

## On the subject of...

## Let there be teeth!

By Viki Eggers Mason



# The Aberdeen Advocate

Last week, in case you couldn't tell, I was feeling more than a little frustrated with Mississippi's legal system and the fact that nobody seems to be authorized to help us in our plight to overcome a seriously corrupt city government.

In my frustration, I called a lawyer friend to ask a few questions. His suggestion was to look to the Mississippi Ethics Commission for answers. Now, as most of you know, I've had some dealings with that commission before. In those dealings, I learned that the Ethics Commission's purview was extremely narrow and that, for all practical purposes, it is relatively toothless. I was so desperate for help, however, I visited their website again.

God even answers MY prayers!

There on the Ethics Commission's home page was a link to something called "NEW LAW," which I followed with monumental interest. Imagine my joy when I learned that in the 2008 legisla-

tive session, our state's leaders passed a bill which toughens up the ethics laws so that very commission has the authority to ask the Circuit Court to REMOVE ELECTED OFFICIALS FROM OFFICE if the commission finds clear and convincing evidence that laws have been broken! (Something like—oh, you know—an indictment!) Well, it's about time!

Now, instead of being forced to turn its suspicions over to the Attorney General's office for eventual investigation and prosecution, the ethics commission will now have the authority to hold its own hearings, issue its own subpoenas and mete out justice—thus eliminating the middle-man.

(Note to Garth and Sykes: The commission may fine anyone who *even attempts* to use his position in government to obtain monetary benefit for himself, his relatives or his business to the tune of \$10,000. Don't you just love that?)

Of course, the law includes

various and sundry hoops to be jumped through, but they are easily navigable ones, particularly if you have sufficient evidence. (And we have in heaps and mounds.)

Also, in this legislation, we find a new and improved system for enforcing Mississippi's Open Meeting Act which is another gripe of mine.

As I may have told you in the past, when I married my handsome husband on the shores of Hebgen Lake, Montana, the mayor and all the city council members were invited to the shindig. They had to attend in shifts, however, since Montana's sunshine laws prohibit council members from assembling a quorum in any place other than a called meeting. Mississippi's laws are a little more flexible in that they allow for "chance" or "accidental" encounters.

(These "chance" encounters do not mean that three aldermen may get together for coffee each

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## From other pens...

Brought to you, in part, by Contributing Editor Don Rowe

Back in the 60s, people took acid to make the world weird. Now the world is weird and people take Prozac to make it normal. A case in point was brought to my attention last week when Viki's irrepressible husband, Bud, provided Advocate bloggers with an email address which contained a video one has to see to believe. For those who did not get a chance to see the video, I found the text of a speech Congressman Lloyd "Ted" Poe from the 2nd District of Texas gave Congress back in May of this year.

According to the information supplied by the website, Congressman Poe first made a name for himself in Texas as a straight-talking, no-nonsense chief felony prosecutor. As an assistant district attorney for

eight years, Poe tried hundreds of cases, even those seeking the death penalty and never lost a jury trial. When Poe became a judge in 1981, he continued his dedication to justice and became one of the youngest judges in the state of Texas, serving as a Harris County felony court judge for 22 years.

Elected six times to the bench in Houston, Judge Poe garnered national media attention for his "Poetic Justice" in sentencing criminals. Among his innovative punishments, Poe ordered thieves to carry signs in front of stores from which they stole; required men who abused their wives to publicly apologize on the steps of Houston's City Hall; commanded sex offenders to place warning signs on their home after serving jail time; and

directed murderers to securely place a photo of their victims on the wall of their prison cells creating a daily reminder of their crime.

Since Mr. Poe has been elected to Congress, some of his speeches have become instant classics in poking holes in the over-inflated nonsense that emanates from Capitol Hill these days. For example, this speech from May 2008 on a new energy bill that would ban incandescent light bulbs:

"Congress's energy bill bans incandescent light bulbs by 2014, and requires Americans to buy compact fluorescent bulbs. Those are called CFLs. Now we can say goodbye to Thomas Edison's incandescent

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# Let there be teeth!

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morning or “accidentally” end up at Sykes’ house the night before an important vote to discuss fishing bait or the most effective fertilizer for tomatoes, but I guess nobody informed Sykes and Garth of that fact.)

In the past, our aldermen have also been known to close public meetings for inappropriate reasons. Cloyd Garth once told me that he could close a meeting for any reason he chose but, in the world of law-abiding citizens, there are really only 11 legitimate reasons which can be used to keep the public from observing as our elected officials conduct the business of the people.

A number of those 11 reasons are specific to school systems, special boards, judicial matters and legislative sessions—leaving only a handful of excuses for Aldermen to use when they don’t want to be seen squabbling among themselves around the board table.

In order for an executive session to be legitimately called, the board must be about to address one of these matters: to discuss a specific employee and his/her performance; potential litigation; matters around the relocation or expansion of a business or industry; security matters or matters involving imminent danger or threat to the public; allegations of misconduct or criminal behavior; and discussions of records or documents exempt from the Mississippi Public Records Act of 1983.

(Yet another of my pet peeves—getting my hands on municipal court records is a little like amassing a collection of hen’s teeth. Court jester Adrian Haynes and her lackey Sharon Edmond are less than eager to allow me to take a peek at the workings of our municipal court. Those records I have managed to obtain were garnered using considerable subterfuge.)

Before SB 2983, the only way I (or any other concerned citizen) could force the issue would have been to take legal action in Chancery Court at my own expense. Once this law is given the official okey-doke by the United States Department of Justice, the Ethics Commission will be empowered to act on behalf of the public to enforce the Mississippi Open Meetings Act, as well as the Public Records Act!

Finally the citizens of Aberdeen are to have some muscle!

Of course, the greatest power we wield is always at the ballot box. I believe we made some excellent choices in the last election. I think, with the exception of Garth and Sykes, we now have a mayor and aldermen who happen to be open to new ideas and are generally inclined to follow the law.

I’ve begun to see a new attitude among some of the city employees who now tell me they are members of “Team Aberdeen,” all of which speaks volumes about our new mayor’s ability to knit the fabric of unity

from the frazzled strings of fear and favoritism. (Great job, Your Honor!)

It’s time now for Aberdeen to finally declare her independence from greed, graft and corruption! It’s time for the voters in Ward 2 to rise up and become heroes for the rest of us by voting to remove Cloyd Garth from office. This man is, in my humble opinion, a raving lunatic whose explosive nature can only lead to serious trouble for the citizens of Aberdeen in the future. (Remember what happened when he exploded all over police officers Powell and Shelton? We don’t yet know what that little temper tantrum will cost the City, but that it ever happened in the first place ought to be warning enough!)

Even if Cloyd Garth does happen to prevail in the July 1st runoff election, and, with thanks to Senate Bill 2983, we may soon have the capacity to bring even our two rogue aldermen into line or, in the alternative, dispatch them in short order.

But, hey! An ounce of prevention is still worth a pound of cure. However tempting it is, lets not let this new legislation lull us into the slumber of sweet satisfaction.

Aberdeen has real problems which require new and innovative solutions. The same old stuff just won’t work anymore! Please choose a candidate who has a positive attitude and a plan for bringing about meaningful changes. (Please see advertisement below.) We must do all we can to help Wilchie Clay defeat Garth on July 1st!

A new day is dawning, Aberdeen! Wake up and celebrate your liberation!

## Ward 2 Special Election—July 1, 2008

### Bring Hope Back To Aberdeen!

### Elect Wilchie Clay!



Wilchie Clay will work hard to bring *all* Aberdeenians

**Unity and**

**Progress Toward Prosperity!**

He will promote

**Quality Education**

for our children!

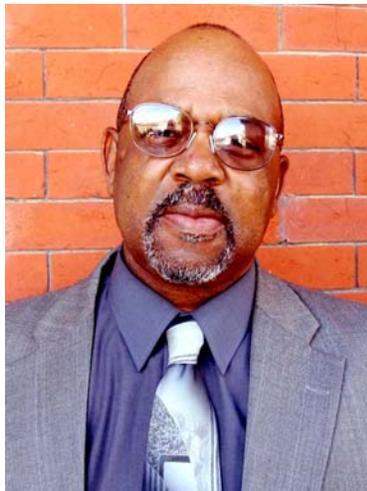
He will work to attract

**Business and Industry!**

And

**Bring Needed Jobs**

**to Aberdeen!**



Friday, June 27th

Citizens of Aberdeen are cordially invited to attend a rally at the High Street Community Center from 5 to 7 p.m.

Meet with Wilchie Clay and discuss your concerns, as well as your hopes for what can be our bright new future!

A barbecue supper will also be served.



# From other pens...

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bulb and his invention.

“Madam Speaker, I have a Constitution here and like most members of Congress, I carry it with me. I've read it through and through, but I don't see anywhere in the U.S. Constitution that it gives the government the power to control the type of light bulbs used in Dime Box, Texas, or any other place in the United States. Besides the lack of constitutional authority, let me discuss these light bulbs further. Nothing in Congress seems to be easy, and that phrase is certainly true with these CFL light bulbs. These light bulbs contain mercury, so they have to be disposed of in a certain way. According to EPA rules, you're supposed to take them to a local recycling center. Thanks to Congress, nothing is easy.

“If you throw them out at home, you're supposed to seal the bulb in two plastic bags and place them in the outside trash; otherwise, the bulb may break and pollute the landfill, of all things. CFLs are made of glass, so they're fragile. If one breaks it or drops it, you have to follow simple rules, thanks to Congress. And according to the EPA, here's what do you if you break one of these light bulbs, and I quote: ‘Have people and pets leave the room, and don't let anyone walk through the area.’

“We must evacuate the room, Madam Speaker. I continue: ‘Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more. Shut off the central heating and air conditioning system. Carefully scoop up glass fragments and powder using stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a glass jar with a metal lid.’ Obviously, that's readily available. I continue: ‘Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.’ Of course we do have lots of duct tape in Texas, so that's no problem. But we're not through yet. I continue to quote. ‘Wipe the area clean with a damp paper towel or disposable wet wipes and place them in the glass jar or plastic bag. Do not use a vacuum or a broom.’ If you break a light bulb in a high rise where the windows don't open, will the EPA light bulb police haul us off to jail because of improper disposal procedures?

“If I dropped this light bulb, we would have to evacuate the House of Representatives, according to the EPA light bulb law. Have we gone a bit too far with this nonsense? Thanks to Congress, we're making what is simple very difficult. And besides, these light bulbs are expensive, and using them may fade photographs on the wall.

“Now, Madam Speaker, I'm going to care-

fully remove one of these light bulbs from a box that contains all these warnings on the outside. And this is one of those CFL light bulbs that Congress is requiring all Americans to use by 2014. There's more to the requirements of using these. It says here, and I quote: ‘These light bulbs may cause interference to radios, televisions, wireless telephones and remote controls.’ Now we're in trouble for Monday night football, because we're going to have to turn out the lights so there's no interference with our TV. We can also thank Congress for giving more money to China. This light bulb, it says right here, with all the warnings on it, is made in China. And Madam Speaker, they are only made in China. They're not made in the United States. We import every one of these things. You know, over the past year we've seen Chinese pet food kill our dogs and cats, Chinese lead paint is poisoning our children, and now Chinese light bulbs that contain mercury can be harmful to our health. Doesn't this bother anybody?

“Meanwhile, gasoline nears \$4 a gallon and Congress still has no energy plan except turn on these light bulbs. Oh, I yearn for the day when America took care of Americans by developing our own abundant natural resources like coal and natural gas and crude oil to provide affordable energy to America. But those days have gone the way of Edison's incandescent light bulb. We might as well turn out the lights, the party's over. And that's just the way it is.”

## Free Corn!

### (Grain for thought found sprouting on the internet.)

There was a chemistry professor in a large college who had some exchange students in the class. One day while the class was in the lab, the professor noticed one young exchange student who kept rubbing his back and stretching as if his back hurt.

The professor asked the young man what was the matter. The student told him he had a bullet lodged in his back. He had been shot while fighting communists in his native country who were trying to overthrow his country's government and install a new communist government. In the midst of his story, he looked at the professor and asked a strange question: “Do you know how to catch wild pigs?”

The professor thought it was a joke and asked for the punch line. The young man said it wasn't a joke and then answered his own question.

“You catch wild pigs by finding a suitable place in the woods and putting corn on the ground. The pigs find it and begin to come every day to eat the free

corn.

When they get used to coming every day, you put a fence down one side of the place where they are used to coming. Once they get used to the fence, the pigs begin to eat the corn again and you put up a second side of the fence. Once they get used to that, they start to eat again. You continue until you have all four sides of the fence up with a gate on the fourth and last side. The pigs, who have become used to the free corn, start to come through the gate to eat. Once that happens, you slam the gate on them and catch the whole herd.

“Suddenly, the wild pigs have lost their freedom. They run around and around inside the fence, but they are trapped. Soon, however, they go back to eating the free corn. They are so used to it that they have forgotten how to forage in the woods for themselves, so they accept their captivity.”

The young man then told the professor that is exactly what he sees happening to America. The government keeps pushing

us toward socialism and keeps spreading the free corn out in the form of programs such as supplemental income, tax credit for unearned income, tobacco subsidies, dairy subsidies, payments not to plant crops (CRP), welfare, medicine, drugs, etc., all the while we continually lose our freedoms – just a few at a time.

If you see all of this wonderful government “help” as a problem confronting the future of democracy in America, then you are a realist. If you think the free ride is essential to your way of life, then God help you when the gate slams shut!

*The moral of the story: There is no such thing as a free lunch and a politician will never provide a service for you cheaper than you can do it for yourself. In this very important election year, listen closely to what the candidates are promising and just maybe you will be able to tell who is about to slam the gate on America. And remember, a government big enough to give you everything you want is big enough to take away everything you have.*



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**Just say no to  
Cloyd Garth!**

The *Aberdeen Advocate* is committed to the goal of improving the quality of life in Aberdeen and Monroe County by identifying and exposing waste and mismanagement in Government. To these ends we humbly offer our observations and opinions.

“Remember through all of time the ways of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. ALWAYS.”

...Mahatma Gandhi

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  - Mr. Charlie’s
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