Imagine the day when higher-speed passenger-train tracks are laid between the current traffic lanes of the interstate highway system. Imagine the day in the future when you decide to take your family on vacation across the country and instead of loading up the car for a multi-day trip or going to the airport, you get on the train at the interstate highway near your home for a fast, energy-efficient, and cost-effective trip that is not connected to Amtrak.

We, the people, own the real estate necessary to lay these tracks. The states own the land under the interstate highways and maintain the roads. This system of ownership and maintenance has worked well for the automobile industry, the trucking industry, the travel industry, manufacturing, and agriculture, not to mention the oil industry. Let's use this model to revolutionize the transportation industry by revitalizing the trains in the United States.

The federal government would set the rules by which each state maintains and enhances this new, greater usage of an efficient mode of transportation. Then when these transportation corridors are rebuilt to accommodate passenger trains as well as individual vehicle traffic, private companies would compete for the opportunity to be the purveyors of rail transportation services. Just like the airline industry, the efficient companies would succeed and thrive, while the inefficient companies would fade away. Amtrak doesn't work. It's inefficient because it's not free enterprise. Imagine the impact this could have for transportation efficiency, national security, and (purported) global warming.

For the sake of argument, let's say that global warming is true. Here's a way for us conservatives to get behind a more energy-efficient means of operating the train system in this country because the trains would be run by private enterprise and not by some form of government. If you need something done quickly and efficiently, give the challenge to an entrepreneur with an opportunity for profit. If the trains were operated this way, Amtrak would become a foggy memory from the past.

For the same sake of argument, let's say that global warming is false. Here's a way for us conservatives to be seen as problem-solvers instead of stumbling blocks until the average temperature starts going down. The electorate is smart enough to know that all the evidence is not in concerning the subject.

The American voting public is looking for problem-solvers, not partisan in-fighters, to lead in

Washington, D.C. I think this idea can be meaningful for the transportation and energy policies of the United States (as well as good for conservatives).

Lee Tank

Bettendorf

Obama Is the Best Hope

We Iowans had a chance to examine all of the candidates in the presidential race for months. The majority of us turned out in record numbers (Democrats, Republicans, independents, young , old, black, brown, white, women, and men) to support Senator Barack Obama. We support him because he is not like any other candidate in the race and because he is the one who can lead us to a new America. America wants - even hungers for - fundamental change. Obama's unique experience as a community organizer, as a constitutional lawyer, as a legislator who brings people together, as a man of courage who spoke out against the invasion of Iraq, and his ability to lead ... make him our best hope.

Cathy Bolkcom

LeClaire

Legalize, Regulate, and Tax

Bravo to op-ed author Garry Reed. (See " Do You Speak Thuggery or Freedom? " , *River Cities' Reader* Issue 666, January 9-15, 2008.) Propaganda is propaganda, regardless whether it is used to prop up a totalitarian regime or a totalitarian policy.

Call it a "war on drugs." Tell us it's all about the children. Convince us you're really just doing it for our own good - to protect us from ourselves. Dress failure after failure up as unmitigated success.

Say whatever you want. The war on drugs is still prohibition. And prohibition still does not work.

Legalize, regulate, and tax drugs, so that we can finally control drugs.

Greg Francisco

Member, Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

Paw Paw, Michigan

An Inquiring Mind

Okay, I'm stumped.

Reader Issue 665 showcases Mike Schulz's year-end mega-review of films for 2007 with a front-page banner that proclaims " Knocked Out ." The *Reader* cover photos I've seen have always been relevant to a story in that issue of the paper. So I'd understand if the headline accompanied a photo of Mike in trunks and gloves, lying unconsious in a boxing ring, having been KOed by the abundance of amazing cinema in the past year. Instead, there he is, sitting next to mult-talented local actor Maggie Woolley, both of them looking slightly apprehensive.

So what's the story, *Reader*? Why is Ms. Woolley in the photo? And what's with their expressions? Are they nervous about the ill-omened upcoming issue, 666, or what?

Inquiring minds want to know.

Peter Soderberg