

## Paul Fanlund: With many better ways to comment, we're turning off the trolls

PAUL FANLUND | The Capital Times | pfanlund@madison.com Jan 13, 2015



I won't bury the lead: Starting today, we will no longer permit comments — almost always anonymous — immediately below our stories. We think there are more productive ways to engage with our audience.

I wrote a column on this topic in 2013 in which I quoted an Onion-affiliated piece whose satirical headline put it best: “Awful online comments hurt understanding of news, reports local news site filled with awful online comments.”

Here's the deal: The Cap Times is making big strides as a digital-first medium on many fronts, and one of the most important is our deep engagement on social media, especially Facebook and Twitter.

There are exceptions, of course, but the anonymous comment feature on captimes.com has been taken over by a handful of trolls, both

topic, often with superficial vitriol. Many readers have told me they refuse to step into that “sewer,” or some equally pleasant metaphor.

We hope you will follow the Cap Times on Facebook where the interactions often feature spirited disagreement but with some semblance of accountability and civility. Our writers have their own Facebook pages as well.

Or email the author: We are happy to respond to writers who civilly disagree.

Or email our opinion editors: The Cap Times has a robust opinion staff for an organization our size and we appreciate letters to Voice of the People, which we publish online and often reproduce in our weekly tabloid. Send letters of no more than 250 words to [tctvoice@madison.com](mailto:tctvoice@madison.com), including full name, city or town, and phone number. (The phone number will not be published.)

Or contact us with an idea for a longer essay, what we call an op-ed, with a maximum of 700 words, to the same email address.

A goal of ours is to better tap into the kaleidoscope of people who make up our always interesting town. We are not stifling genuine engagement; quite the opposite.

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