

OPINION

JOHN S. KNIGHT (1894-1981) **The Miami Herald** JAMES L. KNIGHT (1909-1991)

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EDITORIALS

FIX THE CHILD CREDIT

TAX BILL LEAVES WORKING-POOR BEHIND

Congress did a disservice to both low-income parents and the economy when it quietly killed a provision in the massive tax-bill signed by the president last week. The child tax-credit provision would have put cash in the hands of people who most need it and most quickly would spend it on groceries and other basics.

Yet the \$3.5 billion provision, only 1 percent of the bill's total cost, was cut at the last minute to keep spending under the Senate's \$350 billion limit.

In other words, key lawmakers chose to include budget-busting tax breaks that will benefit well-off families — a cut in dividend taxes will cost at least \$124 billion — rather than a modest measure that would have helped millions of minimum-wage earners and their 12 million children. Congress should reconsider that logic.

At issue is expansion of the child-tax credit, which was billed as a boon to lower- and middle-income families. By design, this credit begins to phase out once families hit six-figure incomes. The math is complicated, but basically families with incomes starting at \$10,500 are eligible for tax credits for their children based on their household income — up to certain limits.

The current tax bill accelerated benefits in the 2001 tax-cut bill to increase the per-child credit to \$1,000 from the current \$600. This means that eligible families with incomes from about \$27,000 to \$40,000 will get \$400 checks in the mail this sum-

Under the current plan, families earning \$10,500 to \$27,000 likely will get nothing.

mer for each child. But those who make from \$10,500 to \$27,000 most likely will get nothing. That's because the increase in the amount of child credit given to households that owe little or no income taxes wasn't accelerated — a provision dropped at the last minute.

The White House and GOP leaders defended that decision, saying that the new tax breaks should benefit people who pay taxes, not those too poor to pay. But the Bush administration's 2001 tax bill already envisioned increasing the amount of credit paid to this low-income group — a group that, as it is, generally isn't entitled to the full child credit.

U.S. Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, rightly pointed out that such a formula penalizes low-income working families, precisely the families that need help the most and are most likely to spend the credit. "Not only is this unfair," she said, "but it further undermines the stimulus portion of the child credit."

If this tax bill truly is intended to stimulate the economy and benefit working people, Congress and the White House should rectify this child-credit inequity.

PURGE RIGHTS VIOLATORS

TO RESTORE U.N. COMMISSION'S CREDIBILITY

The rogue nations are at it again. Cuba's regime, among the world's most proficient human-rights abusers, is leading the charge to yank the consultative status of Reporters Without Frontiers at the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

Why is this no surprise? We've seen it before. Cuba and other human-rights violators act in concert to silence their critics. The United Nations mustn't let them get away with it again. Rather, the United Nations needs to purge the rogues' undue influence if it wants to restore credibility to its Human Rights Commission.

Of course, Cuba's repressive regime wants to retaliate against Reporters Without Frontiers. The watchdog group known by its French acronym, RSF, aggressively has condemned the regime's crackdown on independent journalists locked up for doing nothing more than expressing their views.

In Paris, RSF protesters turned a Cuba tourism office into a mock prison in April by taping photos of jailed Cuban journalists in the storefront window. Among those featured was Ricardo González, sentenced to 20 years for being the RSF Havana correspondent and other allegedly seditious acts. When RSF later staged a protest outside Cuba's embassy in Paris, Cuban "diplomats" beat up a

Cuba's repressive regime retaliates against Reporters Without Frontiers.

dozen demonstrators.

In another attack, the regime complained that RSF had "disrupted" the U.N. Human Rights Commission's opening session this year. What RSF did was drop leaflets protesting the choice of Libya as commission chair. The commission should be ashamed to have Libya, a serial human-rights abuser, at its helm.

Without giving RSF a chance to respond, the U.N. Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations voted to suspend RSF's status for a year. No wonder. The countries that voted against RSF are a rogues' gallery: China, Cuba, Iran, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, Russia, Sudan, Turkey and Zimbabwe. The inmates, indeed, have taken charge of the asylum.

The final vote on RSF's suspension will come in yet another United Nations committee meeting in July. The United States has said that it will try to counter the campaign against RSF. Good.

The Human Rights Commission needs to be saved from itself.

IN RESPONSE

Foley: Focus on my vision

I recently met with students from one of my hometown schools who were visiting our nation's Capitol. They were in awe of the symbols of democracy surrounding them: The legislative branch of our government towering overhead, the Supreme Court behind them and the grand monuments paying tribute to past presidential heroes off in the horizon.

But while these children shared great confidence in our country's democratic institutions, I couldn't help but wonder what's become of the process for selecting our leaders.

As someone preparing to launch a campaign for the Senate, I was more than a little disgusted when a handful of Democrat activists succeeded last week in persuading a couple of South Florida newspapers to publish rumors about me in an attempt to tarnish my reputation.

Just as the students visiting their Capitol had expressed to me, I thought campaigns were supposed to be about the competing visions candidates have for our country. But some involved in party politics believe can-

I am the best person to carry our GOP banner in the Senate.

didates should have to be put through some kind of twisted process that involves dragging them through months of hellfire and, in the end, determining who is the least bruised and bloodied in the process.

I am a conservative who believes government is rarely successful in solving problems that are better left to the strength and wisdom of the American people. In this campaign, I will make the case that as someone who grew up in a strong family and was taught solid values, I am the best person to carry our Republican Party banner in the U.S. Senate.

The campaign shouldn't be about personal accusations that have no relevance to whether I would be able to represent Florida.

U.S. REP. MARK FOLEY
West Palm Beach



THE READERS' FORUM

Plenty of ways to revitalize Liberty City

The May 27 article *Little to show for \$5 million* shows once again that treading the same well-worn path to failure just leads to more failure. Here are the often repeated mistakes — and solutions — that already have been proven to work:

▶ The city has set up a new agency to acquire land in blocks, thereby driving up its own acquisition cost as abandoned lots suddenly become valuable. Solution: There are scattered sites readily available in every infill neighborhood in Miami.

▶ The agency has given more than \$1 million to "professional-service" consultants. Solution: Use the money instead to pay for impact fees, permit fees and infrastructure repair (water

and sewer, sidewalks) in targeted neighborhoods that any home builder can access as a home is actually being built.

▶ The agency subsidizes the developers, and not the buyers of the homes, rewarding selected developers, not for efficiently building homes but for being "connected." Solution: Put all of the funding into "soft" second-mortgage subsidies for the new home buyers themselves. Then any home builder, large or small, can buy a lot, build a house, find and qualify a buyer, and know that the buyer will be able to afford a \$100,000 three-bedroom, two-bath house.

How do I know this works? Because, since 1994, my for-profit

company Wind & Rain has done it 14 times on scattered sites in West Coconut Grove. All buyers were low-to-moderate income renters from the neighborhood, and not one cent of taxpayer money went to Wind & Rain. There's no chance of fraud or waste because if the house doesn't get built, isn't good enough or costs too much, then the developer loses — not the taxpayers. There are other winners, too: My 14 families have seen their \$3,000 down payments grow into almost \$1 million in combined equity in their homes.

ANTHONY R. PARRISH JR.

President
Wind & Rain Inc.
Coconut Grove

Say No to rezoning

Last year, North Dade residents fought the Parks and Recreation Department over the rezoning of Williams Island Country Club to medium housing. The residents of 15 condos and hundreds of homeowners formed the California Club Coalition to fight it. We went in four buses to the County Commission meetings. And 500 strong the *vox populi* was heard.

This is the last 150-acre green space in North Dade. The thought of filling it up with high-rise, high-priced condos is appalling. However, the main arguments against this are the terrible state of overcrowded public schools, the snail trail on Ives Dairy Road and the traffic battle of fire-rescue in the area.

The issue is coming up for rezoning again this year. Do the county commissioners listen to the people? The local schools are 40 percent overcrowded. And the people passed a law last year to decrease the sizes of the classrooms. What are they going to do with 1,000 more children?

DAVID FREEDMAN
Miami

On executive pay

It is interesting to note in the May 26 Business Monday executive-pay article that in the top 25 chart, eight are in the healthcare industry. This is particularly striking when Americans are seeing their healthcare costs rise by double-digit percentages per annum.

Perhaps this contributes to why we pay 15 percent of our GNP for healthcare while our friends in Canada and Europe can get by for 9 to 10 percent, and get a vastly superior product. Eventually we will connect the dots.

S. JAMES HINTZE
Miami

LETTERS GUIDE

We welcome readers' letters that are exclusive to The Herald, are signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. We are unable to acknowledge or publish all the letters we receive, and due to limited space, we edit those selected for publication. Send letters to: The Readers' Forum, One Herald Plaza, Miami, FL 33132-1693; fax: 305-376-8950 or 954-524-9122; or HeraldEd@herald.com

We have doctors complaining that they must see too many patients in a day to meet quotas set for them, and yet the healthcare executive is being paid megadollars. There is something sick about this concept.

MARCELLA UNGAR WERBLOW
Miami Beach

Cruise-ship workers

In exception to the misleading allegations in Jim DeFede's May 29, *Cruise ships run on desperation*, on the SS Norway's tragic steam-boiler accident. I am proud to work as an attorney for the cruise lines and, before completing law school, I spent five years working aboard 17 different cruise ships, including the SS Norway.

DeFede's commentary implies crew members are exploited with poor working conditions, long hours and low pay. But I found without exception that those of us who worked aboard the ships loved our jobs. The cruise companies took safety and crew welfare seriously. Working conditions were generally far safer and more frequently inspected than similar positions ashore. When crew became ill or injured (even if through no fault of the cruise line), the cruise lines provided free medical care and free room and board if we needed to recuperate ashore.

It is true that we often worked far more hours than a typical 40-hour work week, we also enjoyed extended periods of vacation between work. We might work seven days a week for four to eight months at a time, but we would then enjoy a lengthy vacation of two to four months. We made a lifestyle choice. We chose to work hard while aboard ship in return for lengthy vacations that most Americans can only dream about.

If the wages seemed attractive to me as a U.S. citizen, they represented a king's ransom to my shipmates from less-developed countries. They often would work five or six years aboard ship and then return home with more money than they could have earned in a lifetime of working in their native countries.

These are hardly the desperate souls described by DeFede.

JEFFREY MALTZMAN
Coral Gables

Hoodwinked America

With chilling clarity, Robert Steinback's May 27th column, *Where did the feisty Americans go?* has diagnosed a frightening condition that has descended upon America since Sept. 11 shook our false faith in our own invulnerability.

We have allowed ourselves to be hoodwinked by the president's paternalistic veneer, while forces of greed, intolerance and global adventurism rewrite the agenda of this country. While middle-class Americans huddle in their subdivisions with matching Hummers in the three-car garage, the ideals that built this nation are slowly and cynically being subverted.

Let's hope the people wake from their somnambulation before the process is complete. Bravo to Steinback for casting a beam of light into the dark corners of the American psyche.

ALAN MEEROW
Davie

Media 'obstacles'

Re the May 26 headline *Jewish settlers on West Bank may be obstacles to peace plan*: There is nothing untrue about the headline, but it represents only one side of the story. Has there ever been a headline announcing that "Palestinian terrorists may be obstacles to peace plan"? Certainly the almost daily attacks against Israelis, and Hamas' refusal to abandon this tactic are obstacles to peace.

I do hope that the Israelis and the Palestinians reach a peace agreement.

NATHAN LEBWOHL
Surfside

The wrong test

I will reserve my scathing condemnation of the FCAT for another time. Of immediate importance is to clear up the misconception expressed by Rafael Borrero in his May 10 letter, *FCAT advice*. He states that he graduated from high school eight years ago and passed the FCAT "with ease." He did not take the FCAT; he took the HSCT, a test whose level of difficulty does not approach that of the FCAT. This is the first graduating class required to pass the FCAT.

MARY E. RICE
Miami