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OPINION

Putting People Before Lawmakers

he U.S. Supreme Court, fresh off a string of decisions last week that will reverberate across this nation for a long time to come, issued a ruling this week that's also worth noting, for its effect is to empower the people rather than lawmakers to make decisions that impact elections.

On Monday, the court ruled 5-4 that Arizona's independent redistricting panel, which was created by that state's voters, did have the right to redraw congressional districts. This was challenged by that state's Legislature, which sued over the panel's constitutional right to exercise this kind of authority, which is usually handled by governing bodies.

Arizonans approved the formation of such a board back in 2000. The panel would be made up of two Democrats, two Republicans and a fifth member agreed upon by the other four. The purpose of this board was to redraw districts fairly and apolitically, rather than have them geographically twisted and contorted to maximize one party's influence over another. This practice is known as gerrymandering and has been a staple of partisan legislative skulduggery for two centuries.

In other words, the Supreme Court's ruling does something that is badly needed in our political process: It removed a key component of running an election away from lawmakers who stand to gain the most from tipping the scales one way or another.

Yes, that's a broad characterization that is probably unfair in some cases. But the temptation is always there, and it has been used far too often in many states to ensure that one party or another maintains control, or to minimize the influence of one block of voters who may be concentrated in specific areas.

The Supreme Court's split on the subject seemed characteristically typical, but it was a fascinating division based on how the term "legislature" was defined by the Constitution. Justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Anthony M. Kennedy, Stephen G. Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan — arguing in the majority — believed that "legislature" referred to the legislative power of the people to enact change through devices such as initiatives or referendums. The dissent — Chief Justice John Roberts, Antonin Scalia, Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas — argued that it was an elected legislative body, not the people put them there, that should have the final say on such matters.

We'll put our faith in the people — in this case, those Arizonans who wanted an independent commission to fairly redraw district lines — more so than in the lawmakers, who displayed some arrogance in suing over the result of an election that took power away from them.

Frankly, there are aspects of our election process that need some fine tuning, and taking politicians out of the drafting of legislative boundaries, is a good step in that direction. The court got this one

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in history

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, July 1, the
182nd day of 2015. There are 183 days
left in the year. This is Canada Day.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 1, 1940, the original Tacoma Narrows Bridge in Washington state opened to traffic despite concerns over its tendency to "bounce" in windy conditions, inspiring the nickname "Galloping Gertie" (four months later, the suspension bridge's main section collapsed into Puget Sound).

On this date: In 1535, Sir Thomas More went on trial in England, charged with high treason for rejecting the Oath of Supremacy. (More was convicted, and

In 1863, the pivotal, three-day Civil

War Battle of Gettysburg, resulting in a Union victory, began in Pennsylvania. In 1867, Canada became a self-governing dominion of Great Britain as the

British North America Act took effect. In 1912, aviator Harriet Quimby, 37, was killed along with her passenger, William Willard, when they were thrown out of

Quimby's monoplane at the Third Annual Boston Aviation Meet. In 1934, Hollywood began enforcing its Production Code subjecting motion

pictures to censorship review.
In 1946, the United States exploded a 20-kiloton atomic bomb near Bikini Atoll

In 1965, "The Great Race," Blake Edwards' big-budget homage to oldtime slapstick comedy starring Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis and Natalie Wood, was re-

leased by Warner Bros.
In 1974, the president of Argentina, Juan Peron, died; he was succeeded by his wife, Isabel Martinez de Peron.

In 1980, "O Canada" was proclaimed the national anthem of Canada. In 1995, rock-and-roll disc jockey Wolfman Jack died in Belvidere, North

Carolina, at age 57.
In 2000, Vermont's civil unions law, which granted gay couples most of the rights, benefits and responsibilities of marriage, went into effect. The Confederate flag was removed from atop South Carolina's Statehouse (in a compromise, another Confederate flag was raised on the Statehouse grounds in front of a sol-dier's monument). Actor Walter Matthau died in Santa Monica, California, at age

In 2004, actor Marlon Brando died in Los Angeles at age 80.

Ten years ago: Justice Sandra Day O'Connor unexpectedly announced her retirement from the U.S. Supreme Court

(she was succeeded by Samuel Alito). Rhythm-and-blues singer Luther Vandross died in Edison, New Jersey, at age

Five years ago: California lawmakers approved a \$20 million settlement with the family of Jaycee Dugard, who was kidnapped as a girl and held captive in a secret backyard for 18 years by a paroled sex offender. At least two suicide bombers attacked a popular Muslim shrine in Pakistan's second largest city, Lahore, killing

some three dozen people.

One year ago: David Greenglass, the star witness in the trial of his sister, Ethel Rosenberg, and her husband, Julius, died in New York City at age 92. (The Rosenbergs were executed in 1953 for conspiring to pass secrets about the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union; Greenglass served 10 years in prison for espionage followed by years of living under an as-

Today's Birthdays: Actress Olivia de Havilland is 99. Actress-dancer Leslie Caron is 84. Actress Jean Marsh is 81. Actor Jamie Farr is 81. Bluesman James Cotton is 80. Actor David Prowse is 80. Cookiemaker Wally Amos is 79. Dancer-choreographer Twyla Tharp is 74. Actress Genevieve Bujold is 73. Rock singer-actress Deborah Harry is 70. Movie-TV producer-director Michael Pressman is 65. Actor Daryl Anderson is 64. Actor Trevor Eve is 64. Actor Terrence Mann is 64. Rock singer Fred Schneider (B-52's) is 64. Pop singer Victor Willis (Village People) is 64. Actor-comedian Dan Aykroyd is 63. Actress Lorna Patterson is 59. Actor Alan Ruck is 59. Rhythm-and-blues singer Evelyn "Champagne" King is 55. Olympic gold medal track star Carl Lewis is 54. Country singer Michelle Wright is 54. Actor Andre Braugher is 53. Actor Dominic Keating is 53. Actress Pamela Anderson is 48. Rock musician Mark Pirro is 45. Rock musician Franny Griffiths (Space) is 45. Actor Henry Simmons is 45. Hip-hop artist Missy Elliott is 44. Actress Julianne Nicholson is 44. Actress Melissa Peterman is 44. Rock musician Bryan Devendorf (The National) is 40. Actress Liv Tyler is 38. Bluegrass musician Adam Haynes (Dailey & Vincent) is 36. Actress Hilarie Burton is 33. Actress Lynsey Bartilson is 32. Actress Lea Seydoux is 30. Actor Evan Ellingson is 27. Actors Andrew and Steven

Thought for Today: "In an age of multiple and massive innovations, obsolescence becomes the major obsession."

— Marshall McLuhan, Canadian communications theorist (1911-1980).

FROM THE BIBLE

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:10. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



The Evolution Of Michelle Obama

Kathleen

PARKER

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — First-term first ladies are often shadows to their more-important husbands, dabbling in lite fare to avoid criticism and picking safe projects to shield them and their families from the inevitable slings and arrows.

The safest bet has been to keep interests close to hearth and home the universally approved place and role of women. Thus, first lady Laura Bush, who had been a librarian, focused on reading programs and, with the Library of Congress, created the first National Book Festival. Who, after all, could find fault with reading and books?

Similarly, Michelle Obama focused on subjects close to home. As a mother who cares about nutrition and a fitness aficionado whose buff arms became the envy of sleeveless dresses everywhere — she

planted an organic garden at the White House, changed the way children eat at school, and created a "Let's Move!" campaign to get our girth-some youth off the couch and on their

Who could be against nutrition and fitness? As first ladies will tell you, there's never any winning. Critics are often scornful that these women aren't using their extraordinary profiles to tackle more substantive issue. In Obama's case, they pointed to her Princeton and Harvard Law education, suggesting that she was wasting her mind on veggies. (Not that eating your vegetables isn't important.)

But then, recall what happened to first lady Hillary Clinton when she dared tackle health

Second terms, which are often problematic for presidents (unless they have such a week as President Obama did last week), can be liberating for first ladies. In her second term, Bush became a harsh critic of the military iunta in Myanmar and an advocate for jailed opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, later turning her attentions to the women and girls of Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Recently, Michelle Obama created a "Let Girls Learn" initiative to ensure the education of adolescent girls throughout the world.

Speaking Monday at a luncheon hosted by Lesley Jane Seymour, editor in chief of MORE magazine — the July/August issue of which the first lady guest-edited — Obama noted that educating girls isn't only a humanitarian goal but also a foreign policy imperative.

A series of secretaries of state, beginning

with Madeleine Albright, have made this same observation and created policies and strategies accordingly. It is a fact that countries that abuse and marginalize girls and women also tend to be home to terrorists and inflamed minds snagged on ancient histories.

Adolescent girls were specifically targeted because puberty is when many endure the atrocity of genital cutting and/or are forced

into marriage and childbirth while they themselves are still children. Into slavery, in other words.

In a brilliant stroke, Obama tapped the Peace Corps as a partner. Thus, corps volunteers, working with NGOs and other nonprofits, will mentor girls and help provide support to keep them in school. The first lady is also seeking partnerships with companies, congregations and schools.

Corporate partners include MORE and its parent company, Meredith Corporation, a media and marketing conglomerate that seems to have conquered the female market, reaching more than 100 million women and 63 percent of

U.S. millennial women. At the same time, Obama is leaning on other developed countries to join the U.S. effort. The United Kingdom and Japan are thus far on

But she also wants to bring the message of "Let Girls Learn" to young people in this

"Because I want kids here in the U.S. to know about these girls around the world, and I want them to be inspired by their passion and determination, to reignite that hunger in our

Keeping our own kids in school is challenge enough, if for wholly different reasons. Whereas girls elsewhere sometimes risk their lives to go to school, our youth tend to drop out from boredom, lack of support at home — or even a failure to see the point of an education.

Perhaps it would help them to see girls in classrooms in Africa, as Obama described them — gathered in bare concrete rooms with little more than a chalkboard and rickety desks. "And they're thrilled to be there."

These girls don't need motivation; they're ready, says Obama. What they need are desks, supplies, mentors, support from other nations - and safety. Having the U.S. lead this initiative is a giant step for girls in need, as well as for our first lady, who seems to have found her voice and her own power to change the world.

Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleenparker@washpost.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Celebrating Independence!

Larry Zimmerman, Pierre Secretary, South Dakota Department of Veterans

For many the Fourth of July has become a holiday, a three-day weekend or a day off from

The Fourth of July is a celebration — a celebration of the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, one of the

most famous and cherished documents. It's about celebrating the values that this country was founded upon.

It's about celebrating the ideals of democracy, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is a time for us to embrace the foundation this great country was built on and share this legacy with our children and our grand-It is a time for us to remember and honor

create this country and all those that have Helen Keller once said, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the

those first Americans who made sacrifices to

Fourth of July, let us all CELEBRATE our independence. Let us live up to John Adams' challenge to celebrate "from one end of this great continent to the other."

Thankful

As we gather with friends and family this

Duke, Peg, Lindsey, Jaimie Ellingson and Family

On behalf of our family, we would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Habitat for Humanity, especially Julie Dykstra, for dedicating a beautiful, strong oak tree in memory of our son and brother, Cody. We would also like to thank Lauren and Tanner Hanson for the heartfelt tribute to their friend Cody. This was truly a special honor and experience for us and we are very grateful for this memoriam of our dear Cody.

Habitat for Humanity is a wonderful organization whose work makes dreams come true for hard-working, deserving families. This organization is worthy of the contributions and time spent by those who believe in Habitat's mission.

Thank you again from the bottom of our

P&D LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask that a few simple guidelines be followed:

heart.'

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.
- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the PRESS & DAKOTAN will accept no letters attacking private individuals
- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same
- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.