

# No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing

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## The Electronic Cockroach



To Americans censorship is an ugly thing but to every repressive totalitarian regime it's a vital tool. Voices of criticism and dissent must be silenced and the people must be fed a steady diet of self-serving lies to maintain control. In Iraq there was only one TV program - the Saddam Hussain Propaganda Hour. The same program ran every day with gibberish glorifying Saddam and telling people they would be happy and prosper if they were loyal to their benevolent dictator. The regime was always right and if you didn't agree or had other dangerous ideas your name was added to their 'enemies' list; condemnation, surveillance and reprisals followed.

This is the story of one small rural village. In this village the uncritical government-fed media poured out a steady diet of lies and misinformation, telling the people they would be happy and prosper if they supported the regime and did not question its decisions - the regime always knew best. But many villagers had computers and they were secretly reading another source of information one that questioned the methods and motives of the regime. The regime hated and feared it but it could not be silenced until the regime found a computer spyware program called **GWAVA** that would not only block the hated e-mail with the dangerous ideas but it would also enable them to spy on their people and read their secret thoughts and private writings. Now there would be only "One Voice" and their mind control would be complete.

The name of the village is Rolla; the regime is the Rolla School Board. The **GWAVA** spyware was purchased last year for \$2,500 to censor *No Standing News* and one other web site, the **Rolla School Board**\* site (not theirs, obviously) that has facts and information they didn't want employees to see about their highly touted *Blue Ribbon* and *Gold Star* awards and other district public relations myths. They didn't want schoolteachers and employees to read or hear anything except the propaganda of the school board and administration. Is it too harsh to compare their methods and behavior to those of third world dictators? Not if the shoe fits. In their case, it not only fits - they are repeatedly caught wearing it.

Being Americans demands more of us than just the accident of birth and verbiage about democracy, a "free" society and the glories of globalism in a mission statement. It's hard to believe that while we expend American lives to bring freedom to the people of Iraq, at home our school board and administration emulate the practices employed by the dictator we've just overthrown and they do so without hesitation. Censorship takes many forms and the Rolla School Board seems to be hell-bent on trying them all. Their use of spyware and repeated attempts to repress public broadcasts of

their meetings are easily identified as censorship - deliberate violations of the First Amendment. Their consistent use of surreptitious e-mails between board and administration to discuss and decide public business, their illegal discussions of 'sensitive' public policy issues in closed meetings are another form of censorship - the lawbreaking kind. \*[www.rollaschoolboard.com](http://www.rollaschoolboard.com).

**Caught red-handed with the Cockroach.** The **GWAVA** spy program is similar to the program (code name ECHELON) NSA uses to eavesdrop on electronic communications of terrorists and criminals. The owner, Novell, describes it as "*a robust Content Filtering tool that scans the subject, body and attachments for words and phrases you wish to stop*" (or wish to read). The **GWAVA** logo is, appropriately, a cockroach. Several weeks ago the NSN editor sent an email to the school administration asking for information on administrative raises. No response. Three times the request was sent, still no response so the request was forwarded to all school board members. They were asked why there had been no response in three weeks when the Sunshine law says they must respond within three days? Only two board members, **Ralph Wilkerson** and **Jim Burns** responded. That was how they discovered that their computer spyware was being used for censorship. Burns and Wilkerson didn't know about it - obviously others in administration did know. They got caught because the program to censor NSN publications also blocked the R.W. Nash e-mail request for information because both are from the same sender. Superintendent Adams claims he's not responsible, he says Ewing did it before he came, but Adams has been here since last June. The blocks have now been taken off Adams says, it won't happen again he says. That much may be true but what suspect key words or phrases is their electronic cockroach still sniffing out in the e-mail of school employees? We were tipped off last November they had installed it to protect their April bond campaign. More than one employee who found NSN blocked from the school computers then subscribed from their home computers telling us they knew they were all "being watched."

**Is GWAVA still watching?** The ineffectual censorship of NSN isn't the real issue, the issue is this: What kind of people are running our school system who pretend to teach the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, but don't hesitate to repeatedly violate the First Amendment? What kind of people presume to be qualified to teach character education to our children but don't show any evidence of character in their personal or institutional actions? What kind of people adopt

several pages of policies bragging about their board ethics, but don't hesitate to stoop to censorship and violation of public trust to tamper with the outcome of elections? What other 'dangerous' Internet information might teachers wish to have for their classes or their own information that the GWAVA spy program does not permit them to access or receive, information that the administration's secret censors have decided is too dangerous or disturbing for employees to read? They tell us the people they hire to school our children are 'professionals' but management obviously doesn't believe these 'professionals' have the intelligence or judgment to read and evaluate information of their choice. If administration's electronic cockroach is still scuttling through their e-mail, will teachers candidly exchange opinions of new textbooks or curriculum without wondering which employee or co-worker is spying on them and how their thoughts, speech and ideas might be used against them? What happens to academic freedom in our schools when ideas and opinions are suspect, when teachers do not dare to disagree, do not dare to exchange opinions about educational and management issues with colleagues? The board and administration crossed this constitutional and ethical line without hesitation because they were sure they could get away with it. They're not sorry they did it - just sorry they were caught.

**(HELP STAMP OUT CENSORSHIP!** Send used copies of NSN to Rolla Public School employees.)

**More censorship.** At the June 26th school board meeting the board tried yet another ploy to kill the Channel 16 broadcasts. They said they have cut out the money they were paying the Vo Tec students to assist Channel 16 in filming their board meetings (they were *paying* students to do this?). Since the board can't pay the assistants, their reasoning goes, Channel 16 can no longer tape the meetings. The time and effort Adams and the board spend inventing reasons to keep these broadcasts from the public would be comical if it weren't part of a dangerous pattern of conduct - one that perfectly illustrates their anti-democratic tone of mind. By using serial e-mails to pre-discuss and decide all 'sensitive' public issues out of the public view, their meetings are already sanitized to the point of being farcical, but still they persist in trying to shut down the broadcast of their pre-digested decisions. They've tried stealing the video tape, forbidding taping, turning off lights, covering mikes, dawn meetings, spy programs and censorship - now this lame excuse - they can't pay the VC students, therefore the public has no right to know. It is obvious they won't be satisfied until they can discuss all public school business in secret. What they prove with these actions is they aren't qualified to hold public office - not public office in a democracy.

**Their MSBA puppet masters granted censorship rights.** In June, the board renewed their contract with MSBA so they can adopt more canned MSBA policies - policies they don't follow if they get in the way of firing a principal, suspending a student or hiring without posting positions. In this contract, one of the benefits MSBA provides their needy school boards is to *review their closed meeting minutes so MSBA can redact*

*or black-out any information the local taxpayers and voters shouldn't see.* Think about that for a minute. Our school board *pays* MSBA lobbyists over \$5,000 a year (that's just for this contract) of our tax money to read and censor our official district records to keep us - local taxpayers, school parents and voters - from finding out what they're doing with our schools, our children and our money! Our School Board of Censors contract for a censorship service! Is this a local school board or an MSBA branch office? By the way if you want to see what MSBA is lobbying for with the public funds they collect from us in dues you're not entitled to. MSBA plots and plans are password protected and only our board members have the secret password to get into most of the information on their site.

**Administrators skim off the cream - again.** The board's great show lamenting the regrettable political necessity (but possible fiscal imprudence) of giving teachers and staff the promised 5.4% raises from the 80¢ tax increase would have been more convincing if they had admitted that *just minutes earlier in closed session they had voted to give all the administrators a 5.4% increase!* Apparently it was less of a struggle to give 5.4% raises to those making from \$70,000 to \$125,000 than it was to give the same percentage (but much less cash) to those making less than half that amount. It is an admission of guilt that teacher and staff raises were discussed and voted in public, but they hid in the dark to take the reprehensible vote on administrative raises.

**Rolla School Board joins lawsuit.** Not having enough lawsuits of their own creation, the Rolla School Board volunteered to join a lawsuit against the State of Missouri because the education puppet masters at MSBA and DESE have decided the School Foundation Formula is not equitable. This is not a novel discovery. The school funding formula has never been equitable and never will be in this or any other state. Figuring out an equitable school funding formula is like trying to buy 'equitable' Christmas presents for each of your 524 children. The school board said it would only cost \$200 to join the lawsuit **plus the legal fees and costs** to make equitable the inherently inequitable revenue sharing among 524 inherently unequal districts. Did you catch the small print about the 'other legal costs and fees'? How many more local employee and teacher's salaries will be sacrificed to offset the cost of this political litigation? This so-called 'equity' complaint is just an expensive temper tantrum by DESE, the Missouri School Board's Association and the Missouri Association of School Administrators because they are unwilling to cut bureaucratic fat for the benefit of classroom education. Accustomed to skimming off over 24.6% of the state budget under the pretext of providing and improving education (translation: Improving executive pay and perks.), a lot of dumb school boards are being conned into thinking they can bring back the golden "Carnahan-the-Education-Governor" days with this lawsuit. The guise is "equity in education" but the real goal is to get the courts to force more school taxes on the public. No matter how much they have; it's never enough for the education industry.

**Say what Sarah?** The school board claimed they were 'encouraged' to join this fools errand by **Senator Sarah Steelman**. If true, when did this public policy discussion between our school board and our Senator take place? We wonder why Senator Steelman would encourage our small district to take on the expensive task of suing to correct a statewide issue before the new Republican majority has had a chance to balance one state budget much less give attention to the flaws in the School Foundation Formula?

**But the band plays on.** While boards are slashing teachers positions and programs here and throughout the state, MSBA is merrily sending out advance registration notices to school boards for their annual October party at Lake of the Ozarks. It

only costs \$160 each for registration, plus room and board and other expenses. Our board goes to the party every year and they take an assortment of administrators with them. It will cost us from \$6,000 - \$10,000 to send the whole gang to the lake so they can shop, play golf, be wined and dined by bond companies at the Potted Steer and attend workshops on how to get more money out of us. We don't see any workshops on the MSBA program for "How-to-cut-costs-not-teachers-jobs" or "How-to-have-an-election-without-lying" or "Why-you-don't-give-management 5.4% raises-when-inflation-is-less-than-1%." It is, to say the least, unseemly for our school board to allocate money for one of several resort weekends when they have just cut jobs and now have threatened to retaliate by cutting academic programs because they were forced to keep a promise.

### City scores porn and bullies the elderly

**The Porn Vote:** The council 'solved' the porn ordinance problem by passing it with only two lukewarm concessions to the huge public outrage it produced. Instead of Petersen's 500' quarantine limit they increased it to 750' (half of the original 1500') and reduced the proposed 33% exemption to 10%. John Petersen allowed them to make these meaningless changes because neither of them would have an adverse effect on Roy Williams and Family Video. The council, who didn't care enough to educate themselves on the issues involved in this complex subject, and who rejected J.D. Williams motion for a postponement to hear from real experts, never understood the two biggest flaws in Petersen's very flawed ordinance. They strained mightily with the size of the quarantine limit to be sure they were providing 'enough' salable, available, buildable, commercially zoned property for the convenience of pornographers so they wouldn't be sued. Their noses were kept on this red herring by Petersen's big maps and his deliberate misdirection. He had them believing they were enacting a Porn Zoning law instead of simply a licensing regulation for any commercial business located anywhere in the city. If they had simply read one small paragraph in the 1986 Supreme Court decision in *Renton* they would have known *they had no obligation to lower the bar to provide currently available commercially zoned property and could have kept the original 1500' quarantine limit!* ANY and ALL commercially zoned property in town is available to 'Adult' businesses. "Available" does not require that the zoned sites be commercially viable or that they be available for sale or lease today. The municipality need only refrain from effectively denying a reasonable *opportunity* to open and operate. Thanks to the council's total lack of understanding on this important point and their reliance on Petersen's months of 'expert' legal opinions, pornographers can now locate within 750' of each other and every school, church, daycare center and neighborhood anywhere in Rolla.

**The "It's been tested" lie.** The other big lie Petersen fed them to get his ordinance passed was that it was modeled on the Jefferson City ordinance, which he assured them, had

been 'tested' in court (but he didn't say what it had been 'tested' for – it makes a very big difference.). The Jefferson City ordinance is 18 pages long, Petersen cherry-picked it down to 10 pages and he altered the wording of some of that. The 8 pages he left out are the ones that give the Jefferson City ordinance some teeth. Was it asking too much for council members to take ten minutes just to compare the two versions – the real JC ordinance and Petersen's homemade version - to see if they were passing the real 'tested' version or the altered 'untested' Petersen version? Yes, it was too much to ask because not one of them did it. They voted for his ordinance because Petersen said it was just like the real one. They reduced our sleaze protection to 750' believing they had now accommodated the needs of the next porn merchant to show up and they wouldn't be sued. Petersen snookered the council again and he won...for now.

**Petersen in TIF Gorilla suit bullies elderly woman.** As we predicted the 900 lb. TIF Gorilla has been set loose on residents of the proposed TIF zone. John Petersen has already called on one elderly woman who owns land with highway frontage; he wants her land, she's in his way. Petersen scared her into thinking she had better take the offer TIF developer Kaplan Co. would make or *The Judge* (he said) would appoint three appraisers to decide what her land is worth. *The Judge* would then condemn her home, sell it to the city and put the money into escrow for a long, long time. (Would that be *Judge Wiggins*, *Judge Sheffield* or *Judge Haslag* he was implying would help the city rip off an old lady?) This is all the elderly woman understood of the bewildering things he told her; she had no idea what TIF is or why this was happening. She had no one with her: no relative, no lawyer, no minister and no friend to help her make a decision or negotiate in her best interest. Petersen told her Kaplan would be back with the city's offer in one week. Believing she would be evicted in a week she panicked and rushed out to buy a house. Three weeks passed but she didn't hear from this Kaplan person so she contacted Petersen to find out when *The Judge* would take her property? This time he told her it might

be a year before the city made her an offer. Now both confused and frightened, she doesn't know what will happen next. We guess she could call her council representatives for help - that's their job isn't it, protecting their constituents? But in this case she can't turn to them for help, they're the ones who turned their TIF Gorilla loose on her.

**Shame, shame, shame on the Rolla City Council** for going along with another easy-money scheme while pretending the resulting land grab wouldn't hurt anyone. The council voted TIF into existence without knowing anything about it except the sanitized version Petersen, Butz and Morgan gave them. When they found out condemnation was a necessary part of the TIF game they made tongue-in-cheek protests that they would never, never use their powers of condemnation against their own citizens; then they washed their hands of whatever would happen next by turning the nasty details over to Morgan, Butz and Petersen. They knew they wouldn't have to condemn property; the threat alone – just as it was used in this case - would be enough to get what they wanted. **Shame on the RREC and the TIF Commissioners** for pretending such sleazy tactics have nothing to do with them just because Czar Petersen hasn't summoned them to a TIF Commission meeting yet. When Petersen and Kaplan Co. do allow the TIF Commission to meet it will be only to get their rubber stamp on the TIF fait accompli – the official TIF zone, the TIF Plan and the property in it they've bullied out of defenseless people. The RREC planned TIF with Butz and Petersen; the council

blindly rubberstamped it, now the TIF Commissioners are now "officially" in control but they haven't demanded a meeting to *rein in what Petersen and Kaplan Co. do in their name*. Pretending to see no evil, hear no evil, do no evil, isn't going to work this time. We hold them all responsible for turning Petersen and his scare tactics loose on people who have worked hard and paid their taxes for decades. Unlike Petersen, the TIF residents have earned their place in this community and they deserve better treatment than this. They deserve a fair price; at the very least, the same price per square foot that Walgreens is offering Lottie Callen. If the TIF Commission doesn't meet soon and put a muzzle on Petersen, Kaplan and their tactics, all the TIF dirt they stir up will stick to the Rolla City Council, RREC and the TIF Commission.

**UMR golf course con.** It's interesting to see the letters from UMR students and alumni protesting the elimination of golf from their sports program. What they don't know is that before long UMR won't have a golf course at all so the budget excuse is just smoke and mirrors. At the March 'Chicken 'n Chew' dinner between the city and school board (the one where the school board swapped 23 years of TIF taxes in exchange for the council's endorsement for their bond issue) the elimination of the UMR golf course for another economic development scheme was openly discussed. Protesting UMR students and alumni are being conned if they bought the story that this is because of the state budget crisis.

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