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*Acknowledge the right of the people
to get from the newspaper both sides
of every important question.*

G. B. Dealey

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EDITORIALS

On Housing, Mayor Is Right On The Money

As he told a Senate panel, this is a market problem and a public health problem

We have been tough critics of Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson because he seems so uninterested in using his bully pulpit to advocate for his city. Last week, however, he made an important argument before the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs.

Johnson was invited to testify at a hearing titled “Housing Roadblocks: Paving a New Way to Address Affordability.” His message was straightforward: Federal housing programs are helpful to a degree, but the housing shortage is ultimately a supply-and-demand problem that only the private sector can tackle at scale.

The more housing that gets built, the more that supply will drive housing costs down for everyone across the income spectrum. Johnson said the government’s role in the solution is to help remove obstacles to building that housing. He underscored Dallas City Hall’s efforts to speed up permitting.

Dallas’ permitting story is not exactly a success story. The city is correcting a crisis of its own making. But the mayor is right that the path to building more housing is to cut red tape, not to add even more federal housing programs.

To be clear, Johnson didn’t call for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to be cut. On the contrary, he acknowledged that there is value in the federal housing dollars sent to Dallas and that they have generated some housing stock for low-income residents. But the mayor noted that these programs create a few thousand housing units a year when we need tens of thousands of units.

HUD dollars have been critical to power the rehousing efforts of Housing Forward, the region’s lead homelessness response agency. Housing tax credits have also helped developers secure gap financing for mixed-income apartments. But it’s also true that Dallas City Hall has a questionable record with HUD money, having previously lost millions of dollars, squandered funds on doomed projects and even returned money because it couldn’t deliver on promises.

Johnson also spoke about addressing street homelessness as a public health issue. He said most chronically homeless people on the street are there because of serious mental illness, substance addiction and other behavioral problems.

The latest homelessness census in Dallas and Collin counties found that a fifth of unsheltered people have a severe mental illness. National data from 2023 indicated 26.3% of people living on the street or in shelters have a severe mental illness. At any rate, too many homeless people are suffering without treatment. They are a danger to themselves and others.

This isn’t a hypothetical. We wrote in the fall about at least two attacks in downtown Dallas involving homeless people who appeared to be mentally unwell.

Johnson made an eloquent argument. Now he must guide efforts in his city to — in his words — change the narrative around homelessness. What would a public health approach to solving homelessness look like? The housing-first model is not an adequate strategy for the severely mentally ill. The mayor can lead in finding the right policies.

LETTERS

Try tax fairness first

Re: “What a Mess Musk’s Hatchet Has Made — Federal cuts are needed, but with examination and the ‘scalpel’ Trump has promised,” Thursday editorial.

Everyone agrees America’s multitrillion-dollar deficit is unsustainable. However, your statement that the “budget cliff is insurmountable without cutting federal programs or the workforce” completely ignores the second option: raising taxes and eliminating tax loopholes for the mega-wealthy. Perhaps a combination of reasonable cuts and “fair share” revenue gains can go hand-in-hand.

Paul Edward Schmidt, Dallas/Lakewood

Known facts are now news

Re: “Vitamin A won’t prevent measles,” March 7 news story, and “Why is virus so contagious?” March 8 news story.

How far have we fallen? These two front-page headlines are simple statements of known facts about measles. Twenty years ago, pieces like these would have appeared in the quirky-stories section deep in the paper.

Of course, vitamin A will not prevent measles. And of course, measles has always been dangerously contagious. But the darkly effective assault on fact that has occurred over the past decade has turned these stories into newsworthy pleas for readers to apply logic to their decision-making.

Scientific discovery and human reason have built up a foundation of commonly known facts that have fueled the progress of human society. These stories are another tragic example of the splintering of that factual foundation.

Peter Andrew Evett, Dallas

Rational measles information

Thank you so much for putting some rational information about measles on the front page of the paper. We need to get the facts from somewhere since we can’t get it from the state or federal government.

Peggy Tucker, Richardson

Vouchers un-American

Say what you will about the school choice issue, at the end of the day the concept is in conflict with values formulated in the mid-19th century. Public education has been a policy of the federal government for well over 150 years.

Our republic is dependent on a literate, educated population to participate in a representative democracy. Funding of public schools open to all was considered essential for providing instruction in basic reading, composition and mathematics.

The schools were also considered critical in teaching each generation the history of the republic and the shared values of a diverse population that held American society together.

The current education savings accounts plan as passed by the Texas Senate and being debated in the Texas House runs contrary to these intentions.

Also, consider that the U.S. Constitution specifically separates church from the state, and that Supreme Court rulings going back to the 1880s have prohibited taxes from being used by schools operated by religious organizations.

Together, the only description of what the Texas Legislature, governor and lieutenant governor are trying to do is un-American.

John Hitz, Plano

Falling for disinformation

New contributing columnist Glenn Rogers

likes to criticize the large amounts of money influencing the Texas Republican Party, especially since it’s that money that defeated him in a primary for his re-election to the Texas House in 2024.

What he hasn’t discussed is why the Republican primary voter is influenced by disinformation and misinformation so easily. If it weren’t for them, the influence of money would be negligible.

Dennis Han, Allen

Questions for representatives

Re: “Yes or no on fascism,” by Paul Bennett, Tuesday Letters.

I, too, have written to my U.S. representative, Lance Gooden, about various issues. I tried to ask very simple questions such as, “What is your stance on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid?”

Also, a couple of gimme questions included, “When will my storm-damaged post office reopen? When is your next town hall meeting?”

I guess he is waiting for his MAGA masters to tell him how to respond.

Greg Stone, Garland

We need examples

Surely everyone agrees that our elected officials are accountable to us, the people. This means they should be able to state their positions about an issue clearly and with their rationale.

Recently, a well-known journalist asked the speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, about Elon Musk’s DOGE efforts. Johnson replied that he has been in meetings with Musk, going through the data, and that the American people “will not believe” all the “waste, fraud and abuse.”

What exactly are examples of that? Are those programs marked with a “W, F or A?” Who is deciding how particular code signifies fraud?

Closer to home, when I called U.S. Rep. Beth Van Duyne’s office last week about the president clearly siding with Russia in its invasion of Ukraine, the staff member told me the representative had no statement, but she could assure me she was “not pro-Russia.” What does that even mean?

If she, like the huge majority of Americans, is not pro-Russia, what examples can she share that demonstrate that?

In grade school, we learned to state a thesis, then to support it with rationale and provable examples. We, the people, as well as journalists need to demand that of our elected officials.

Cathy Murphree, Richardson

Curious about Tesla sales

Am I wrong that because Tesla sales are not through franchised independent dealers, the vehicles they build here in Texas cannot be sold directly to customers in Texas? I find this fascinating, and a topic that might be worth investigation by *The Dallas Morning News*.

Craig Marckwardt,
Dallas/Mountain Creek

LETTERS POLICY

We value reader submissions. We receive far more than we can print and publish a representative sample. Letters should not exceed 200 words. **Please include the source of your information.** Letters are edited for length and clarity. Include your name, address with ZIP code and daytime phone number. Submissions become property of *The Dallas Morning News*.

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Or via email: letters@dallasnews.com

We cannot accept letters via postal service.

Texas, Back Off the Bitcoin Reserve

Volatile cryptocurrencies are no place for public investments

Texas doesn’t need a bitcoin reserve any more than it needs a Beanie Baby reserve or a tulip bulb fund. Nevertheless, state leaders are determined to create one.

The Senate passed SB 21 on March 6, which authorizes the state to establish the Texas Strategic Bitcoin Reserve “for the purpose of investing in cryptocurrency.” The bill, which had strong bipartisan support, assigns oversight of the fund to the comptroller of public accounts. The legislation also allows, but does not require, the state to make appropriations into the fund.

Call us old-fashioned, dismiss us as Luddites, but we cannot endorse financial speculation with public dollars. Cryptocurrency is far too volatile an asset to belong in a public reserve fund. It is too frequently associated with fraud, theft and other illegal activity, even though it is theoretically extremely secure. Private investors can do what they want with their money, but public agencies should avoid this market for now.

In their most general sense, reserve funds help households, nonprofit organizations and businesses cover both expected and unexpected expenses. Local governments often hold reserves to pay off debt or in case revenue falls short of projections. No matter the reserve fund’s ultimate purpose, governments must be conservative — in the financial sense — investors. Not losing public money is more important than trying to make a lot of money.

That’s why public funds shouldn’t be in-

vested in cryptocurrency. It offers overly abundant opportunities to lose principal. There are thousands of cryptocurrencies, and even the best-known are volatile. The price of bitcoin rose above \$109,000 on Jan. 20 but fell below \$77,000 on March 11 — a loss of about 30%.

Another source of risk is theft. Hackers have proved remarkably astute in finding flaws that allow them to abscond with large amounts of cryptocurrency. In February, for example, the FBI accused North Korea-affiliated criminals of stealing \$1.5 billion of ethereum tokens from the Bybit cryptocurrency exchange.

There are other concerns. Mining cryptocurrency demands enormous amounts of electricity. Maybe a growing state with increasingly warm weather shouldn’t be investing in a business that will further strain the electrical grid.

Last, the majority of Americans don’t trust cryptocurrencies. The Pew Research Center surveys Americans annually about their attitudes on the issue. Last year’s survey found that only 17% of Americans had ever used these currencies — a share that hasn’t changed since 2021. Sixty-three percent of respondents said they had little to no confidence that existing ways to invest in, trade or use cryptocurrencies are safe or reliable.

A government-sponsored bitcoin reserve is questionable at best, and adding “strategic” to the fund’s name doesn’t make it any safer or smarter. Texas doesn’t need to fall for this fad.

Editorials on this page are written by the editorial board and serve as the voice and opinion of *The Dallas Morning News*.