

# The Observer

## Danville Schlarman group proposes concealed weapon law

Kurt Fowler  
Springfield Williamsville

A bill group from Danville Schlarman hopes to pass legislation that would allow persons age 18 and older to conceal and carry a firearm.

Currently, Illinois and Wisconsin are the only two states in the country that do not have laws that provide for any form of concealed carry.

"This bill would enhance personal safety," said Senate Sponsor Lucas Seilhmyer. "It is no coincidence that we have one of the highest crime rates in the country."

Some delegates feel that incidence of crime in Illinois has little to do with the lack of a concealed carry law.

"Of course we have a high crime rate," said Jake McNamara, a legislator from Springfield Williamsville. "We're a very urban state; we're definitely going to have more murders than a state like New

Hampshire."

According to the legislation, any weapon .45 caliber or less could be concealed and carried under the law.

"The military issues .45 caliber handguns," said Seilhmyer. "An ordinary person wouldn't need any more than that."

The bill had some restrictions.

Concealed carry would not be permitted at schools, establishments where alcohol is served, public events, or government buildings.

Owners of private property can also post that carrying a gun is prohibited.

Applicants must undergo a training session administered by the Illinois State Police.

"A background check is already required in order to obtain a FOID (Firearm Owner's Identification) card," said Seilhmyer.

While Seilhmyer and his co-sponsors, Nathan Tissier and Nathan Ligget,

feel that carrying a weapon gives a person a sense of security, McNamara believes that allowing citizens to carry weapons would have a much different effect.

"If we let everyone carry a gun, you'd have a murder anytime someone got mad," he said. "In an

everyday circumstance, like following a car accident, you'd have people shooting whoever hits their bumper."

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### 2009 Y&G Ballot

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- Matt Shine - Network Stagg
- Stephen Vercellino - Jefferson Co. Sesser-Valier

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# GET THE MOST OUT OF THE EXPERIENCE

The Y&G program has been a growing experience for me during the past two years.

Here we all are in Springfield, and yet we come from all across the state.

Half of the program is just about meeting new people who you normally never would.

I have always lived in Williamsville where I have attended a very small school district.

My class is made up of only ninety-six people, and combined with the other three grades we have a total of 430 students.

You could say that it was a reality slap to at-

tend a pre-leg in a high school where one grade is the equivalent to my entire high school.

Even though at times it brought me and some of my fellow delegates outside of our comfort zones, being in that situation has really helped me grow.

My sophomore year of Y&G press consisted of me being extremely timid to interview delegates or even socialize in the halls between committees.

To all of the new del-

egates- don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and talk to someone.

Last year I started to become more involved in my role with the press and really enjoyed talking to delegates from other schools.

For all of the seniors involved in Y&G this year, make the most of this weekend.

Do anything and everything you can in order to get your bills passed, but have fun at the same

time.

Pretty soon I will be going to a university where I won't even come close to knowing half of the student population.

I have learned a lot about our government and journalist tactics, but I think the most that any of us can take out of this program is meeting new people and creating new experiences.

So this weekend go out and talk to other delegates.

You may never know how much you might have in common with someone from a different part of the state!



**Samantha Pelc**  
*The Observer*  
Editor

## Should 18 year-olds be allowed to drink alcohol?

Jake Buescher  
Springfield Williamsville

Katie Grouzard and Katie McNeela from Elmhurst Lake Park proposed a bill intended to change the legal age to consume alcohol from 21 to 18.

The justification behind the bill stems from all the activities 18 year-olds can legally do. The bill sponsors do not understand why 21 is the magic number for alcohol consumption.

"If you can be in the army and you can vote at the age of 18 you should be able to consume alcoholic beverages," McNeela said.

When asked what obstacles McNeela would expect to face in the bill passing, she said opponents to the bill would probably argue that if the bill became law, "people might abuse alcohol at a younger age."

However, when asked what the advantages to a lower drinking age would be, McNeela responded, "College underage drinking tickets would go down, and drinking would be a mature thing to do."

McNeela was asked if there were any personal reasons for writing the bill.

She said "No. Eighteen year-olds can do anything but drink."



*If a bill proposed by an Elmhurst Lake Park delegation is passed and signed into law, then seniors in high school who are 18 will be able to legally purchase alcohol. (Image: www.austrianbeer.com)*

# PROPOSED BILL TO MAKE BATHROOMS SAFER

Jenna Hansen  
Springfield Williamsville

A delegation from Jefferson County Sesser-Vallier introduced a bill making it mandatory for public bathroom doors to open outward.

According to the legislation, if the door does not open outwards, antibacterial gel must be provided on the outside.

House sponsor Paige Dickey said, "We made this bill because it's disgusting to go to the bathroom and, after washing your hands, having to open a door that's covered in germs"

"There is no current law [in regards to this issue], but we are just trying to make the environment a little cleaner and hopefully a little safer," announced Dickey.

The bill states that any public place that violates the act will receive a warning and 30 days to

make alterations so it complies with the law.

If there is a second offence, the business will be fined \$150, and the third and subsequent offenses will result in fines of \$500 for each offense.

Senate sponsor Allison Rogers explained, "It's easy and a common-sense thing to do. It doesn't even cost the state money; it's making money. Employees, employers, and the public in general will be healthier over all."

Chase Bryan, a legislator from Paris Heritage agrees with the bill.

"It's a good bill, and it's a great way to eliminate germs," he said.

Dickey said, "Our goal is to make a healthier Illinois. We want to keep people from getting sick and being kept from work; hopefully, we can decrease the rate of disease spreading."



Delegation wants stricter rules on how public bathroom doors are installed and operated. Their intention is public safety. (Image: abcnews.com)

## John McSpadden excited about the chance to experience Y&G

Gilbert Botham  
Heritage Oswego East

Each year, many new delegates join Y&G and get to experience the program first hand.

Of those delegates, most generally are sophomores, with a few juniors sprinkled in among the ranks.

John McSpadden,

from Heritage Geneva, is one of those new delegates to Y&G. However, he is a senior.

As a senior he is only going to be able to be in Y&G this year, but to him, later is always better then never.

McSpadden saw Y&G

as an educational opportunity.

"I found it [an] interesting thing, and [I] wanted to learn more about government and its processes," he said.

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MCSPADDEN

The Observer, which is distributed free of charge to Illinois YMCA Y&G participants, is published four times annually. Please send letters to the editors to the press room in the Holiday Inn Express. The advisors/editors reserve the right to edit the letters for considerations of brevity, clarity, and tastefulness.

**Editor**  
Samantha Pelc  
**Reporters**  
Gilbert Botham  
Jake Buescher  
Ashley Davis  
Shannon Dennis  
Jordan Durham  
Kurt Fowler

Miranda Freeman  
Mitch Gaffney  
Jenna Hansen  
Drew Lazar  
Zach Mierzejewski  
Mark Podeschi  
Bricklin Welch  
Dylan Woods

**Advisors**  
Adam Kershaw  
Michael Gudwien

# Group wants state-mandated alcohol and tobacco policies

Drew Lazar  
Springfield Williamsville

A Christian County Taylorville delegation developed a bill mandating uniform policies and penalties for students who abuse alcohol while enrolled in both public and private schools.

The concept behind the bill is that every school, no matter if it is public or private, should have the same rules regarding alcohol and tobacco use in school so that the consequences and punishments for the abuse are the same statewide.

## Delegates split over proposed changes to ways students are punished

Drew Lazar  
Springfield Williamsville

For some school districts, student use and abuse of alcohol is not really a big problem.

For others, it is a huge problem.

When a student does get caught illegally using alcohol, punishments employed vary greatly among school districts.

To address this problem, a delegation from Christian County Taylorville is proposing legislation to mandate statewide the same punishments for violating alcohol and tobacco policies.

Is this the way to go?

Delegates are split as to what is a correct punishment. Many think the police should be called.

Kelsey Rodely from Jefferson County DuQuoin

This action will also guarantee that all athletes and athletic teams throughout the state will be treated fairly.

Currently, different schools have their own policies, and that could be unfair to each school's sports team. The unfair advantage is that some schools might decide to protect their more dominant players by not giving them equal punishment for violating an alcohol and tobacco policy.

House sponsor Emily Raab said, "Schools in different conferences normally have different rules.

said, "I think that the police should be called since it is against the law, and the law should handle it."

Mark Podeschi, a press member from Christian County Taylorville, said, "The police should be called because it is illegal and the police should be involved. Also, there should be a punishment in school because it makes the school look bad [so the students should] be punished."

Others like, Erica Kirsch, a legislator from Jefferson County Mt. Vernon, agree with the legislation in that the school should handle the punishment.

"Expulsion is too dramatic, but a suspension will still be a strict punishment," said Kirsch.

We need to just make it really simple and have every school have the same rules, and that way what is fair and unfair would be a lot easier to understand."

According to the bill, the punishment for the first offense would have the player sitting out 20% of the season.

However, during that time, the player may practice with the coach's consent.

A second offense would result in a player missing 50% of season, with practice, once again, being left up to the coach.

Finally, a third offense

would mean removal from the team.

The Illinois State Board of Education would be responsible for monitoring and enforcing this measure.

Calen McGinty from Jefferson County West Frankfort had some reservations.

"I feel this may not work. This board is located too far away from most of the schools [to do an effective job of monitoring]," said McGinty.

See related article below  
DELEGATES SPLIT OVER  
PROPOSED CHANGES

## GROUP DEMANDS STRICTER RULES ON TATTOO PARLORS

Shannon Dennis  
Springfield Williamsville

A Jefferson County Mt. Vernon group introduced a bill concerning the inspection of body piercing and tattooing facilities.

The bill requires these establishments to undergo two health inspections each year.

Current law only requires one health inspection a year.

House sponsor Leah Minor said, "Under the proposed legislation, there would be two inspections a year, one where you can make the date and the other one

will be a surprise."

According to the bill group, the health inspectors primarily will be looking for cleanliness.

They are making sure all the needles are being disposed of properly and all equipment is sterile.

Minor also added, "If the parlor is not clean, [it] will have fines the first time, and if it doesn't improve by the second inspection, then the establishment's license will be revoked. This is to prevent Hepatitis C from spreading."

Minor encourages clients to research a tattoo parlor before getting a piercing or a tattoo.

## State's mandatory seat belt law comes under attack by Jefferson County Mt. Vernon delegation



Graphics and artwork like the one above could disappear in Illinois if a Jefferson County Mt. Vernon bill passes and is signed into law. Delegates are split on the issue. (Image - blogspot.com)

Samantha Pelc  
Springfield Williamsville

Should wearing a seat belt be the choice of the driver or should he or she be required by law to wear one at all times when behind the wheel of a vehicle?

This issue has been brought to the attention of the Y&G delegates because of a bill issued by Jefferson County Mt. Vernon, which proposes repealing the mandatory use of seat belts throughout the state.

The delegates virtually were evenly split on this contested topic.

Most of the delegates who felt as though seat belts should be mandatory gave the reason that wearing seat belts saves lives.

Shay Nelson, a legislator from Jefferson County Sesser-Valier, is one of those delegates.

She said that when it comes to driving "[she] believe[s] that everyone

should be safe."

Other delegates believed that it is not the state's responsibility but rather the driver's own personal right to choose whether or not to wear his or her seat belt.

Lauren Brandt from Springfield Williamsville said, "If [the driver] wants to be irresponsible and not take precautions when driving a motor vehicle, then that is his or her own decision."

Another delegate from Jefferson County Sesser-Valier, Lorena Marlo, said, "It's ignorant that motorcyclists can ride a motorcycle [without a helmet], and we get a ticket for not buckling up when we are in a large vehicle. It should be our choice."

Because the delegates of Y&G are so split on this issue, it should be contested quite well when it is brought up on the floors of the House and Senate.

# Gay marriage debate reaches Y&G

## BILL GROUP PROPOSES REDEFINING MARRIAGE

Gilbert Botham  
Heritage Oswego East

A delegation from Lake County Stevenson has proposed a bill which would no longer restrict marriage between a man and a woman.

The bill would allow marriage between two men, two woman, and people to animals.

When asked why she chose this topic for the bill, House sponsor Stephanie Coon, replied, "There is a need for rights for gays."

When asked the same question, Senate sponsor Alina Lenar, said, "I feel strongly about this topic, and it is a hot issue."

According to the bill group, gay marriages are currently only allowed in one state, Massachusetts.

Another factor driving this bill is the fact that the sponsors "both have a lot of friends who are gay."

Moreover, the sponsors feel that this legislation will affect a great number of people, who currently have no voice.

According to Coon, CNN claims 8.8 million Americans identify themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Statistically, that means that about 1 in 25 people identify themselves as gay.

If this bill is passed into law, any public institution that does not recognize the marriage will be fined \$1,000 for the 1st offense and \$10,000 for this second offense.

A third offense will result in the mandatory clos-

ing-down the institution.

Delegate opinion of the legislation is mixed.

John Majors, a legislator from Heritage Neuqua Valley, said, "Because of religious reasons, marriage should only be between a man and woman."

On the other hand, Sarah Eid, a legislator also from Heritage Neuqua Valley, said, "I personally believe that [you should] go for what you want, whatever makes you happy."

## McSpadden

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Additionally, McSpadden had a family link to the program.

"My brother did [Y&G], and he said it was fun. It was also looks good on college [applications]," said McSpadden.

McSpadden is a legislator, and his bill this year deals with personal rights.

According to McSpadden, current law states that automobiles parked on school property can be searched by a school's officer without the consent of the owner.

McSpadden's legislation requires a police officer to get a warrant to get into the car.

In the end, McSpadden hopes that since this will be his only time at Y&G, he will be able to pass his bill and get much accomplished in the program.

# Group wants to limit oil company profits

Jordan Durham  
Christian County Taylorville

Introducing a bill new to the statehouse, delegates from a Jefferson County DuQuoin delegation look to make a law restricting oil companies to only three cents profit from the sale of every gallon of gasoline in the state of Illinois.

"We're sick and upset at how gas prices are climbing up and so is the price per barrel," said House Sponsor Kelsey

Rodely. "We're paying too much and they're taking advantages."

The bill, calling for a drastic change from the current profit of about 11 cents, will not require any funding or resources from the state, but will only cost the violating companies.

While not directly aimed at the citizens of Illinois, the bill focuses more on major oil companies such as Exxon Mobil, which in their first quarter sales of 2008 made a \$10.9

billion profit, a \$11.68 billion profit in the second quarter, and a \$14.8 billion profit in the third even as gas prices around Illinois and the nation lowered for the presidential election.

"Many citizens have to choose between what to pay, such as paying the electric bill or getting gas," said co-sponsor Whitney Woods, "and that's just not right."

If the bill is signed by the governor, any company found in violation of the

law will be fined \$250,000 for the first offense and \$500,000 for the second.

The third offense would require the company to forfeit its profits in Illinois for the maximum of three months, with the money going to the state.

"Exxon Mobil is just making too much money," said co-sponsor Hillary Ruffing. "\$10.9 billion for the first quarter when consumers have to choose what to pay next. It's just too much."

## Survey: Terror War is a mistake

Mitch Gaffney  
Springfield Williamsville

The "War on Terrorism", or "War on Terror," despite what most people believe, is not actually a war.

Fore one, it has been called an "extended military engagement" by military analysts.

According to the U.S. government, the objectives of the "war" are to secure the American homeland, break up terror cells throughout the world, and disrupt the terrorists groups who align themselves with Al-Qaeda, one of the most notorious and well-known terrorist organizations in the world.

When surveyed, the majority of delegates were opposed to this war.

One who supported the objectives of the "War

## In Region III, majority of delegates polled favor concealed-carry legislation in the state of Illinois

Mark Podeschi  
Christian County Taylorville

Should concealed weapons be allowed in the state of Illinois for the protection of the citizens of the state?

For the majority asked, the answer to the question was a yes.

They felt that such a law would provide greater protection for themselves and other citizens from danger.

"I think they should be allowed," said legislator Hilary Ruffing of Jefferson County DuQuoin. "The people who use them to harm others already carry them, and it's only fair for people to be able to defend themselves."

Christian County Taylorville legislator Kate

Althoff agreed.

"I think we should be able to protect ourselves," said Althoff. "The ones who would abuse this right would do it whether [it is] legal or not."

Ironically, most who

would actually deteriorate if this bill were passed into law.

"I feel that concealed weapons should be allowed for law enforcement only," said Annie Crews, a legislator from Jefferson County Murphysboro.

"I don't think it should be allowed because it is danger and could kill people," said Ryan Drea, a legislator from Christian County Taylorville."

"[Concealed weapons] shouldn't be allowed," said lobbyist Jeanette Strater of Jefferson County Mt. Vernon. "Even though some people would only use it for protection, some would use it for crime."

**"I think they should be allowed . . . it's only fair for people."**

favored the bill were seeking protection from criminals who were carrying handguns.

On the other hand, some believed that the law was unnecessary, and for others, that public safety

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DELEGATES OPPOSED  
TO TERROR WAR

See related article on page 1

# Increase foreign language requirement in schools, argues Mattoon bill group

Miranda Freeman  
Springfield Williamsville

Learning a foreign language is a very important skill.

Most Americans, however, do not start learning a second language until they are in high school.

But Geoff ZuHone, a Senate Sponsor, and Jillian Hawkins, a House Sponsor, both from Mattoon, believe that a foreign language and its culture should be taught in all school districts in the state of Illinois beginning in the fifth grade.

This group decided that when children are younger they should learn a different language.

The bill calls for the teaching of either French or Spanish.

The bill group felt that learning a language would be valuable for American citizens.

"The world is grow-

ing, and so is the cultural growth of other countries," said ZuHone. "If nobody is fluent in other languages, communication will be lost."

During committee debate, the bill group was asked how the law would treat students who are already fluent in French or Spanish.

ZuHone answered that the particular student or students would have to pass an exam proving fluency.

The bill group was also asked why just French and Spanish were given as suitable foreign languages.

ZuHone said, "French and Spanish as basic languages just to start with. [More may be added later]."

Current taxes and grants would fund these new requirements, according to the bill group.

# DELEGATES OPPOSED TO TERROR WAR

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on Terror" was Alex Wolfe, a legislator from Danville Schlarman.

"I think that we should all support the war because we need to help the people in turmoil," explained Wolfe. "I'm also glad that we stopped Saddam Hussein," she added. "We could have saved millions of people."

Delegates opposed to the war site the lack of reasons for invading in the first

place.

Hannah Webb, a legislator from Jefferson County Sesser-Valier, explained, "[The War on Terror] was a mistake in the first place. I think that we need to get out, but I also think that it should be done gradually."

Lobbyist Lauren Mor-dacq from Springfield Williamsville was more blunt.

"This 'war' is ridiculous," she said.

When asked to comment on the war, several delegates had no opinion.

# DECATUR EISENHOWER BILL GROUP WANTS SCHOOLS TO FOCUS ON CANCER AWARENESS

Dylan Woods  
Springfield Williamsville

A Decatur Eisenhower bill mandates that all public schools require their freshmen students to take a course in cancer awareness.

According to the bill brief, over 7.9 million people die each year from cancer.

However bill sponsor Breeya Taylor maintains that there is a lot more that can be done to fight cancer. "Many types of cancer can be prevented," she said.

The bill requires that all schools add a unit of cancer awareness in addition to the required health class.

Some in committee argued that there might not be enough information to fill an entire semester course.

Taylor disagreed. "There is plenty of information. Many things like worksheets and projects can be given to help inform," she said.

Suzanne Nolan, a legislator from Christian County Taylorville, felt that the current curriculum for health classes adequately covers the topic of cancer.

In regards to funding, the bill states that Decatur Memorial Hospital (DMH) will fund the program.

Many delegates were unsure about the funding but Taylor guaranteed that DMH would provide the money. "We have close relations with DMH. They told us they would," said Taylor.

# Dixon group calls for an extension for safe havens

Samantha Pelc  
Springfield Williamsville

A new topic this year at Y&G is that of the safe haven, introduced in the bill sponsored by a group of legislators from Dixon.

The current law in the state of Illinois is that a child can be dropped off at an emergency facility without signs of mistreatment within seven days of their birth.

Heather Grobe, Jordan Brady and Danielle Grimley believe that by increasing the time limit, many children can be provided with safer lives, and less child abuse cases would exist.

Grobe, the House Sponsor of the bill, believes that by extending the time limit to 35 months there will be a "decrease in child abuse cases."

When asked why a parent would drop off their child when there are no signs of abuse, Grobe replied, "The first three years are the hardest times for the parents with stress and money."

If a parent does drop off a child and later changes his or her mind, a petition must be filed within the first thirty days, and if passed, there will then be a court case deciding the fate of the child.

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SAFE HAVENS

## Delegates from Region III want to change Pre-Leg time

Kurt Fowler  
Springfield Williamsville

A majority of delegates to the Springfield Williamsville Pre Leg II are in favor of moving the event to a Friday evening, and almost all of them would like to see it shortened.

The downstate Pre Leg II starts at 8:00 A.M. on a Saturday morning and takes more than six hours to complete while the Chicago delegations meet for roughly three hours.

"We should definitely shorten it and move it to Friday," said Cora Jeffers, a legislator from Springfield Williamsville. "People have to wake up way too

early to get here on time, and then they have to stay here twice as long as the Chicago schools; it needs to change."

A common complaint among delegates was frustration over the early start time. "It should be short and sweet," said Amy Dickenson, a legislator from Jefferson County Mt. Vernon. "I think it should start later on Saturday though."

A small minority feels that the meeting is worth the time. "It should not be shortened," said Blake Flota, a legislator from Jefferson County Mt. Vernon. "If we have to drive three hours to get here, we might as well make use of

our time."

Some delegates would like to keep Pre Leg II on Saturday mornings because it allows them to have the nights free. "Everything happens on Friday and Saturday nights," said Gabrielle Weis, a lobbyist from Jefferson DuQuoin. "I don't want to miss it."

Many ways to save time at the meeting were suggested. The most popular was shortening the amount of required debate time. "They don't need to make us talk about each bill for 20 minutes," said Jeffers. "No one really has that many questions, and all we do is sit there and watch the clock."

## BILL DEMANDS NEW RESTRICTIONS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PARKING LOTS

Bricklin Welch  
Springfield Williamsville

A bill group from Heritage Batavia introduced a bill that would make it mandatory for all new parking lots to be made out of permeable concrete or other permeable paving materials.

Senate sponsor Flo Katzenbach said, "There is no information that would make concrete any less desirable than asphalt."

The runoff water from traditional asphalt parking lots often carries pollutants directly into our waterways.

Also, asphalt, a common material used in parking lots, adds toxins to our waterways and does not allow natural filtration.

Parking lots made from permeable materials, as the bill mandates, would prevent this run-off.

According to the bill, concrete is also a better material for parking lots than asphalt because of its color.

Asphalt's color, which is black, raises the temperature of the area around it.

This rise in temperature is known as the island effect.

In short, the bill group sees the benefit of using concrete.

"Concrete uses are better, and they work just as well as asphalt, with less maintenance," said House sponsor Rachel Nellis.

The bill also provides for strict penalties for those who do not follow the law.

The bill states that "any person(s) who violates this act is guilty of violating the Clean Water Act put in place by the EPA, and the penalty for that violation is a fine between \$500 and \$5000. The fine will be paid to the EPA."

## SAFE HAVENS

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Therefore, if a child is dropped off with signs of abuse, the parent will be taken to court after the state presses charges after DNA testing.

If a parent wishes to remain anonymous, this is possible after the child is searched for no signs of abuse.

Many delegates in the committee, however, believed that thirty-five months was too long of a time limit for the safety of the child.

An amendment was created changing the time limit from thirty-five months to two years.

Grobe believes that this will still prevent child abuse cases in the state because there is still a long enough amount of time for the parents to try to adjust.

### Advisor Press Note -

This year, the staff of *The Observer* represents only three schools. Consequently, the coverage in this issue is limited to the PreLeg's that those reporters attended. We apologize for not being able to provide a more complete coverage of the program in this issue.

- Michael Gudwien and Adam Kershaw, advisors for *The Observer*