

Editorials



Letters

Petition will raise our taxes

OK, here's how I read this: A group of people are afraid our duly elected county commissioners are going to get us into debt that will raise our taxes. So a petition has been circulated to force an election on the proposal to issue certificates of obligation to expand the county annex building.

If the petition is successful, we are assured this group once again will run a negative campaign to defeat the proposal which they are afraid will raise our taxes. Ultimately, this will raise our taxes by putting off the inevitable expansion until the cost of construction far outpaces the nominal tax increases we would have seen if we had let the commissioners do the job we elected them to do in the first place.

This is exactly what occurred last year when a group of "outraged," excuse me, "concerned" citizens decided they knew how to keep our taxes lower by defeating the jail and annex bonds in order that we continue paying other counties to house our rising prisoner population and in the end forcing us to pay possibly twice as much or more for the exact same jail and annex expansion we would have gotten without their petitions.

Every citizen does have a hand in running our county government and watching over our tax dollars by voting for the county commissioners they think will get the job done right.

How do you spell tax relief?

Gail Eltgroth
Lometa

May 10 balloting in Copperas Cove

To the citizens of Copperas Cove:

May 10 is an important day for this city. It is Election Day. We can take all the negative events that the City Council has thrust upon this city over the course of the last year and turn it into something positive.

To take our city back from the council that does not listen to its constituents we must unite together. If you do not like your tax dollars spent on investigations, if you do not like hypocrisy in government, if you are tired of seeing injustices and violations of basic rights, this election you have the chance to make changes.

On the ballot are 28 propositions to the City Charter that the citizens of Copperas Cove will vote on. Please pay special attention to Proposition 19. Vote "For" No. 19. This proposition covers recalling a City Council member from office for any stated reason. This proposition will empower the citizens and should make the City Council accountable for its actions.

To make it more complicated for the citizens to recall council members, Proposition 20 attempts to raise the number of signatures required on a recall petition. Proposition 20 requires 51 percent of the number of people voting in the last regular municipal election or 750 qualified voters, whichever is greater. This proposition has been added to the ballot to confuse the voters and make it more difficult to recall a City Council member, when it only takes five people to remove the mayor. Vote "Against" Proposition 20.

Please take the time to educate yourself on all the propositions. Go to the polls and vote. Remember, vote "For" Proposition 19 and "Against" Proposition 20, keeping it at the current 500 or 33 percent.

Trudy Perry
Copperas Cove



Policy by sound bite

The sound bite presidential campaign of Barack Obama — working to transform itself into the sound bite presidency of Barack Obama — delivers a puzzling judgment on the Iraq war. It is that the war, to quote Obama, has "made the American people less safe."

We heard it again during the rhetorical run-up to Gen. David Petraeus' latest debriefing to Congress concerning the war and will certainly hear it for a while longer. This, despite the lack of intellectual underpinning for the assertion. In other words, huh? "Less safe" how? More exposed — or something — to World Trade Center-style terror?

Policy by sound bite, inevitable as it may seem in the Internet Age, has its drawbacks, one of those being the potential to cloud the general grasp of reality. A little nuance might not come amiss in assessments of our present Iraq policy.

No Obama speech ever reckons with the complexity of what, I dare say, any of us would categorize as the Iraq mess. No, it's always: "I was against it," "we got tricked," "let's get out." And we're "less safe." Yes — you think about it that way all the time, don't you?

To the war's defenders — I don't mean apologists, I mean defenders of a proposition many hope still to make semi-successful — goes the task of introducing nuance and complexity into the discussion; admitting, yes, it's still god-awfully tough right now (despite the surge), while adding, if not in so many words, quitters never win.

The peril of quitting is the topic hardly any Democrat — certainly not Obama — wants to bring up. To bring it up would be to admit to complexity. There would be pain as well as gain from withdrawal. You never hear it from the Democrats. You hear instead the "less safe" mantra, amid self-bestowed back pats for having doubted or opposed the war from the start.

In fact, John McCain is right — if you prefer, conceivably right — in what he told the Veterans of Foreign Wars: "Terrible consequences" would follow the abandonment of "our responsibilities in Iraq."

Whether we're "winning" at the moment surely isn't the issue. The question that campaign rhetoric tends to mask is, what would happen if we just walked away? We take our bats and balls, head for home and ... what then? The cost to the Iraqis would be ...? The cost to



William Murchison

us would be ...? Doesn't a candidate for president owe it to the voters to wonder aloud?

Enough rhetorical questions. Here's a plausible view of what would happen: The country would explode, and major responsibility for the ensuing deaths and the outgoing tide of refugees would be ascribed to the United States.

The departure of all our troops would take months, even if President Obama gave the signal on Inauguration Day, so combat wouldn't end right away for American troops. A consideration Obama seems unwilling to wrestle with is that of our troops' being sucked into the maelstrom of civil war, like it or not. All he affirms, with calculated vagueness, is a desire to keep a certain number of troops close at hand to intervene, or something like that, in particular unspecified situations.

Nor could one dismiss the certainty of international laughter and scorn at the spectacle of the mighty Americans returning home, tail between legs, whimpering. Spectacles of that sort do wonders for a country's image, both at home and abroad, wouldn't you agree?

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger says of Iraq: "We do not have the option of withdrawal." The option to engage in unserious sound bites on the campaign trail for the sake of excitement — that's a different matter. You can make a perilously complex international crisis sound like simplicity itself.

And what's the sound bite when, having implemented your sound bite policy, you find everything coming to pieces — loudly, explosively? Here's one possibility: "Oops. Sorry."

William Murchison is a columnist with Creators Syndicate.

Linda Chavez



Pandering on trade issues

Democrats' hypocrisy knows no bounds when it comes to free trade. The latest example of duplicity comes from the Clinton campaign, which was forced to announce last week that chief strategist Mark Penn would be stepping down from his official post. It seems Penn had been doing a little moonlighting on behalf of the government of Colombia in its efforts to win a free-trade agreement with the U.S. — something Hillary Clinton vigorously opposes.

Penn, who has earned around \$15 million from the Clinton campaign for providing strategic advice, never gave up his other job as worldwide CEO of the large public relations firm Burson-Marsteller, which represents Colombia. He had promised Hillary, however, that he'd recuse himself from dealing with the issue personally. But then last week Penn met with Colombia's ambassador to the U.S. just as President Bush was about to send the Colombia free trade agreement to Capitol Hill.

Of course, the Clinton campaign isn't the only one that has been embarrassed on the trade issue. Earlier, Barack Obama got egg on his face when one of his economic advisers, Austan Goolsbee, told Canadian officials that Obama didn't really mean what he said when he was busy bashing the North American Free Trade Agreement.

But the real problem for the Democrats isn't undisciplined campaign advisers — it's the candidates' ridiculous pandering on trade itself. Clinton and Obama are worried that they might offend the protectionist labor unions that provide money and "volunteers" — actually, paid union staff — critical to their fortunes in November, whichever one of them gets the nomination. So, they prattle on about the dangers of trade pacts like the one President Bush is proposing Congress fast-track with Colombia. And they never let facts get in the way of their claims that free trade costs American jobs.

In the case of the Colombia agreement, the Democrats' criticism is even more outrageous — namely that we can't sign a pact because Colombian trade unionists have sometimes been assassinated. Obama has gone so far as to suggest, "You've got a government that is under a cloud of potentially having supported violence against unions, against labor, against opposition." In fact, Colombia's president, Alvaro Uribe, has fought hard against extremists of both left and right in his country, and crime against labor leaders is actually lower than against other sectors of the population. Indeed, Uribe is one of America's strongest allies in Latin America, and he has had remarkable success rescuing a nation that was on the brink of anarchy a few years ago.

The Colombia free trade pact will help the U.S. every bit as much as it will Colombia — in some ways, more. The overwhelming majority of Colombia's exports to the U.S. — 90 percent — already are free of tariffs, but our exports to Colombia face heavy tariffs of up to 35 percent — and depending on the product, sometimes much more — for everything from consumer goods to agriculture. If Congress acts favorably on the agreement, 85 percent of our industrial and consumer exports will be tariff-free, and eventually 100 percent of our exports will be. Now, however, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is threatening not to allow a vote on the issue at all, jeopardizing not just this agreement, but our ability to negotiate future trade agreements, as well.

A secure and economically viable Colombia helps us in many ways. The U.S. faces unfriendly governments in several Latin American countries, most notably Venezuela under the dictator Hugo Chavez. We need all the friends we can get in the region — and rejecting the Colombia agreement will be a real slap in the face of a strong ally. President Uribe has cracked down on narco-traffickers, seizing 500 metric tons of cocaine in 2006 alone — and these groups wreak havoc not only by financing terrorism in their home country but flooding our inner cities with drugs that breed crime and corruption.

Instead of firing their campaign advisers because they made the candidates look like hypocrites, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama should rethink their own positions on free trade. Clinton has previously made some sensible statements on the issue, and one of her husband's few major accomplishments in office was winning approval of NAFTA. And Obama is too smart a fellow to not realize that what he says about NAFTA and the Colombia agreement is utter nonsense. But I won't hold my breath for either of them to show real leadership by rejecting protectionism.

Linda Chavez is the author of "An Unlikely Conservative: The Transformation of an Ex-Liberal" and a columnist with Creators Syndicate.

From the Bible

"Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which Thou hast done, And Thy thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with Thee; If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count."

Psalm 40:5

Difference in Ellis Island immigrants

Here is a letter that was sent to me by a friend. I thought it was very good.

Skipper Wallace

So many letter writers on immigration have based their arguments on how this land is made up of immigrants. One suggests we should tear down the Statue of Liberty because the people now in question aren't being treated the same as those who passed through Ellis Island and other ports of entry. Maybe we should turn to our history books and point out to these people why today's American is not willing to accept this new kind of immigrant any longer.

Back in 1900, when there was a rush from all areas of Europe to come to the United States, people had to get off a ship and stand in a long line in New York and be documented. Some would even get down on their hands and knees and kiss the ground. They made a

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pledge to uphold the laws and support their new country in good and bad times. They made learning English a primary rule in their new American households, and some even changed their names to blend in with their new home.

They had waved goodbye to their birthplace to give their children a new life and did everything in their power to help their children assimilate into one culture. Nothing was handed to them. No free lunches, no welfare, no labor laws to protect them. All they had were the skills and craftsmanship they had brought

with them to trade for a future of prosperity.

Most of their children came of age when World War II broke out. My father fought alongside men whose parents had come straight over from Germany, Italy, France and Japan. None of these first-generation Americans ever gave any thought about what country their parents had come from. They were Americans fighting Hitler, Mussolini and the Emperor of Japan. They were defending the United States of America as one people.

When we liberated France, no one in those villages was looking for the French-American or the German-American or the Irish-American. The people of France saw only Americans. And we carried one flag that represented one country. Not one of those immigrant sons would have thought about picking up another country's flag and waving it to represent who they were. It would have been a disgrace to their parents who had sacrificed so much to be here.

These immigrants truly knew what it meant to be an American. They stirred the melting pot into one red, white and blue bowl.

And here we are in 2008 with a new kind of immigrant who wants the same rights and privileges. Only they want to achieve it by playing with a different set of rules; one that includes the entitlement card and a guarantee of being faithful to their mother country.

I'm sorry, that's not what being an American is all about. I believe the immigrants who landed on Ellis Island in the early 1900s deserve better than that for all the toil, hard work and sacrifice in raising future generations to create a land that has become a beacon for those legally searching for a better life. I think they would be appalled that they are being used as an example by those waving foreign country flags.

And for that suggestion about taking down the Statue of Liberty, it happens to mean a lot to the citizens who are voting on the immigration bill. I wouldn't start talking about dismantling the United States just yet.

Letters Policy

The Lampasas Dispatch Record encourages letters from its readers. Letters should be to the point, typed if at all possible, and signed. Address and telephone numbers also should be included for verification purposes. Only one letter per writer will be considered in a 60-day period.

Letters will be printed on a space-available basis. Letters should stick with issues, and not simply be personal attacks. Letters endorsing a particular position on issues of local interest will be accepted, however letters endorsing a candidate for political office will not be accepted.

We reserve the right to edit for length, content and potentially libelous statements. Correspondence should be mailed to:

Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 631, Lampasas, TX 76550. Or send an opinion via e-mail to letters@lampasasdispatchrecord.com.