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LOCAL COLUMNIST ■ DICK YARBROUGH

**THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT IT IS
TIME FOR ANSWER MAN**

Hey, what time is it, boys and girls? It is time for Answer Man! The show that gives you the straight skinny to whatever has you bewitched, bothered and bewildered. Answer Man is so confident in his responses that he offers a money-back guarantee. If you are dissatisfied in any way with Answer Man's replies, just send him your bank account information, your most recent tax return and a copy of your Social Security number. Answer Man will take care of the rest.

Today's answers have been verified by Barney Funk and Porter Wagnalls.



YARBROUGH

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Lee, the firm's general manager and a pest control professional. Let's take our first question.

Dear Answer Man: While I was doing my patriotic duty and kneeling Sunday afternoon, someone stole my bling, my bag of weed, my unregistered gun and drove off in my Lamborghini. I guess I need to report this. Any suggestions? — **Buster Buckethead**

Dear Buster: Whatever you do, don't call the police. They are not your friend, remember? I would report it to the National Football League Players Association or to some bleeding-heart liberal and see what they suggest. They seem to have all the answers. Besides, the police are probably busy saving some unappreciative jerk's life as we speak.

Dear Answer Man: We are tired of a certain columnist picking on us because we want to use state tax dollars for private school scholarships. Our rich constituents feel they shouldn't have to pay taxes for public schools they don't use. What do you think? — **Determined Intrepid Public Servants.**

Dear DIPS: I had never thought of it that way. Please give me time to mull over this novel concept. In the meantime, I am going to try to get my tax dollars back for all the roads in Vermont I don't use and for any of my taxes that go to fund the Secretary of Education in the Trump Administration. Is this a great country or what?

Dear Answer Man: I hear you have criticized the Trump Administration. You couldn't get elected a dog catcher in Georgia. I am going to build a wall around Attapulgas and make you pay for it because my IQ is higher than yours. Fake news! You're fired! — **A pee-oh'd POTUS**

Dear P.O.: Not to quibble, sir, given that you have the superior IQ, but our dog catchers aren't elected in Georgia. They are appointed. The dogs don't seem to care one way or the other. As for the good folks in Attapulgas, if it would keep our carpetbaggers who think we

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Southerners talk funny and marry our third cousins, they would probably welcome the wall. Sorry I can't underwrite it, though. Fake news doesn't pay as much as you might think.

Dear Answer Man: I think you are a Clinton-loving, big government, bed-wetting liberal. What do you say to that? — **Angry White Guy**

Dear A.W.G.: Dang. You are very observant. I didn't think it showed.

Dear Answer Man: I think you are a Rush Limbaugh-loving, red-necked male chauvinist pig. What do you say to that? — **Angry White Woman**

Dear A.W.W.: Dang. You are very observant. I didn't think it showed.

Dear Answer Man: I understand you are back to driving after an absence of several months. Have you noticed any changes on our roads? — **Luther from Luthersville**

Dear Luther: Yes, I am back on the highways. And, no, not much has changed. I am pleased to say the Hi-Yo Hitchens Initiative remains in force. As you may recall, that was a groundbreaking piece of legislation sponsored by Rep. Bill Hitchens, R-Rincon, that declares no matter how fast you are going, say warp speed, and someone comes up behind you at, say warp speed times two, you must move over or be cited by the police for something other than going warp speed. Things seem to be working as intended, except when a semi breaks the sound barrier.

Well, boys and girls, that's all the time we have today. Be sure and tune in same time next week when our topic will be what squirrels and California have in common. Hint: Think nuts. In the meantime, keep those cards and letters coming in.

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COLUMNIST ■ BOB BARR

**The Rannazzisi file:
Congress fuels opioid crisis**

In the childhood fairy tale Snow White, the magic mirror from which the evil queen seeks reassurance of her beauty never lies, much to her ultimate fury. In a contemporary story — definitely not a fairy tale — an expert on opioid abuse is forcing the Congress to look into the mirror, and realize that it is to blame, at least in part, for the tragedy of opioid abuse that is ravaging our nation.

In many respects, the opioid epidemic is more insidious than other problems the Drug Enforcement Administration has confronted. For starters, there is no typical "opioid" user; addicts range from wealthy suburbanites to inner city poor. Nor does the distribution chain resemble anything like that of cocaine or marijuana. Manufacturers are not South American "narcos," but Fortune 500 companies. Dealers are not carrying burner phones and standing on street corners, but instead, wear stethoscopes and run offices with full-time staffs.

For officials like Joe Rannazzisi, who once spearheaded the government's efforts to fight opioid abuse at the DEA, the challenge was immediate and immense. He took action, and it cost him his job.

Last month, Rannazzisi was interviewed on the CBS flagship program 60 Minutes as a part of a joint investigation with the Washington Post into America's opioid crisis. Rannazzisi painted a disturbing picture of how multi-billion dollar pharmaceutical distributors diverted hundreds of millions of opioid prescription pills from manufacturers to so-called "pill mill" pain clinics, which serve as fronts for unscrupulous doctors to write fraudulent prescriptions. When prosecuting individual providers proved ineffective, Rannazzisi relied on the DEA's regulatory power to investigate and fine distributors. These companies are required by law to make a "good faith effort" to report suspicious orders to the DEA so action can be taken; instead the companies often just look the other way rather than risk cutting off the money spigot from such sales.

For a time, the Rannazzisi strategy was effective; resulting in huge fines against some of the opioid industry's largest players. Unfortunately, his efforts also drew the industry's ire, precipitating a lobbying effort designed to convince conservative members of Congress that the DEA was interfering in the free commerce of legitimate business. Eventually, says Rannazzisi, even his superiors at the DEA started to push back on his team; and the number of cases being pursued plummeted, even as opioid deaths continued to rise.

The final straw came in 2015, when a bill written by a former DEA official then

working for "Big Pharma," raised the standard of proof required by the DEA before it could investigate suspicious orders, to a near-impossible level. The primary sponsors were Tom Marino, R-Pa., in the House and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) in the Senate.

Objections by the DEA and Rannazzisi himself were insufficient to match the \$102 million spent lobbying Congress; the bill passed both Houses last year by unanimous consent and was signed without publicity by President Obama. Rannazzisi by then had retired after a 30-year career at the DEA after a heated exchange with Marino and Rep. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., led to accusations he was attempting to "intimidate the United States Congress." Coincidentally (or, perhaps not), both Blackburn and Marino received sizeable donations from pharmaceutical distributors that year.

In the end, it was Congress that proved to be the DEA's biggest foe in slowing opioid diversion and abuse. "If it had been the intent of Congress to completely eliminate the DEA's ability to ever impose an immediate suspension on distributors or manufacturers, it would be difficult to conceive of a more effective vehicle for achieving that goal," Chief DEA Administrative Law Judge John J. Mulrooney II will state in an upcoming Law Review article acquired in advance by the Washington Post.

There is, of course, a line that must be drawn that prevents the government from directly interfering with, or limiting, the ability of doctors to treat patients with a pain management regimen best for the patients; and, prescription opioids have proven to be one of the best options for such treatment. However, there is a clear difference between bad legislation that hamstring healthcare providers and the Marino bill that effectively robbed the DEA of any ability to uphold what was already the law targeting drug distributors.

The opioid epidemic is not going away on its own. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that nearly 80 percent of heroin users today first abuse opioid prescriptions obtained primarily by family, friends, or personal prescriptions. It is a vicious spiral that can only be broken by a multi-faceted approach. Accomplishing this, however, is being made needlessly more difficult by congressional actions such as the 2016 bill that hamstringed the DEA's regulatory arm.

Bob Barr is a former federal prosecutor and a former Congressman. He represented Georgia's 7th congressional district as a Republican from 1995 to 2003.



BARR

COLUMNIST ■ LINDA OLSON

**Victims deserve
Constitutional rights, too**

As a licensed clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, I've devoted the past 30 years to serving and treating the adults who, like me, grew up living with domestic violence.

Domestic violence consumed my family and as children living in that home, for me and my sisters, Childhood Domestic Violence was "normal". The violence left emotional scars that impacted not only our childhood, but our lives well into adulthood. One of my sisters died from dating violence; another died from other consequences directly related to the impact of CDV.

I survived my upbringing only to repeat it as an adult. I lived in a violent and abusive marriage for many years until I saw the effects it was having on my sons, and I resolved to break the cycle of violence and denial.

Going from feelings of constant fear, uncertainty, confusion and doubt to realizing the incredible strengths and gifts that were developed by growing up with Childhood Domestic Violence has empowered me to help others with childhood backgrounds like mine. It's enabled me to help them find their true potential hidden inside of them.

My message to those in recovery: "There is hope. Your life matters. It's not your fault."

The impact of childhood adversity doesn't heal overnight after some calming words, however. It's a process and it takes time and effort.

Often the fear and confusion continue even after law enforcement has arrested the abuser and the wheels of justice begin to turn. Survivors live in terror thinking their abuser will come back to hurt them again. That's why it's so critical that we have the strongest possible rights in the legal process.

We all know that the accused and the convicted have constitutional protections — but today in Georgia their victims do not. That's not the norm. Our state is one of only 15 in the country that doesn't have constitutional rights for crime victims.

That's why I support the work of Marsy's Law for Georgia, which would put crime victims' rights in the state Constitution.

I have a special connection to Marsy's Law because it's named for a young California college student who was killed by her boyfriend after she broke up with

him — just like my youngest sister, Ann. My sister had broken up with her abusive boyfriend. He stalked her and killed her on her college campus soon after their breakup. The judicial process to finally get justice was a long and difficult one for my family.

After Marsy's death, her killer was released without the victim's family's knowledge and then confronted her terrified family in public.

Marsy's Law for Georgia would give crime victims the following constitutional protections:

- ◆ The right to receive information about their rights and services available to crime victims;
- ◆ The right to receive notification of proceedings and major developments in their criminal case;
- ◆ The right to receive timely notification of changes to the offender's custodial status;
- ◆ The right to be present at court proceedings;
- ◆ The right to provide input to the prosecutor before a plea agreement is finalized;
- ◆ The right to be heard at plea or sentencing proceedings or any process that may result in the offender's release;
- ◆ The right to restitution.

Despite Georgia's inclusion of victims' rights in state law in 2010, these rights are often unenforceable. Placing these rights within the constitution would be of no additional burden to the legal system, as these rights are already supposed to be enforced.

After passing the state Senate by a vote of 50-4, Marsy's Law will face the state House during next year's legislative session.

No one deserves to be kept in the dark by the system created to protect them. I have fought for victims' rights for decades and will continue to do so as long as I live.

I encourage you to join me in this fight. Call your state representative and ask them to take a stand for vulnerable citizens in need by supporting Marsy's Law for Georgia.

Linda Olson is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist who practices in Atlanta. She is the Founder & Chairwoman of the Georgia Chapter of the Childhood Domestic Violence Association, as well as on the Association's national Board of Directors. For more about Childhood Domestic Violence of the work of CVDA, visit cdv.org.