

OUR VIEW: THUMBS-UP, THUMBS-DOWN

Serious charges linger too long

Thumbs-down: To yet another delay in Corey Butler's criminal case. Butler, pastor of Jesus is the Way Christian Center in Sycamore, was charged in 2015 with possession of child pornography and dissemination of child pornography after police raided his DeKalb home in April 2015. Four-and-a-half years later, he has yet to face trial on these charges. On Wednesday, the case in DeKalb County court was delayed yet again after Butler told the judge he was going to change attorneys for the second time. The court was supposed to have a hearing on whether Butler was fit to stand trial, but that had to be delayed with the announcement he was changing lawyers. Butler has been free since he posted \$1,000 bail shortly after his arrest. These are serious charges, and they must be tested soon. Butler now has until Dec. 11 to appear with a new lawyer. We agree with Judge Robbin Stuckert, who said in court this week, "we need some resolution."

Thumbs-up: To a grant for the Egyptian Theatre. This week, officials at the Egyptian announced they had received a \$75,000 grant from the DeKalb County Community Foundation. The funds will help to pay for the ongoing \$5.5 million expansion of the 90-year-old theater at 135 N. Second St. in downtown DeKalb. The city of DeKalb also has contributed \$2.1 million in tax increment financing funds for the expansion project. When the work is complete, the theater will have more adequate restrooms and will also have air conditioning in the theater space, which will allow for year-round programming. The Egyptian is a unique and valuable showplace for the arts in DeKalb County, and we are glad to see it receiving broad support.

Thumbs-up: To the return of "Spider." Sycamore Alderman Rick "Spider" Kramer, who is battling cancer, attended his first City Council meeting since July on Monday. Kramer, who spent 43 years as a volunteer firefighter and owns Spider Tattoo in Sycamore, reported that chemotherapy treatment has been effective, but also limited his ability to move around at times. Community benefits and fundraisers for Kramer, including one organized by the Cortland firefighters, have been successful, and we hope that Kramer's recovery likewise continues to be a success.

Thumbs-up: To another year of progress in DeKalb County. At the DeKalb County Economic Development Corp.'s "State of the County" event Thursday, attendees learned about the many projects that have been completed in DeKalb, Sycamore, Genoa, Sandwich and other county communities in the past year. There are many projects afoot around the area, in part because of its designated enterprise zone and the quality workforce available in the area. The DCEDC is working to attract more employers through targeting key industries and marketing and branding the area to employers, and facilitating agreements. We are still waiting for word on a possible food processing operation that is hoped for in DeKalb's ChicagoWest Business Center that could bring 1,000 jobs to the area. That would be a great capstone to an already productive year.



ANOTHER VIEW

Civil war causing global problems

There is no end in sight to Syria's civil war, which has dragged on for more than eight years. There is a risk that extremist groups will reestablish themselves amid the instability and spread terror across the world. A sense of crisis must be shared among the countries involved.

A foreign ministerial-level meeting of coalition partners to discuss measures to cope with the Islamic State militant group was held in Washington.

IS has lost its bases in Syria and Iraq, and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a U.S. military operation in October. But it still maintains strongholds in Libya and elsewhere, while also continuing a propaganda campaign on the internet. The threat posed by the group has not disappeared.

Young people from countries in Europe and North America, radicalized under the guise of Islam, have received military training in Syria and elsewhere. Large-scale terrorist acts by these foreign fighters and their collaborators have occurred multiple times in France and Belgium. Similar atrocities must not be allowed to occur again.

The challenge for the time being lies in how to handle the group's foreign fighters now detained in Turkey and Syria, and their families. Turkey has begun repatriating some of the about 1,200 foreign fighters detained in the country, about 30% to 40% of whom are said to be from European countries. The United States' stance is that their home countries should accept them.

However, countries in Europe are reluctant to do so. The prevailing view is that these fighters should be judged according to the laws of the coun-

try in which they have allegedly committed crimes. Britain has revoked the citizenship of some such individuals.

Repatriated fighters will have to be prosecuted and punished in accordance with the laws of their home countries. However, gathering evidence that would lead to verdicts that find such fighters guilty of involvement in terrorism won't be easy for these countries. Prosecuting those who have merely undergone training under European laws will be even more difficult.

Those fighters who are not found guilty and released could turn to terrorism in their home countries. It is understandable that European countries are concerned about such dangers.

Europe has criticized Turkey over such acts as launching cross-border attacks against Syria and is preparing punitive measures. Turkey's hard-line stance could conceivably be a tactic to prevent European sanctions. If Turkey is repatriating foreign fighters, will it provide the governments of the receiving countries with the documents needed to try them in a court of law?

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is trying to join hands with Russia to take the initiative in Syria. The reality is that Russia and Turkey have filled a void created by the withdrawal of U.S. forces from northern Syria.

Doubts remain after U.S. President Donald Trump's warm display with Erdogan during recent talks. How should Turkey, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally forging closer ties with Russia, be dealt with? A clear strategy must be established.

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THE FIRST AMENDMENT

- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

