

The Florida Times-Union

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\$2



A RACE TO RETURN WWI HONORS

Group seeks to reunite 100 Purple Hearts before 100th anniversary of U.S.' war entry **Nation, A-8**

FIRST TIME'S A CHARM FOR INDY 500 WINNER

Sports, C-1



Curry campaign for pension tax now taking shape

Public advocates for half-cent tax likely won't start till July

By Nate Monroe
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Mayor Lenny Curry is the bridge between a City Hall administration and an outside political campaign that are — in different ways — supporting an Aug. 30 referendum that asks voters to approve a special sales tax to help pay down Jacksonville's ballooning pension debt.

The political campaign likely won't have much of a public presence until later in the summer, but behind the scenes, Curry's allies already

raised substantial money and plan to roll out waves of community leaders to help sell his pension fix. The campaign — led by professional operatives and a political action committee called Yes for



Curry

Jacksonville — will carry many of the same bells and whistles of Curry's high-dollar mayoral run last year: Phone banks, volunteers, office space and paid advertising.

City Council members, who have met with Curry's political team, will

TAX continues on A-4

Conservatives urge Florida to sue over transgender order

Group says business-focused governor needs to lead on social issues

By Gray Rohrer
Orlando Sentinel

TALLAHASSEE | Where transgender individuals go to the bathroom has become the latest battle in America's social-issue wars, but so far Republican leaders in Florida have refused to join the fray.

"The issue is really about protecting the privacy, safety and security of children," said John Stemberger, president of the Florida Family Poli-

cy Council, an Orlando group that promotes conservative causes.

Stemberger is pressuring Florida Gov. Rick Scott to join a lawsuit filed this past week by 11 states — including Georgia — opposing a federal directive sent to school districts nationwide. The directive says that said federal law requires schools to allow transgender students to use the bathrooms and locker rooms of the gender with which they identify.

"When it comes to social issues, (Scott) is not a leader, and he needs to

GENDER continues on A-4

MEMORIAL DAY

a FATHER she never met, a HERO she always knew



Photos by Bob.Self@jacksonville.com

Above: Skipper Miller holds a copy of the book about the last flight of her father's B-24 during World War II. George Goddard and all but one member of the crew of Miss Fortune were killed.

Below: Photos of George Goddard and his Purple Heart give Skipper Miller a link to her father.

What's in a name? Woman's connection to dad killed before her birth

By Matt Soergel
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Before she was even born, before anyone knew if she would be a boy or a girl, the crew of the Miss Fortune, a B-24 Liberator, called her "our Little Skipper."

After all, the father-to-be, George Goddard, was the bomber's pilot, the Skipper. At 23 years old, he was the old man of the crew, and his men liked to tease him about becoming a dad. But it was all in fun.

"George was so proud and so were we," one wrote after war. "He got a razzing from all of us quite often, but he took it swell."

Little Skipper was born June 3, 1944, three days before Allied troops hit the beaches of Normandy



to take Europe back. Her given name was Vancil, after a grandmother's maiden name, but she was always called Skipper — and still is.

Skipper Miller, who grew up and still lives in Jacksonville, reckons the name is a far sight better than Vancil. And she likes the connection it gives her to her father,

a man she never got to meet.

Lt. George Goddard, the pilot of Miss Fortune, died Feb. 22, 1944, after his plane was shot down on a bombing run from southern Italy to an industrial plant in Regensburg, Germany. After encountering flak and enemy fighters, it crashed into the countryside of what was then Czechoslo-

GODDARD continues on A-4

Weather
Mostly sunny, isolated T-storms
Forecast on A-2

91 Today's high
72 Tuesday morning's low

DAILY DEAL!

Summer camp with the Jacksonville Giants
Details, A-2

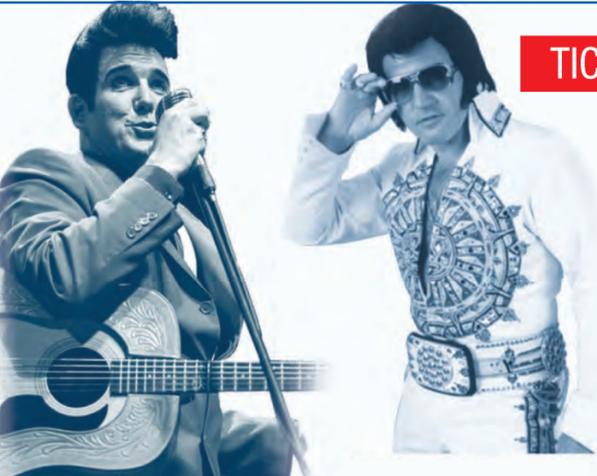
C-8 Legals
D-2 Life
D-2, 7 Crosswords
A-10 Editorials
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D Life
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TAX

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likely take an active role as well, using grassroots knowledge of their own neighborhoods to make inroads with voters.

"The district council members ought to know their districts and the voters ought to know them," said City Councilman Bill Gulliford. "I think it's important that district council members get engaged."

Curry has proposed enacting a half-cent sales tax that would begin after the Better Jacksonville Plan's sales tax expires in 2030 and would be solely dedicated to Jacksonville's \$2.85 billion pension debt. His administration has not explained how that plan, if approved, would alleviate the burden of growing annual pension payments the city must make in the 14-year run up to 2030, but Curry has remained insistent his plan is the best of bad options and would solve the problem without requiring voters to pony up more tax money than they pay now.

GOVERNMENT VS. POLITICAL

City Hall can take an active role in community discussions about the sales tax, though the role local government can play is a bit nuanced.

The city can pay for communications, like TV advertisements, that share information about Curry's plan as long as those spots don't "expressly advocate" how voters should mark their ballots Aug. 30, according to a memo drafted by city General Counsel Jason Gabriel in response to a question from Curry's administration.

That means Curry's office could also send out taxpayer-financed fliers on the pension tax as long as those fliers don't explicitly tell people how to vote. Such fliers would be part of an "informational campaign" rather than a political effort, Gabriel wrote.

One of Curry's administration officials could also share their own opinion about the issue in a news interview, as long as City Hall wasn't paying for the



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Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry visited the First Coast News program "The Chat" to help sell the extension of a half-cent sales tax to fund the city's pension program.

media coverage.

"City officials are not bound to keep silent in the face of the need to educate the community about the unfunded pension liability and impacts of the referendum," Gabriel wrote. "The actions taken by city officials to educate the community are both the 'right and duty' in order to communicate to the public what the city officials believe is the best course of action for the city."

Then there is the more subtle kind of messaging the mayor has at his disposal as the city's chief executive. Curry has said, for example, that in the absence of a clear plan like his to address the city's pension debt, draconian cuts will be necessary in future budgets. He expects to roll out one such budget later this summer.

The political campaign, however, has no restrictions, and Curry is free to wear both hats.

So far, he has focused on more low-key efforts to pitch his plan by appearing in front of civic groups and for media interviews. That will change deeper into the summer, when the more high-powered political campaign heats up. Curry's team won't say exactly when paid media spots will start airing; it could be as late as July.

Curry, who chairs the Yes for Jacksonville committee, said he expects to raise more than a million

dollars for the effort, and there is little reason to doubt that.

Yes for Jacksonville has not yet held any formal fundraising events, but the committee has already raised \$225,000. Insurance executive Tom Petway, Curry's largest financial backer in the mayoral campaign, donated \$50,000 last month. Petway's son also cut a \$50,000 check.

Brian Hughes and Tim Baker, professional operatives who led Curry's mayoral campaign, also are back to lead the committee, along with Susie Wiles, a longtime Jacksonville political consultant who was a Curry campaign supporter.

BIPARTISAN APPROACH

Curry ran a hard-scrabble campaign for mayor that did not shy away from picking partisan fights with his opponents.

"The nature of the campaign is going to be different," Hughes said. "It's really about building coalitions of people that work together for the common cause."

Wiles, a Republican, is co-chairing Yes for Jacksonville with former Sheriff Nat Glover, a Democrat. There will be more announcements soon about "coalition directors" — expect more emphasis on the bipartisan makeup of the group — who will lead the committee.

Many of the city's tradi-

tionally influential groups also line up behind Curry. The JAX Chamber and the Civic Council — a group made up of dozens of Jacksonville CEOs and civic leaders — supported Curry's push to move a bill through the Legislature that made his sales-tax plan possible.

All 19 members of the City Council co-sponsored the legislation to place the referendum on the Aug. 30 ballot.

Pockets of opposition have emerged, particularly from some pastors who represent Northside neighborhoods that have felt neglected by City Hall for years and from Beaches residents who have questions about how the city could share revenue from the sales tax with their independent communities.

But it's unclear whether any organized opposition will emerge to fight Curry's push or how potent such a challenge would prove to be.

The Duval Democratic Party is reviewing Curry's pension proposal, but there is no timeline when the party might take a position and no guarantee it will, according to party secretary James Poindexter.

The party has been critical of the way Curry has messaged his pitch in front of some community groups, but its elected officials on the City Council have been unanimous in supporting the mayor's efforts so far.

"We are hearing from individuals knowledgeable on the topic and trying to understand the intricacies of a policy proposition that is very complicated and very important," Poindexter said.

Asked whether Yes for Jacksonville expects any organized opposition, Hughes struck a confident tone.

"The case is so clear that the future of Jacksonville is in the balance and that this is so clearly the best solution for the challenges the city faces. I can't imagine who would possibly be against this," Hughes said. "But as we see in politics every day, people do unwise things for very bad reasons."

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GENDER

Continued from A-1

be a leader," Stemberger said.

Democrats and LGBT activist groups have applauded the Obama administration's directive and decried attempts to criminalize bathroom use.

"To force (a transgender girl) to use the boy's restroom would be to subject her to abuse, bullying and violence," said Carlos Guillermo Smith, a lobbyist for Equality Florida, an LGBT rights group.

Social conservatives are determined to fight the federal directive. They say they see the social fabric of the country at stake.

"This whole fiction of closing our eyes and pretending that men and women are the same ... is just madness," Stemberger said.

Although the transgender fight usually falls along partisan lines, in Florida the reaction to the directive has been mixed.

Neither Scott nor Attorney General Pam Bondi has been eager to join the lawsuit challenging the interpretation of Title IX, a federal law banning gender discrimination in schools.

Obama issued the directive after North Carolina and the Justice Department sued each other over a state law requiring trans people to use the bathroom associated with the gender on their birth certificate.

Scott told reporters this week the Obama letter, which tied federal funds to compliance with the directive, amounted to "blackmail." He said he's reviewing the case but stopped short of joining the lawsuit.

But other Republicans have been less vocal in opposition. U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., has a transgender son and has supported equality issues.

Orange County School Board Chairman Bill Sublette, a former Republican state lawmaker, has said his school district would comply with the federal guidance. Sublette did

not say that he supported the rule, only that it was a federal issue, not a local one.

But in deeply Republican areas, some officials are looking to fight the directive. Marion County School Board members enacted a policy defying it, which brought a federal complaint filed by the ACLU.

State Rep. Janet Adkins, a Republican, sent a letter to Bondi asking for a legal opinion on the Obama guidance letter, suggesting it violated states' rights. Adkins is running for the Nassau County Schools superintendent post.

Bondi's office sent a two-sentence reply saying it can't provide a formal legal opinion on federal law, even though Bondi has in the past joined other states in lawsuits involving federal issues such as gay marriage, Obamacare and environmental regulations.

Neither Scott's nor Bondi's office would not answer questions about what makes the transgender issue different from those instances.

Susan MacManus, a University of South Florida political science professor, said Florida's tourism interests and other big businesses could be leery of the backlash from LGBT activists that ensued in North Carolina. Plus, Scott has other issues to deal with such as reorganizing economic development agencies and boosting college affordability.

"Sometimes with these kinds of high-profile issues you ... let somebody else bear the legal costs and wait until the dust settles," MacManus said.

Last year, a transgender bathroom bill failed to get through the GOP-controlled Florida Legislature.

The measure died in a committee chaired by GOP Sen. Greg Evers.

But now, as Evers is locked in a GOP primary for a congressional seat in the Panhandle, he is asking Scott to ensure schools don't lose federal funding as a result of "common sense" policies.

"People would come up to me and say, 'Oh, we loved your dad. What a great guy he was.' I grew up knowing he was a hero, something special."

Skipper Miller, George Goddard's daughter

GODDARD

Continued from A-1

vakia, one of three American bombers lost on that mission.

Nine of the 10 men on the plane died with Goddard: Haig Kandarian, Charles Spickard, Joseph F. Altemus, Roy Hughes, Wayne Nelson, John A. Goldbach, Rexford Rhodes, Harold C. Carter and Oscar W. Houser.

Only Ray Noury, the right waist gunner, survived. He escaped Miss Fortune with a damaged parachute and plummeted to the snowy earth, reaching for the crucifix around his neck before he blacked out.

After the war, Noury wrote a letter to the families of Miss Fortune's crew, saying the Skipper knew the mission would be a tough one.

"George called us together. He said, 'Boys, it's Regensburg and you can expect the worst. No fighter escort so keep your guns working and your eyes open at all times. Check in often and report if anything goes wrong ...' He appeared a little nervous for the first time since I had known him. That may have been on account of the 'Little Skipper' (His little baby girl he never saw.)"

Goddard grew up in Ennis, Texas, where he was a high-school football hero who enrolled in college to be a teacher before he enlisted. He met his wife, Evelyn, in Jacksonville, her hometown, where he spent a few months before leaving for the war, and they were married May 22, 1943.

Their daughter Skipper was born in Texas, where her mother was living with George's parents. Though



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George Goddard's 1938 class ring from Ennis High School in Texas was found by a Czech man digging at the site of the B-24's crash and returned to his daughter, Skipper Miller, in Jacksonville.

MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS

A listing of ceremonies being held across the First Coast. **B-2**

Evelyn moved back to Jacksonville and remarried after George's death, she made sure Skipper knew her father's family.

Skipper spent summers and vacations in Ennis, where her grandparents liked to put her in her best dress and take her to the one-street downtown so people could meet George's baby girl. George had been their only son, and they were so proud of him.

The people of Ennis were proud, too, of the football star and native son, his daughter said. "People

would come up to me and say, 'Oh, we loved your dad. What a great guy he was.' I grew up knowing he was a hero, something special."

The story of the plane Goddard piloted is told a recent book, "Miss Fortune's Last Mission," written by Bill Boyce and John H. Torrison, with John Demers. Boyce's father was a member of the Miss Fortune's crew, but an injury kept him from being on its last mission. Torrison's uncle, Wayne Nelson, was among those killed.

Boyce said it's not exactly clear what happened to Miss Fortune that day, though it might have taken some evasive maneuvers since it crashed 150 kilometers from the target, after

dropping its bombs.

It smashed into the snowy ground near a small town named Nepomuk, in what is now Czechia. Many townspeople were drawn to the site; nearby, one found Noury, the man who fell from the sky, and took him home, calling a doctor to tend to his wounds.

Germans soon came for him, and he spent the rest of the war in a POW camp.

Though Germans occupied Nepomuk, a wreath appeared at the crash within days.

In later years, memorials to American troops were not allowed in Czechoslovakia during Communist rule, but the people of Nepomuk and surrounding villages never forgot the Miss For-

tune: After the fall of Communism in 1989, they erected a memorial to the crew, and each year hold a ceremony for the men lost there.

Boyce traveled to Nepomuk in 2014 for the 70th anniversary of the crash. Over the years, he said, the villagers had excavated the crash site, where there's still a crater in the ground, and built a more elaborate memorial there. They also established a museum about the plane in the town square, where they display dog tags, pieces of wreckage, engine part and photographs.

"People are very serious about remembering this crew, very emotional. I watched people crying during these ceremonies," Boyce said. "The war start-

ed very early for them and they were subject to Nazi occupation for many years, so they have a very strong feeling of appreciation and respect for the American troops who liberated them."

After the end of Communism, a Czech man, digging at the crash site, found the Skipper's 1938 class ring from Ennis High School. He later gave it to an American and, through some detective work, it was eventually returned to the pilot's daughter in the early 1990s.

It was as if a ghost, she said, had walked into the room.

In recent years, Skipper Miller visited and became friends with Noury, the survivor. He told her stories and gave her letters that her mother had written to his mother. After that, her dad's old friend would call her every Feb. 22.

"Let's remember the crew," he'd say. She'd call him on Memorial Day and other holidays, until he died in his home state of Rhode Island late in 2013.

In 2005, Skipper Miller went to Nepomuk for the annual memorial to the Miss Fortune. In a rental car, she became part of a convoy to the crash site, a procession that included numerous World War II vintage vehicles.

People on the side of the road waved American flags, and villagers told her how much the sacrifice made by her father meant to them. At the memorial site, down a dirt road in the woods, someone had put a photograph of her father inside a plastic bag and tacked it to a tree. And on a chain around her neck, she wore her father's class ring, which had spent more than four decades in that very earth.

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