

EDITOR'S *note*

Dreaming impossible dreams

As I write this column week after the event, I'm still euphoric over the Saints' victory in the Super Bowl. All loyal Saints fans waited so long and endured so much heartache, year after year, one roster of players after another. The most striking thing to me about the "Who Dat Nation" is that every fall we once again renewed our high hopes that the team would take the opportunity of a new season to make a fresh start and excel - only to see our hopes go down the drain.

Maybe some of us wore paper bags over our heads, but we still went to the games. Throngs of fans awaited the return of the team's jet to New Orleans after games they won and the games they lost. Even in the years when it looked like they couldn't do anything right, we had faith they would one day get it together, do the right things and have a winning season and perhaps win their division and - dare we dream it? - win the Super Bowl.

It occurs to me that I've been having parallel thoughts about our Congress and our president. Year after year Congress has disappointed us, no matter who was in office or what party was in control. Nevertheless, every time a new "quarterback" was elected, we had high expectations for their performance even if they weren't our first draft choice for the leadership position of president.

A few weeks ago, as President Obama began his State of the Union address, I hoped he would put his fumbles of the past year behind him and try to start over with a new game plan. Surely, I thought, the election of conservative Republican Scott Brown to fill the Senate seat vacated by the death of Ted Kennedy would be a wake-up call for him. Once again, I was disappointed that he resorted to his failed tactics of blaming the other "team" for not playing fair and the previous "quarterback" for causing all his problems instead of taking responsibility for running the wrong plays on crucial downs. Yes, he has been unfairly roughed up a few times, but that's the licks a quarterback has to take. A smart quarterback doesn't cry or whine; he



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LIVINGSTON BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 2010
Volume 4 Number 8

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Livingston Business & Real Estate Journal
P. O. Box 1956
Denham Springs, LA 70727-1956
(225) 773-6600

www.LivingstonBusiness.com

ON THE COVER

Will you be counted in the upcoming Census? If not enough people are conscientious about returning the census forms received in the mail, our parish could lose federal funding for many local projects and even representation in the state legislature and Congress. Forms will be mailed out in the next several weeks and should be returned by April 1.

dusts himself off and learns from his mistakes and executes a better play next time.

After his speech, I was feeling resigned to another "tie game" - a stalemate session of Congress with no prospect of a practical healthcare bill - until I watched Obama's White House press briefing Feb. 9. Surprisingly, he dropped back his position and said the right things in offering to compromise with the Republicans and modify his game plan. He has called a summit for Feb. 25 to have a give-and-take - a scrimmage of sorts. We'll see who will stand fast and hold the line when needed and who will compromise when prudent and put the needs of the electorate ahead of their own egos. But if it turns out that Obama just grandstands for the TV cameras and turns down every idea in the Republicans' playbook, or if the Republicans dig in and refuse to even show up and play, the people will end up with another losing season without affordable healthcare and will feel cheated in the bargain.

Going into the summit, if I could say something to both teams, I would tell Obama and the Democrats to stop belittling the middle-class people in this country who are demanding real change and don't want anything shoved down their throats. I would tell the Republicans we don't want them to block every play Obama runs just because they can and because it makes him look bad. Both parties should show up at the summit with good ideas and a willingness to work towards a common goal of crafting a true bipartisan healthcare plan that will score a touchdown for the working people.

Maybe I'm naïve in hoping the president and Congress will do this, but just like I stuck with the Saints because I had faith in them, I have to have faith that, one of these years, our elected officials will do the right thing. Now there's a novel idea for them; dare we dream it?

Helen Wade Turner,
Editor

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