

EDITORIAL

La Villa's water dispute

Although the water payment dispute in La Villa is still not quite resolved, we are greatly relieved that the city's 650 students and 100 faculty and staff have returned to classes and that city officials have turned the faucets back on to the district's four campuses.

That's a great first step. We're hopeful that La Villa ISD's school board, Mayor Hector Elizondo and the board of aldermen soon will be able to work out an amicable financial agreement.

We had hoped that an agreement would be reached this weekend, however it seems that both sides were still negotiating after the school board met on Saturday evening to consider a proposal by the city. At least they are still negotiating and talking. We encourage the lines of communication to continue remaining open — for the sake of the children.

Still unresolved is the amount of a water surcharge per student and school district employee and the amount of debt owed by the school district.

City Attorney Mike Saldaña said after Saturday evening's meeting that they are close to a resolution, *The Monitor's* Jacob Fischler reported. "The city has presented an offer that we feel is very workable," he said.

That's wonderful progress.

Even more encouraging was Mayor Elizondo's statement to Fischler in which he said: "I do not want to turn off the water."

We don't want that either. Nobody does. And we certainly hope it never comes to that again.



Elizondo



Garcia

Recent activities in this small delta town will have lasting repercussions. Sporting games were rescheduled, learning time was lost and feelings were hurt.

Students and staff missed three days of school last week — the first scheduled class days since their winter break — after the city stopped supplying water suddenly after a year-long dispute over how much the district owes for every student and staff member culminated in a crisis that garnered statewide attention.

La Villa Independent School District Superintendent Narciso Garcia told a member of *The Mid-Valley Town Crier's* editorial board that the district is applying for a waiver from the Texas Education Association to allow students not to have to make up the three missed days of school. District officials had discussed requiring children to attend school on Saturdays.

Once all the particulars are ironed out, we hope this town can begin to heal. We hope that wounds inflicted with words and actions will, in time, be forgotten and forgiven.

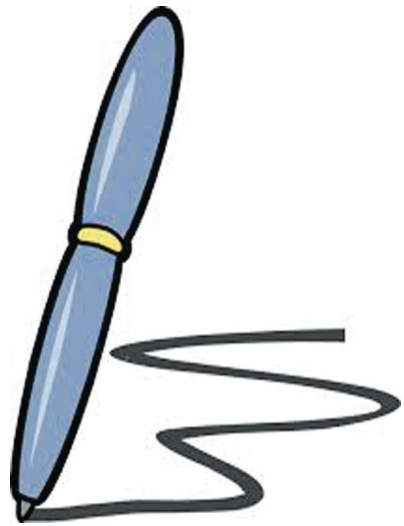
The beauty of living in a small town is knowing everyone and the togetherness this affords. When things go wrong, however, it's hard to look around and not point fingers. Yet that is what it will take for this Valley town to move forward.

If the children and teachers can hold their heads high and return to classes, we know the adult elected officials can return to the bargaining table and do the same thing. And hopefully end the day with a handshake.

Submitting a guest column

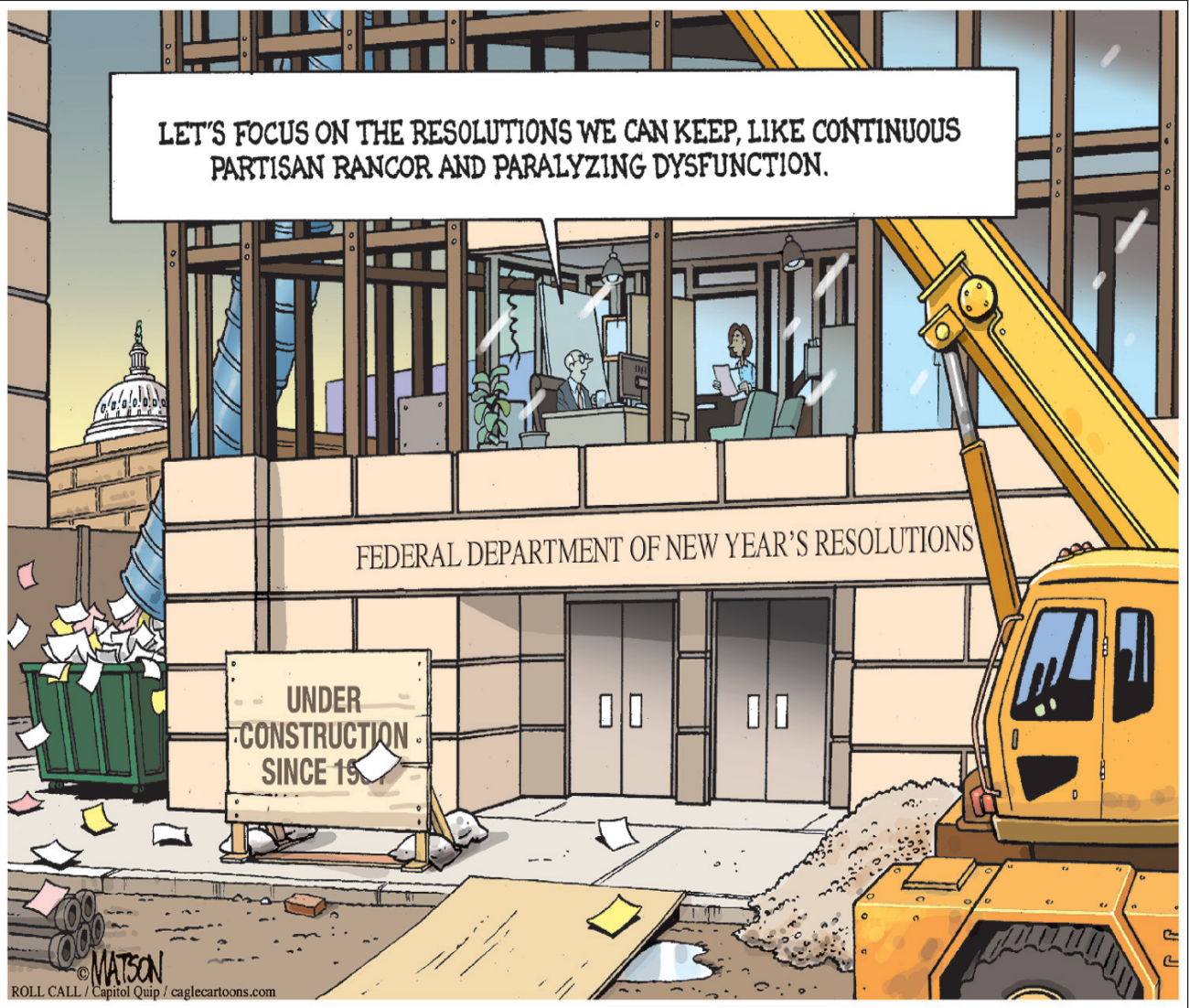
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Please email submissions to Opinion editor Sandra Sanchez at: ssanchez@mvtnews.com or call (956) 975-3508.



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COMMENTARY / DR. CHRISTOPHER MILLER AND DR. RUSSELL SKOWRONEK

Creation of a virtual Civil War trail in the RGV

The Community Historical Archaeology Project with Schools program (CHAPS) at the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) is laying the groundwork for the development of a virtual Rio Grande Valley Civil War Trail consisting of a trail map, podcasts and a web site. The proposed trail would highlight the region's role in the American Civil War, leading visitors from the beaches of Brazos Santiago — where Union troops waded ashore — through forts, battlefields and skirmish sites in Starr, Zapata and Webb counties and culminate at Laredo's Fort McIntosh.

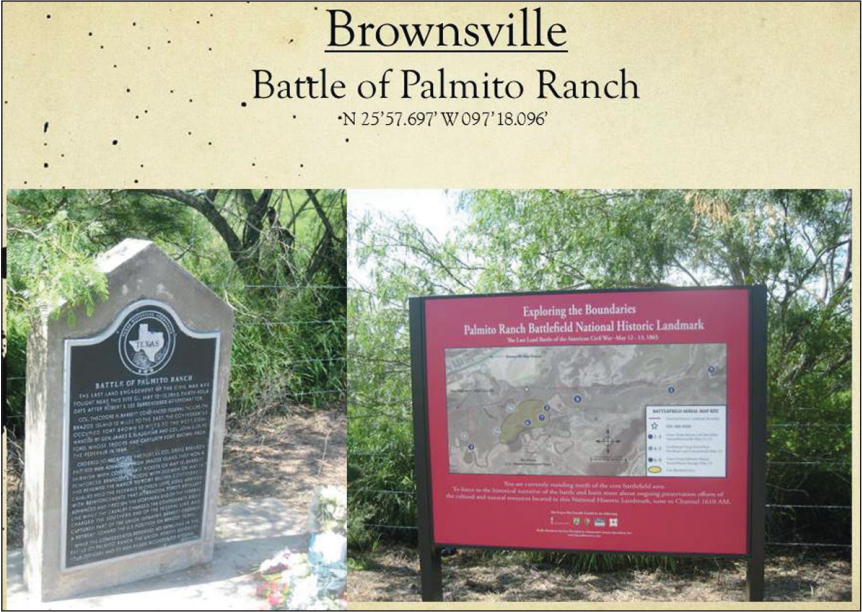


Dr. Miller



Dr. Skowronek

These are all sites where our Valley forebears struggled — sometimes brother against brother — in a monumental war that is an important part of our region's 250-year-old Euro-American history. This history has witnessed political changes from Spanish, to Mexican, Confederate and ultimately United States rule. While a number of these sites are commemorated in federal, state, county and local parks and museums, a virtual Civil War Trail can relate themes and lead visitors through a coherent path. Generous support from the



Summerlee Foundation is helping CHAPS to develop the trail but matching funds are needed from local residents, visitors, businesses and civic organizations for it to become a reality in time for a commemoration of national importance taking place in the Valley next year. The last land battle of the Civil War, known as the Battle of Palmito Ranch, was fought just outside of Brownsville on May 12-13, 1865. A re-enactment of the battle to be held on its 150th anniversary in May 2015 will be the culmination of sesquicentennial observations of the American Civil War and will draw people from across the United States to our region. Having an operational Rio Grande Valley Civil War trail by May 2015 will help drive the continued development of heritage tourism

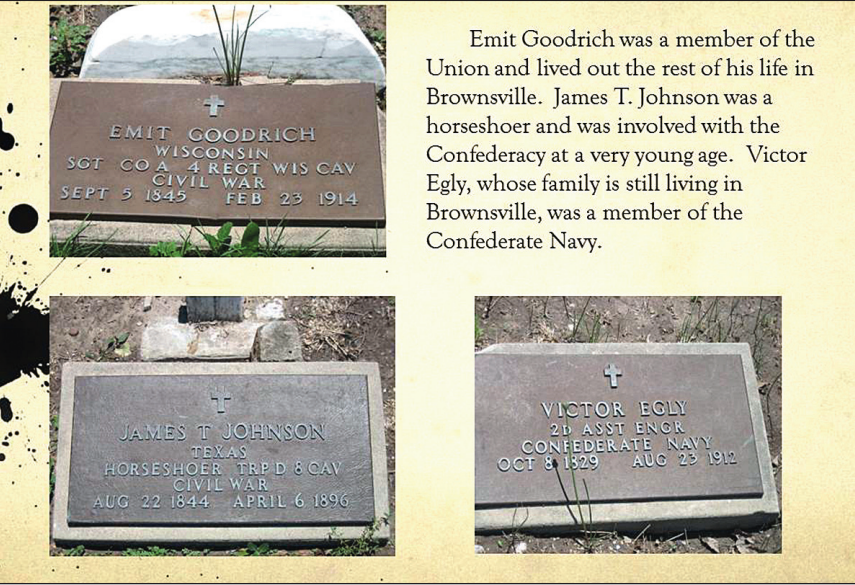
to our region, which includes ecotourism. Many visitors come to the Valley to enjoy the sights of our birds, butterflies and beaches, and they also take the time to visit cultural sites associated with the history of our region. All of this activity ultimately supports local businesses and increases visits to our parks, historic sites and museums.

However, the importance of a Rio Grande Valley Civil War trail exceeds its potential economic impact. The trail would also stand as a permanent legacy to those Valley forbearers who fought and died here. Remembering and understanding their role in our history will also help to educate and inform new generations of Valley residents about this important aspect of local history that ties our region to the historical experience of the rest of the nation.

The Rio Grande Valley Civil War Trail enjoys the support of the National Park Service, Texas Tropical Trail Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Museum of South Texas History and other agencies and organizations. We invite readers to join in the effort to create the Civil War Trail by visiting <https://bronccountry.utpa.edu/givenow> and directing gifts to "CHAPS." To learn more about CHAPS, visit www.utpa.edu/chaps or call 956-665-3231.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Opinions expressed by contributing columnists and readers do not necessarily reflect those of the *Mid-Valley Town Crier*. Anyone interested in submitting a column or a letter to the editor can contact ssanchez@mvtnews.com or (956) 975-3508. Contributor selection is based on writing ability and will be edited for Associated Press style and content.