

The Style Invitational »

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 799: Send Us the Bill



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The Schock-Warner Act to mandate beach alarms to announce the approach of flabby guys in Speedos.

The new members of Congress were sworn in this week — there are a whopping 68 of them if you count House members who became senators, and if you count Al Franken and Roland Burris, which we will even if their would-be colleagues aren't ready to. And as we do in honor of each new session, we want to give them something to work on. **This week: Come up with legislation that, given their names, two or more freshman senators and representatives might sponsor together,** as in the example illustrated above (the list is below). Each bill must have at least two sponsors. Among similar ideas — we're inevitably going to get lots of duplication this week — the ink will go to the best explanation of the bill.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a genuine Goldwater '64 bumper sticker — it's scaled to the size of the typical mid-'60s sedan and only a bit torn — donated by 80-time Loser Beverley Sharp, AND a 1984 Mondale-Ferraro bumper sticker coughed up by 83-timer Andrew Hoenig. This pair may well be the most suitable Loser prize ever — by a landslide.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air freshener (Fir Stink for their First Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Jan. 19 (sorry, people who do the Invite at the office, we can't wait all the way to Wednesday). Put "Week 799" 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 Feb. 7. 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 results is by Stephen Dudzik; this week's Honorable Mentions name is by Larry Yungk.

REPORT FROM WEEK 795

In which we asked for some shovel-ready suggestions on what the government should be spending our money on in an effort to stimulate the economy: Many people thought it might buy a Senate seat from the governor of Illinois.

UberLoser Russell Beland, who relaxes by being an economist during his time off from writing Style Invitational entries, notes that John Maynard Keynes suggested that the government hire teams to bury bottles of bank notes in mineshafts and let the private sector employ people to find them, while Milton Friedman imagined that a government could drop money from helicopters directly to the public.

- 4** Build a video game room at the Capitol Visitor Center so that school-age kids have something to do while their parents are touring. (David and Wendy Epstein, Potomac, First Offenders)
- 3** Encourage people to spend money faster by printing it with disappearing ink. (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)
- 2** the winner of the Official Bush Countdown Clock, useful for the next 10 days: Since pro ball players make great salaries, let's build a major league stadium in every town. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Erect a picket fence along the whole U.S.-Canada border, so we have something to lean on while we chat about the weather. (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

INAPPROPRIATIONS: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Forget the cardboard cutouts in front of the White House. Have the real Barack Obama pose for pictures with tourists — a hundred bucks a pop.** (Michael Gips, Bethesda)
- Build the Backside of Mount Rushmore Memorial, with the corresponding views of Pierce, Buchanan, Harding and Dubya.** (Kevin Dopart)
- Have the Treasury secretary put it all on Red. If he wins, repeat.** (Russell Beland, Fairfax)
- We could help both the airlines and the innkeeper industry by requiring all citizens to go to their home towns for the 2010 census.** (Jon Graft, Centreville)
- Decrease threats to U.S. security by financing anger management classes for terrorists.** (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)
- Provide airline tickets to India for people who can apply for the jobs they lost here.** (Michael Mason, Fairfax)
- Replace all Metro down-escalators with airplane emergency slides, because it'd be cool to try those things out if there weren't a plane on fire or anything.** (Tod Hale, Fredericksburg)
- Paint the land with thick dotted lines and**

- gigantic stars so it looks like a map from a plane.** (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)
- Extend FDIC insurance to Ponzi schemes.** (Martin Bancroft)
- Install phone booths on each corner. Some of us need a ready place to talk on our cellphones without every jerk on the street listening in.** (Kevin Dopart)
- Don't give \$17 billion to the automakers. Instead, buy a half-million of the biggest beasts the Big Three make and hand them out to people who have lost their homes to foreclosure. The automakers get the cash, the autoworkers get jobs, and the homeless get a place to live.** (Fil Feit, Annandale)
- It supposedly helps the economy for the government to pay farmers not to grow crops, so let's pay people not to work at all. Hey, it works at the DMV.** (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- Adapt the Statue of Liberty's torch to shine the color of the current national security threat level.** (Larry Yungk, Arlington)
- Help GM by buying a national fleet of meter maid Hummers.** (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)
- Enhance our morning commute by placing**

- entertaining Burma-Shave-type signs at intervals along Massachusetts Avenue, e.g.: You're late to work; This traffic sucks! Your reps can't vote: Just send your bucks.**
- The U.S. Congress.** (Beverly Sharp, Washington)
- Replace half the lanes on the Beltway with grass. This will increase green space and reduce carbon emissions, yet have no impact on traffic.** (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)
- Upgrade the Pentagon to a hexagon.** (Kevin Welber, Bethesda, a First Offender)
- Start a massive advertising campaign encouraging citizens to participate in Leave Your Refrigerator Open for 24 Hours Day, to help counter global warming.** (David Garratt, Glenn Dale)
- Build an adults-only annex to the Library of Congress.** (David Garratt)
- Build a Bridge to a Future Somewhere.** (Christina Courtney, Ocean City)
- Complete Interstate 10A to Hawaii.** (Jeffrey Contompasis, Ashburn; Jon Graft)

Next Week: Sincerest Flattery, or Moanikers

The New Members of Congress (includes House members who became senators)

Adler	Coffman	Guthrie	Kilroy	Lummis	Olson	Roe	Titus
Austria	Connolly	Hagan	Kirkpatrick	Maffei	Paulsen	Rooney	Tonko
Begich	Dahlkemper	Halvorson	Kissell	Markey	Perriello	Sablan	Udall
Boccieri	Driehaus	Harper	Kosmas	Massa	Peters	Schauer	Udall
Bright	Fleming	Heinrich	Kratovil	McClintock	Pierluisi	Schock	Warner
Burris	Franken	Himes	Lance	McMahon	Pingree	Schrader	
Cao	Fudge	Hunter	Lee	Merkley	Polis	Shaheen	
Cassidy	Grayson	Jenkins	Luetkemeyer	Minnick	Posey	Teague	
Chaffetz	Griffith	Johanns	Lujan	Nye	Risch	Thompson	

ASK AMY

Dear Amy:
Out of the blue, I've been contacted by an ex. I'd be happy never to speak to this person again; we had a brief relationship several years ago, which represents part of my past that I'd rather forget. He is emotionally unstable, so I can't just tell him to leave me alone, even nicely. I'm afraid he might do something to harm me, though I think that's unlikely. I've been responding to his phone calls and e-mails (which all have a general message of "I think of you often and I miss you"). Should I just ignore him? Is there anything I can say that won't push him off the deep end?

Reader in N.H.

You might do best if you taper off contact by dodging your ex. A security expert once told me that the best way to deal with unwanted contact is not to make any declarative statements but to simply be too busy to respond. The idea is to try to slip quietly out of the person's sights.

I was told that people who are capable of harassment sometimes use technology to vent. Once they do, they are satisfied and eventually shift their focus. Responding — even to say "please don't contact me again" — might encourage this person to step up his campaign.

Print out any e-mail messages you receive from him. If these messages increase in frequency, or if the tone becomes menacing, reach out to your police department.

Dear Amy:
I am an amateur photographer and participate in various photo classes, meet-ups and online forums. In each setting, we show our photos to get peer feedback. Some peers are brutally honest. They say a blunt critique gets your attention, and that's how we learn to get better. Their intent is to motivate us to improve, but it can also feel like a cold slap in the face. Other peers deliver praise along with suggestions for improvement. They say that a respectful critique encourages the desire to improve. But feedback designed to avoid hurt feelings may not be fully understood or as helpful. Which approach do you believe is better: tough love or positive support?

Behind the Lens

As someone who receives a lot of daily criticism from readers

(and others), I respond best when someone starts by respectfully noting something positive to build upon.

The idea when critiquing someone's work is to do so in a way that establishes credibility but also encourages the person to listen.

A cold slap in the face, while getting your attention, may deflect it to the extent that you blame the messenger for being rude, while discounting the message.

Any artist receiving criticism learns more from a thoughtful and reasonable critique than from praise alone.

You can grow by accepting critiques to improve your technique while staying true to your own vision, and by remembering your own lessons when critiquing others.

Dear Amy:
I am a 31-year-old single female with no children. I am approached by men wanting to go out on dates often, but I haven't wanted to date anyone until now. A few months ago I started volunteering and met a gentleman. I don't know how to approach him. I don't think he is married, but he could have a girlfriend. I can't help but wonder if he is the one for me. Do you have any ideas on how I can approach him?

T

You could try to do a little sleuthing to discern whether this person is available by asking someone who knows him what his status is. Be aware, however, that when you do this you leave yourself open to the sort of romance-gossip popular in middle school. Also, his availability doesn't guarantee his interest in you.

A more direct approach is preferable but requires a short burst of courage, accompanied by nerves of steel. Ask him if he wants to have a cup of coffee with you. Coffee is a low-impact date idea. No matter how things go, anyone can survive being asked out for coffee. If he is married or otherwise attached, he can take the opportunity to tell you, either before or during coffee.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, CT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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BY RICKY CARIOTI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Steve Neidenfeuhr of Team Suzuki polishes a bike at the International Motorcycle Show, where custom-made models are gleaming in the spotlight.

Motorcycle Mania Revs a Custom Love Affair

BIKE, From Page C1

industrial and office park near Dulles Airport. "But craftsmanship! That's a discipline. Not everyone can do that. That's what custom motorcycles are — craft."

Carlini will be showing off seven or eight highly stylized bikes at the show this weekend — crazy things with the front wheel about a mile from the cycle body. He machines his own parts; he builds bikes with names. High Life. Beef Cake. Urban Assault Chopper. Makes about 75 bikes a year, has a staff of 10. Sells across the United States, Europe, the Mideast, South America. He can make you a simple bobber, those 1950s-looking things, starting at \$16,000. Most are double that. One went for \$200,000.

"These are not impulse buys. These are toys these guys have been thinking about for years," he says.

Will Langhorne, D.C. area native and international race car driver, knew he wanted a custom bike. He also knew whom he wanted to build it.

"Alfredo is really doing unique things," says Langhorne, who owns the aforementioned Urban Assault and is working with Carlini on another bike. "Really pushing the envelope."

Custom bikes used to be outre, in a garage-punk kind of way. They were down-market and kind of weird. It started just after World War II, when returning soldiers started stripping down production bikes — then as now mostly Harley-Davidsons — to get a different, wilder look. You pared the bike down, "chopped" off the fenders or fairing or anything else. High handlebars, the low seat, the raised foot pegs up front — these were standard modifications.

"I remember making bikes back in the 1970s, and I might be able to sell one for \$5,000," says Perewitz, the Massachusetts-based builder who is a legend in the field. (He now builds only a dozen a year. They start at \$60,000.) "There was only me and a few guys across the country who did it. We all knew each other."

Carlini likes to call his bikes

"hard-core Americana" to reflect that tradition.

But with computer engineering making original parts easier and cheaper to manufacture, and cable shows such as "American Chopper" gaining a large audience, one-of-a-kind bikes have become ... mainstream. Paul Teutul Sr., the mustachioed star of "Chopper," says in a telephone interview that though the show has boosted the demand for his motorcycles, what everyone really wanted was the T-shirts.

"It was the merchandising we couldn't keep up with," he says.

But as American builders made more money, their designs lagged. At the six-year-old AMD World Championship of Custom Bike Building — held in your red-white-and-blue bastion of Sturgis, S.D. — no American designer has ever won. Canada, yes. Japan, yes. Sweden (Sweden!), yes. "Murcans? Nope."

"Things in the United States just stopped evolving in the late 1990s," says Robin Bradley, founder of American Motorcycle Dealer

magazine and creator of the contest. "They kept referring to [motorcycle styles] in the 1950s and 1960s. It was very popular, and there's nothing wrong with it as a business model. But stylistically, creatively, the rest of the world moved on."

Carlini doesn't go for high-profile. He grew up in Springfield. Went to George Mason. Did four years in the Army. Ran a body shop. Put together his first bike in 1991, just for himself. Drove it up to the gas station to fill up — guy offers to buy it. Opened his own place five years later.

Today, the only external sign that the place exists is a black and red banner atop the two-story building. The banner is partly torn by the wind. You have to be buzzed in. There's no real showroom. There are old carpets and tires and cardboard boxes of parts on the floor. Only one of the two fluorescent overhead lights is working in his office. It's as drab as the bikes are fiercely beautiful.

A little bit of America, the heart still beating.