

school systems continue to rank at the bottom. Are we great for \$11 an hour jobs? You bet. But any industry requiring a lot of educated workers and comprising employees who want their children to get a good education is going to have to be able to either attract them from elsewhere or bring them with them.

Private, corporate responsibility

SAWB: It seems like our society is shifting from one that places a premium on the rights and responsibilities of the individual to one that is more focused on the rights and responsibilities of society. This manifests itself in many ways, such as the educational system that seeks to graduate large numbers of uneducated students because we hate to hold any individual back. We see it in the criminal justice system where we look for every conceivable reason to let criminals out of jail instead of punishing individuals for their actions. In business we see it where large numbers of individuals are now receiving taxpayer-funded bailouts even though they bought homes they could not pay for. We see politicians calling for restrictions on firearms while refusing to punish those who commit crimes with the same firearms. Yes, lack of personal responsibility is the basis for many of the problems in our society.

carlosgvv: Corporate responsibility? Guess we'll start off this Friday with some really dark humor.

GUEST COLUMN

Professional lobbyists are essential for sound policy

By James E. "Jet" Toney

Well-prepared lobbyists are functional and necessary contributors to public policy discussions at all levels of government.

Our history is replete with examples of one person advocating for the well-being of a larger group of people or businesses significantly impacted by laws and regulation.

Lobbying was conducted on behalf of our state before its birth.

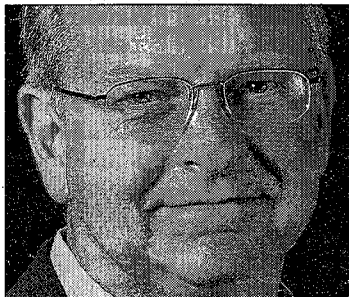
In 1732, King George II succumbed to the persistent lobbying of social reformer James Edward Oglethorpe and authorized the establishment of the colony of Georgia.

Through Oglethorpe's advocacy, prison ills in Britain were corrected and opportunities were opened in the namesake colony.

Like Oglethorpe, some lobbyists represent charitable organizations. Others represent business and industry.

Georgia state lawmakers depend on a limited number of research staff and committee aides. Professional lobbyists educate officials and staff with information, expertise and perspective that is not always readily available.

Lobbyists also serve as filters of new ideas, pointing to flaws and unintended conse-



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quences.

The presence of professional advocates on several sides of each issue assures a thorough and healthy debate.

So-called entertainment of elected officials is among the most controversial elements of lobbying.

The purchase of meals or travel expenses by lobbyists for legislators creates opportunities for necessary discussion.

In Georgia, all of these expenses must be reported to the Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission. This "ethics commission" posts all reported expenses on a state website where the public can examine the information.

The benefit of social interaction among businesses and

customers is the same as the benefit to lobbyists and government officials – increased understanding and appreciation for the perspective of the other party.

Some organizations have called for caps or a ban on lobbyist expenditures.

Before this is seriously considered, one should look to states where legislators are prohibited from receiving any gift or entertainment, even a cup of coffee.

Are the laws passed in those states more effective than in Georgia? Do the legislators there make better decisions because they've interacted less socially with professional policy advocates?

The Founding Fathers made quite clear in the U.S. Constitution that freedom of speech and the right to seek redress from the government are protected.

All citizens should embrace these rights to advocate for his/her beliefs and values. If they do, the role and impact of professional lobbyists will diminish.

Until then, lobbyists will continue to serve as primary participants in public policy discussions, whether it is over a plate of barbecue in the legislator's hometown or in the starkly clinical setting of a government building.

AFGHANISTAN TRIP

Grandstand is exactly what Obama craved

The AJC inadvertently confirmed what we all know: that President Barack Obama's latest junket to Afghanistan was yet another campaign trip costing the taxpayers tens of thousands ("Obama sees an end to combat," News, May 2).

The AJC story stated:

"He ended his lightning visit with the speech delivered straight to the television camera – and the voters he was trying to reach back home."

The supposed purpose of the trip (to sign an agreement with Afghan's President Hamid Karzai) could have been accomplished via diplomatic pouch – but that would not have given Obama the grandstand he craved.

WALTER H. INGE, ATLANTA



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together to their com-
mon adversary, Google.

The company

work. And that partner-
engine and the social net-
between its Bing search

Change	Close	Open	High	Low	Volume
Philippines	0236	0236	0236	0236	42.27
Singapore	8003	8003	8003	8003	1.2495
South Africa	1250	1250	1250	1250	8.0028
South Korea	000877	000877	000877	000877	1140.80
Switzerland	10783	10783	10783	10783	9274
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Foreign					
Frankfurt (DAX)	6518.00	6518.00	6518.00	6518.00	42.69
London (FTSE 100)	5543.95	5543.95	5543.95	5543.95	13.90
Hong Kong (HKONG)	20227.28	20227.28	20227.28	20227.28	103.36
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4 p.m.					
Dow Jones Industrial Average	11333.81	11333.81	11333.81	11333.81	25.52
Dow Utilities	471.79	471.79	471.79	471.79	4.78
NYS Financials	4536.69	4536.69	4536.69	4536.69	33.85