

The Style Invitational

Week 590: Send Us the Bill



BY BOB STANK FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

- The DeMint-Toomey Campaign Finance Enhancement Act.**
- The Tauzin-Cleaver bill to promote safety in the kitchen.**
- The Dent-Costa-Moore-Green bill for oversight of auto repair shops.**

This week's contest: The list appearing elsewhere on this page consists of the last names of the newly elected members of Congress, including those who slid over from the House to the Senate, as well as the members they displaced. In our seventh edition of this contest, your challenge is to come up with a bill sponsored by any combination of these people and explain the purpose of the bill, as in the examples above.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a totally unedited CD of Style Invitational Losers "singing" 13 of the Christmas carol political parodies that were featured here last week.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Jan. 3. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of

humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Jan. 23. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village.

Report from Week 586, in which we sought variations on "If God . . ." jokes. Submitted by many: If God hadn't wanted us to invade Iraq, God wouldn't have put all that oil there.

- ♦ **Third runner-up: If God had wanted us to read, He would have invented the Book Channel.** (Josh Borken, Bloomington, Minn.)
- ♦ **Second runner-up: If God hadn't wanted men to be thoughtful, romantic lovers, God wouldn't have invented halftone.** (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- ♦ **First runner-up, the winner of the "Nuns Having Fun" calendar: If God had wanted us to be politically correct, He would have given "those people" a little sense of humor.** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- ♦ **And the winner of the Inker: If God didn't want sex to be considered dirty, He wouldn't have put it . . . y'know . . . down there.** (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

♦ **Honorable Mentions**
If God wanted us to love our neighbors as ourselves, God would have made our neighbors as lovable as we are. (Tom Kreitzberg, Silver Spring)

If God had wanted Americans to elect John Kerry, God would have prevented Saddam Hussein from launching the 9/11 attack. (John Shea, Lansdowne, Pa.)

If God had wanted us to be vegetarians, God would have had Disney design all the animals. (Marty Pearl, Arlington)

If God didn't want fat people to wear thongs, He wouldn't have invented shoehorns. (Niels Hoven, Berkeley, Calif.)

If God had wanted the people of the world to live in peace and harmony, God should have stuck to just one name. (Michael Levy, Silver Spring)

If God hadn't wanted us to be culturally refined and discriminating, He wouldn't have found it necessary to invent the subtle, elegant differences in taste and bouquet of nacho cheese dip, Cheez Whiz, Cheeto dust and Velveeta. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

If God didn't want me to run naked through the shopping mall, then He wouldn't turn himself into a little brown three-legged dog and repeatedly tell me to do it. (Bird Waring, New York)

If God hadn't wanted us to kill each other, God wouldn't have made some of us so damn annoying. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

If God had wanted us to floss regularly, He would have given us those funny little snake tongues. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

If God hadn't wanted us to pick our noses, God wouldn't have made our nostrils pinkie-shaped. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

If God had wanted men to care for infants, God would have made them self-cleaning, like ovens. (Chris Doyle)

If God had wanted us to elect John Kerry, He would have taken the time to vote, but no—voting is "too mortal." (Russell Beland)

If God hadn't wanted us to covet our neighbor's wife, God wouldn't have made her such a tomato. (Stephen Litterst, Ithaca, N.Y.)

If God wanted us to think being gay was wrong, He never would have let Clarence be George Bailey's guardian angel. (Mike Cisneros, Centerville)

If God didn't want us to brush our teeth, God wouldn't have invented bidets. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

If God hadn't wanted us to put on weight, He would have given us six rectums. (Barry Blyveis, Columbia)

If God had wanted Julia Roberts to be in so many movies, God would have given her another facial expression. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

If God had wanted us to spell it "Filipino," He'd have made the country the Filipines. (Russell Beland)

If God had meant us to believe that the world and all its life forms were created 5,000 years ago, He wouldn't have given us radioisotope dating techniques. That is, unless God is a liar. (Ken Gallant, Little Rock)

If God hadn't wanted us to be gay, God wouldn't have made members of the same sex so attractive. (Karen Shimansky, Emmitsburg, Md.)

If God had wanted us to do sit-ups, God would have put one of those recliner handles on our right sides. (Chris Doyle)

If God had wanted us to back into our parking spaces, God would have given us eyes in the backs of our heads. And maybe we'd be able to make that beeping noise with our, er, noses. (Tom Witte)

If God wanted us to all vote Republican, God would have given us all lobotomies, instead of just 51 percent of us. (Marleen May, Rockville)

If God had wanted men to talk to women, He'd have made us all women. (Dot Yufer, Newton, W.Va.)

If God had wanted us to be entirely hetero, God would have put us on a bigger planet. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

If God hadn't wanted Bill Clinton to campaign for John Kerry, He would've . . . oh, um . . . (Judith Cottrill, New York)

If God didn't want us to have wrinkles, God would have implanted little winches behind our ears. (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)

If God had wanted the rain forests to survive, God wouldn't have invented Stephen King. (Chuck Smith)

If God had wanted more English people, God would have given them more than just a stiff upper lip. (Chuck Smith)

If God had wanted us to wear pantyhose, God would have put our crotches at our knees. (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)

If God hadn't wanted us to watch reality TV, God wouldn't have given us schadenfreude. (Pam Sweeney)

If God wanted us to tithe, He would give us all 11.11 percent raises. (Russell Beland)

If God hadn't wanted me to peek into the women's shower at the gym, God wouldn't have waited so long to give me a sign, don't you think? (Marc Leibert, New York)

If God hadn't wanted us to put a "u" in "humour," God would have spelt it "hmor." (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand)

If God had wanted us to speak in gender-neutral pronouns, He or She would have made the English language so cumbersome in this regard so we could adequately express His or Her desire. (Marc Leibert)

If God hadn't wanted us to run out of gas, God wouldn't have driven past that gas station you pointed out six miles back. So fine, I'm not God. Happy now? (Tom Kreitzberg)

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

For New Year's, Less Annoyance

If you are looking for a small, manageable New Year's resolution that doesn't interfere with dinner, Miss Manners may be able to help. Thanks to her Gentle Readers, she is unnecessarily well acquainted with a variety of common habits that should be unlearned for the sake of community harmony.

These are not sinful pleasures, the sacrifice of which would cast a pall on previously exciting lives. They are the little quirks and tics that people hardly realize they have, but are nevertheless stunningly effective at driving others mad.

It is the maddened who report them to Miss Manners. She is warned that if the person in the next cubicle, or in the next seat at the symphony subscription, or at the opposite seat at the dinner table, keeps doing whatever it is, mayhem will follow.

Some cases in point:
 "I have a co-worker who constantly, all day long, yawns very loudly. So loudly that you can hear her clear across the office. Some have said she sounds like a dying moose."

"A man in my book club keeps tapping his foot while others talk. We all like him otherwise, but none of us can stand it anymore."

"I work as a teller in a busy bank. One of the other tellers is constantly humming, even while waiting on customers. It is really annoying for everyone who works near her, and the subject has been mentioned several times between other associates and even managers. Some customers have mentioned it as well, saying, 'You must be in a church choir.' She says yes, and goes right on humming."

"Our friends are mostly educated, successful professionals, yet many of them have atrocious table manners. Despite my best efforts, I loathe and cannot overlook one end-of-meal activity that seems to have become quite acceptable these days—that of picking one's teeth in public after a meal in a restaurant."

"One of my colleagues blows his nose while eating in the lunchroom and doesn't wash his hands. Nobody wants to eat when he is in the lunchroom."

"A woman I work with keeps popping her chewing

gum—every day, all day. As I've heard, popping is for fire-works, not gum—especially in an office area."

"I'm engaged to the perfect man, except for one thing. We can be having a perfectly nice conversation at a perfectly nice dinner, and then he starts pointing his fork at me to emphasize what he's saying. Sometimes his knife. I've been ignoring it, but I'm afraid someday I'll grab the knife away and use it on him."

These reports are accompanied by a confession of reluctance to mention the transgression, other than the occasional ineffective "hint," because it is so trivial. The risk of annoying the annoyer, who can then point out the triviality of the offense, is also a factor.

Miss Manners therefore proposes that a bit of self-examination and control would be in order. If you have observed shudders from those close to you and can trace them to some such habit, you may be able to make a resolution that will contribute to the peace of the world. Or at least that of your colleagues and family.

Dear Miss Manners:
A Christmas card I received from a friend included a wedding announcement stating that he got married last February. On the bottom of the wedding announcement he conveniently let me know where he was registered. Am I obligated to send a gift? Is this a little tacky?

Tacky? When he refrained from demanding a Christmas present? Miss Manners is guessing that you missed his birthday as well, and he seems to have been too delicate to point that out.

Presents are properly sent at the volition of the giver, not at the demand of the would-be recipient. How you react to beggars is also up to you.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby:
 A month ago, I celebrated my 10th wedding anniversary. My husband and I have been together for 12 years. He didn't lay a hand on me until a year ago.

We got into an argument on Valentine's Day, and he slapped me twice that night. It happened again last month. We separated after the second incident, but I couldn't afford to move out because I've been a stay-at-home mom for six years.

Tonight we had a minor spat, and he broke my nose. An hour later, his 21-year-old girlfriend drove over and picked him up, and here my 7-year-old son and I sit, while he not only gets sympathy but also companionship and sex.

Abby, please tell young women that getting involved with married men isn't just stupid; it's dangerous—and often to the woman he's married to when the single woman comes into his life.

Bruised in St. Louis

I'm broadcasting your message, but don't expect much response. Men who cheat on their wives are not above lying to their girlfriends. No doubt he has filled her head with what a terrible wife you are and how unhappy you have made him. That's the "lure" to snag her in the role of "rescuer."

Perhaps you should warn her so she doesn't become victim No. 2. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, have some taken of you before your bruises heal. The police should also be contacted, and the battery put on record.

Dear Abby:
 My husband and I have one child, and we have decided that we are having no more. People frequently ask when we're having another child, and when we say, "Never!" they always demand to know why.

When we tell them our reasons, they go on and on about how we shouldn't make our little girl an only child and how

"cruel" that would be to her.
 What can we say to politely end everyone's incessant need to criticize us for not having more children? Do you agree that this is a rude question?

Having Fun With One in N.Y.

I certainly do, because that question is often painful to answer. You might catch less flak if, instead of saying "Never!" you reply as my friend Sherry does: "I had the first one. It's up to my husband to have the second." That usually stops 'em.

Dear Abby:
 I think my sister has an eating disorder. She's rail thin and is always watching her calorie intake. My concern is that she does it with my 3-year-old nephew, too. She has the child on a strict diet, counting his carb and calorie intake. Her little boy is still eating baby food (made for ages 6 to 9 months), and I'm afraid he will develop an eating disorder, too. What can I do?

Worried Aunt in Virginia

Children have very different nutritional needs than adults, and your sister needs to be aware of what they are. Encourage your sister to consult her son's pediatrician about the eating program her child is on to assure he's getting the nutrients he needs for optimum brain and body development. A session with a dietitian who's credentialed by the American Dietetic Association would also be a good idea. (They have "RD" after their names.)

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable
 NORTH (D)
 ♠ J 7 5 3
 ♥ A Q
 ♦ K Q 10
 ♣ A K J 10

WEST
 ♠ K
 ♥ 9 8 7 5 2
 ♦ 9 7 5 4 3
 ♣ 6 4

EAST
 ♠ Q 6
 ♥ K 6 4 3
 ♦ 8 6 2
 ♣ Q 9 8 3

SOUTH
 ♠ A 10 9 8 4 2
 ♥ J 10
 ♦ A J
 ♣ 7 5 2

The bidding:
 North East South West
 1 ♣ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
 4 ♥ Pass 5 ♦ Pass
 5 ♣ Pass 6 ♠ All Pass

Opening lead: ♥ 9

If your regular game includes several average players, you're bound to hear many analyses that are sound—and not much else. Most arguments are more sound than substance.

Today's South lands at six spades, and West leads the nine of hearts. Before you read on, decide how you'd handle the play.

The actual South put up the ace of hearts and cashed three diamonds to discard his last heart. South then led a trump from dummy, and when East followed with the six, South put in his ten.

West took the king and led another heart, and South ruffed and cashed the ace of trumps, drawing East's queen. South then led a club to dummy's jack, but East produced the queen. Down one.

"Unlucky," South argued. "My safety play in trumps gained nothing, and the club finesse lost as well."

South's argument was a lot of sound, signifying not much, and it's not a wonder that North was furious. South should lead a trump to his ace at the second trick. He next cashes three diamonds for a heart discard, ruffs dummy's queen of hearts, leads a club to the ace and exits with a trump.

As it happens, East wins—and is end-played. He must lead a heart, conceding a ruff-sluff, or lead a club from his queen.

The correct play gains when East has two trumps and the queen of clubs: 20 percent of the time. South's actual play should gain only when East has all three missing trumps and West has the queen of clubs: only about a 5 percent chance.

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The Members

Ballenger	Crane	Graham	Mack	Quinn
Barrow	Cuellar	Green	Majette	Reichert
Bean	("kway-ar")	Greenwood	Marchant	Salazar
Bell	Daschle	Higgins	Martinez	Salazar
Bereuter	Davis	Hill	McCarthy	Sandlin
(pronounced "be-writer")	DeMint	Hoeffel ("huffel")	McCaul	Schrock
Boren	Dent	Hollings	McHenry	Schultz
Boustany	Deutsch	Houghton	McInnis	Schwartz
Breaux ("bro")	Dooley	("hoat'n")	McKinney	Schwarz
Burns	Drake	Inglis	McMorris	Smith
Burr	Dunn	John	Melancon	Sodrel
Campbell	Edwards	Isakson	("mel-lahn-sawn")	Stenholm
Carnahan	Fitzgerald	Jindal	Miller	Tauzin
Carson	Fitzpatrick	Klecza	Moore	("toe-zan")
Cleaver	Fortenberry	Kuhl	Nethercutt	Thune
Collins	Fox	Lampson	Nickles	(not "tune")
Coburn	Frost	Lipinski	Obama	Toomey
Conaway	Gephardt	Lipinski	Ose ("oh-see")	Turner
Costa	Gohmert	Lucas	Poe	Vitter
	Goss	Lungren	Price	Westmoreland

Next Week: The B-List, or ExFad Field