



## Don't pre-judge

Regarding the story, "[Columbia man arrested](#)," Feb. 12, B1.

Whatever happened to being innocent until proven guilty? The article implies just the opposite. I know this person -- Joel Kuhn -- personally. He has had a very good reputation and is a hard worker. He took responsibility for his soon-to-be-5-year-old daughter and her mother, just after graduating from high school. He had a good reputation and was well liked by all.

They are very good parents, and if he is guilty, he has only hurt himself and his family. If innocent, what a shame to have your reputation ruined.

Also, he was being bashed on Facebook, when these people knew only what they read in your paper, not knowing all of the facts. I guess they never made any mistakes.

Jeanette Ott, Columbia

## Memo to GOP: Don't be 'stupid'

In a letter, E. Dale Hornberger quotes Bobby Jindal as saying, "Free individuals taking risks, building businesses is the root of America's greatness."

So what has changed? Isn't everyone free to start a business or invent something? When he says values are being replaced by government controls, what is he talking about?

Obama won the election because he was the better candidate. Dale talks about free stuff -- what free stuff? The vast majority of people on welfare are there because they have no choice.

Do you know anybody on welfare? I do, and they don't like it one bit. Do you know anybody who is abusing it? It's like Bigfoot -- everybody believes he exists but nobody can claim they actually saw him.

Apparently, Mr. Hornberger has never been to a socialist country because, if he had, he would know that his president is not a socialist.

If the Republican Party wants to win, they can do it by, as Bobby Jindal also said, "Stop being the stupid party," or they can find more ways to cheat, like gerrymandering or voter suppression. Cheating seems to be their chosen path.

I would like to know what freedom anybody has lost since Obama has become president.

Christine Macready, West Hempfield Township

## Freedom of speech is at risk in Pa.

Advocates attempting to forward their mission rely heavily on the Constitution's First Amendment -- which includes freedom of speech. Having recently moved to Pennsylvania, I never knew how really important the First Amendment was to all Americans.

Here in America, when we see wrongdoing, we should have the right to question it, no matter who it's about or in what state you reside.

In Pennsylvania, however, it seems if you ask an official too many questions, you may eventually end up embroiled in a SLAPP lawsuit.

The term SLAPP virtually explains itself. It stands for [Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation](#). It's a lawsuit that's intended to censor, intimidate and silence effective critics by burdening them with the cost of a legal defense, thus forcing them to abandon speaking their mind.

Many states have outlawed SLAPP lawsuits because they find them unconstitutional. If we don't do something to end these encumbering suits, we will find ourselves without the ability to state our opinion in Pennsylvania.

You never know when you may find yourself in need of free speech. But if we, as a community, don't do something to stop the lawsuits now, when you attempt to rely upon your First Amendment rights, justice will have been sued out of your reach.

Currently, Lancaster County has no humane officers. The primary duties of a humane officer is to prosecute cases of animal cruelty. Humane officers are considered law enforcement, but they are not protected by sovereign immunity as are other branches of law enforcement.

How can a humane officer do his/her job effectively if the potential of a lawsuit is a constant threat?

I'm convinced there is a reason why this amendment was made first in our Constitution. Without the right to free speech, we really don't have any rights at all and, if we did, they couldn't be expressed.

I believe every public official should have total transparency and, if a statement or question is made about them, they should try to fix the

problem instead of attempting to SLAPP the citizen, or in this case, humane officer, into silence.

**Jacki Flanigan**, Lancaster