

# OPINION

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## Speech: A freedom we can't afford to lose

Have you ever thought about how great our freedom of speech is? Seriously. Any time you can publicly express your distaste regarding our president, your annoyance with your fellow drivers, your aggravation with specific retail stores or your gripe with regard to our justice system without facing law enforcement retaliation, you're lucky. Same goes for the positive - if you're endorsing a political candidate, expressing happy thoughts or just plain telling people how much you love life ... no one can say you can't.

Oppression in other areas of our world permits unthinkable reactions to such a simple thing as speech or expression. For example, according to the International Herald Tribune, the Global Edition of the New York Times, a politician in Iraq, Mithal al-Alusi, lost his job, his party affiliation, his pride and his children for a simple expression of wanting peace with a Jewish state. His two children were murdered during assassination attempts on al-Alusi's life. There were a total of nine attempts.

Unfortunately, there is often times individual harassment in our country regarding our views on political issues. On the flip side, there is rarely ever any governmental retaliation on our comments, unless viewed as possible security threats. Isn't that nice? Last time I checked, none of us had to worry about getting arrested for saying George Bush makes Elmer Fudd's speech impediment seem non-existent.

In our wonderful county, we have recently experienced the freedom of speech and expression through several blogs: [www.thinkchristiansburg.com](http://www.thinkchristiansburg.com), [www.depotdazed.com](http://www.depotdazed.com) and [http://www.cakewalkblog.com/speakoutchristiansburg/entry\\_archives.aspx](http://www.cakewalkblog.com/speakoutchristiansburg/entry_archives.aspx). Each of these blogs are written by residents who speak out about their surroundings, the actions of local

government and even the freedom of speech. In a blog dated May 25, Lisa Gardner of the Christiansburg Pet Peeves blog says, "Recently

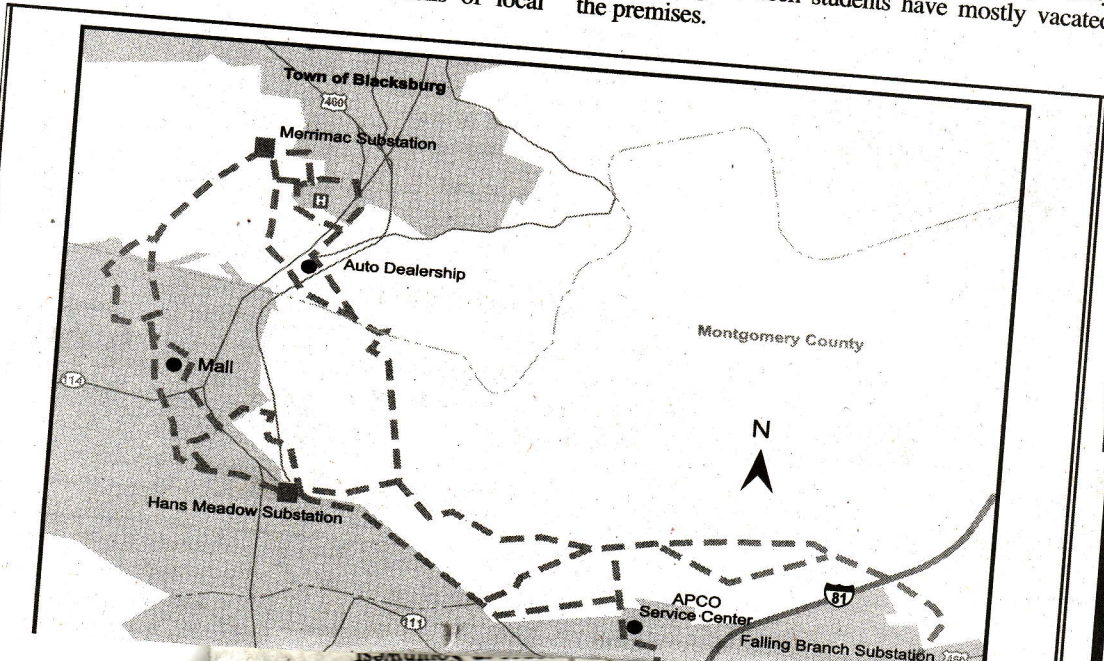


Leigh Anne Correll  
staff writer

some other town residents have been bullied and threatened for speaking their minds and now it seems that I have got some people upset by being critical of our police department. Excuse me, but NO department is perfect and there is always room for improvement which is what I am suggesting."

Perhaps we all need to take a step back and look at our freedom of speech and expression. When we become riled about what another person says or types, maybe we need to realize that we have the same power to express ourselves, too. Why not create your own blog stating your opinion? Why not write an editorial to your local newspaper (The News Messenger!)? Instead of attacking one another, come forward as your own individual opinion and make yourself known. I commend everyone who does write a blog as an expression - don't let the naysayer's stop your efforts.

Isn't it nice to know that you can say you endorse Bob Barr for President (like you'd actually endorse the Anti-Christ, the guy who wants us to occupy Iraq for 100 years or Bill Clinton's wife), don't like shopping at Wal-Mart (aka: home of the cheap, plastic stuff) and you love summer in Montgomery County mostly because Virginia Tech students have mostly vacated the premises.



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