

not really part of the war on terror, and that fighting an endless war there is a dangerous distraction.

As bad as Saddam Hussein was to his people, invading Iraq when it had nothing to do with the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, took the focus off catching or killing the real architects of those attacks.

*Jim Nelson*

*Veteran, Tucson*

### **Liberals expect handouts**

On this anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, it is appropriate to comment on the rebuilding that has occurred. Over in Mississippi there has been a lot of progress rebuilding, and other than the sound of reconstruction it has been pretty quiet. People are working diligently, all on their own. Over in Louisiana, especially in New Orleans, the only sounds are from those doing nothing but getting fat sitting on their porches, with hands held out for a handout and a mouthful of gimme. Nobody is doing anything but waiting for someone else to do it.

What is the difference? Mississippi is a Republican state with a lot of wiped-out Republicans practicing the Republican motto: work, succeed, be happy and get it done. Over in New Orleans, the (mostly) Democrats are sitting around doing nothing but waiting for someone else to do it, and practice the Democrat motto: hate, blame, be a victim and let someone else do it.

*Rick Cunningham*

*Tucson*

### **Grass is a blight on the desert**

Re: the Aug. 29 guest opinion "Buffelgrass criticism is misguided; plant's benefits receive short shrift."

Buffelgrass is devastating our Sonoran Desert. It kills native plants by crowding them, taking up their water, and preventing seed germination, converting a rich desert scrub ecosystem to an African savannah or a wasteland.

Buffelgrass and other invasive grasses have also introduced wildfire to our non-fire-adapted desert areas. Finally, buffelgrass eventually depletes soil nutrients and dies, leaving sterile wastelands behind.

No longer confined to roadsides, it is spreading into natural habitats in many parts of its range. We support the efforts of local citizens who have learned to identify and combat the spread of buffelgrass and other invasive plants in Sonoran Desert habitats.

*Mark Dimmitt, Ph.D.*

*Director of Natural History, Center for Sonoran Desert Studies, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson*

### **Fighting grass worth the effort**

Re: the Aug. 29 guest opinion "Buffelgrass criticism is misguided; plant's benefits receive short shrift."

Whereas I agree with Ann Carr that buffelgrass provides excellent forage grass for cows and is probably here to stay, she dismisses a wealth of scientific literature that documents the negative ecological impacts of invasive grasses and altogether misses the point of why people are concerned.

Invasive grasses have out-competed native plants and increased fire frequency, thus reducing the abundance of species maladapted to fire. Despite Carr's claim to the contrary, buffelgrass does burn readily and grows beyond the edges of roads and areas of additional runoff.

People are concerned because they enjoy the Sonoran Desert for its unique assemblage of plants, many of which will disappear as fires become hotter and more frequent. It may be a Herculean challenge to try and minimize the spread of buffelgrass and other exotic grasses, but for those of us who love the desert, it's a worthwhile fight.

*Gary Huckleberry*

*Geoarchaeologist, Tucson*