brief remarks before throwing it open to the public. Unlike Gillmor, Gardner gave the public the full amount of time, 90 minutes, that was advertised.

About 30 people attended, two thirds of whom were public officials. The 10 or so of us from the public got to ask our questions, make our statements early on and the public officials largely took over for the middle and end of the session.

Gardner stated that he supported a 21 percent cut in the state income tax because he believed it would help stimulate the state's lagging economy.

I asked him if he was sure the tax cut would have a stimulus effect because the state had been cutting the tax most years and the economy has been slumping since 2000.

Gardner said he was not sure the income tax had been cut all that much and he was supporting the bigger cut regardless. Plausible answer, no doubt anticipated.

The next day, the Bowling Green *Sentinel-Tribune* carried a front-page article about the public hearing. A color picture 6 inches wide and 5 ½ inches high was published in the top half of the page of Gardner nattily dressed in a dark suit and colorful tie.

Below the fold were pictures of three constituents, including me. Mine was about one-sixth the size of Gardner's, 3 inches wide and 2 inches high. My checked shirt shows up nicely as does the pen I was holding pointing at my oversized ear.

The account portrayed Gardner as a good-listener legislator, lack of support for education, libraries and health care notwithstanding.

Forum, meeting, hearing. Sincere efforts to listen or clever fooling of the public. You decide.

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