

<http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2011/mar/15/TDOPIN01-letters-to-the-editor-ar-905675/>

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Published: March 15, 2011

[Home](#) / [news](#) / [opinion](#) / [mailbag](#) /

Letters to the Editor

By Times-Dispatch Staff

Dam bill aims to ensure public safety

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

In response to the recent letter, "Dam bill seeks to profit engineers," concerning the dam safety bill (SB 1060) that was passed by the Virginia Senate: James E. Atkins inferred the purpose of the bill was to enrich and benefit engineers and no one else. The Virginia Society of Professional Engineers (VSPE) feels Atkins' comments are misguided.

The bill applies to dams greater than 25 feet in height or that have 50 acre feet of stored water behind the dam. Most small farm ponds are below this threshold. The bill was introduced by Hanover County, and VSPE worked with Hanover and the State Dam Safety Department to find a reasonable balance between cost and public safety. This is an important issue. In the past 15 years there have been significant dam failures in Williamsburg, Fairfax and Lynchburg. On June 22, 1995, privately owned, operated, and maintained Timber Lake Dam failed, resulting in two fatalities. Even when there is no loss of life or property values, there are still impacts to wildlife and the environment.

Professional engineers are licensed by the state. Our role is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public in conjunction with our designs and work projects. We apply this concept to all infrastructure: roads, public water, buildings, bridges, dams, etc. Requiring a dam to be inspected at least once every six years is a reasonable measure to ensure protection of those downstream. It's similar to getting a checkup from your doctor every six years. Early detection is the key to preventing more costly repairs or replacements.

With this in mind, VSPE reviews all legislation affecting the engineering profession to find a reasonable process that offers protection to public health and safety while balancing risk and costs.

Craig S. Moore,

VSPE President,

David D. T. Warriner,

VSPE Legislative Committee

Chairman.

Richmond.

Does rational thinking make one a no-brainer?

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

Correspondent of the Day William Swiger ["PBS caters to those with brains"] labeled people who don't watch or listen to PBS as "no brainers" because we accept only the fabricated propaganda spewed by "oil company (tea party) employees like the American Enterprise Institute, CATO Institute, and the Von Mises Institute."

I am a retired oil company employee, so I suppose I am a "no brainer" from the start. Yet, I earned a chemical engineering degree with honors from a top American university (UVa), so maybe there is hope that I can become a "brainer" if only I would watch PBS.

I do try to evaluate issues from a different perspective, but I also apply rational thought to my evaluations. For example, I concluded it was not rational to believe that providing health insurance coverage to an additional 32 million people was going to reduce overall health care costs. I also don't believe the U.S. can eliminate foreign crude oil imports within a few years by building windmills and solar panels as some brainers are suggesting. Finally, I don't believe that we can maintain our wonderful standard of living by adding more than a trillion dollars to our national debt each year.

I prefer being a no-brainer to being an arrogant elitist lacking the ability to think rationally.

Jim Miller.

Moneta.

Another political term needs defining

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

It was with great interest and curiosity that I read in John B. Browning's letter, "What's worse: A shellacking or a landslide?" the definitions of landslide and shellacking. I wonder how Browning (no relation, I assure you), would categorize the declaration of a mandate with far, far less than 50 percent of the vote?

David Browning.

Richmond.

Here's a suggestion for trimming the debt

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

Relative to Sens. Mark Warner's and Saxby Chambliss' plan to trim the national debt which, among other suggestions, would require sacrifice on the part of those receiving entitlements (I do not), I have a suggestion: How about cutting all entitlements and handouts to themselves — that miserable and inept bunch of politicians who got us into this mess?

Alana Courtney.

Urbanna.

the Richmond Times-Dispatch © Copyright 2011 Media General Communications Holdings, LLC. A Media General company.