

# viewpoint

## OPINIONS PAGE BLOG

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# Shared sacrifice takes a hit in Curry's pension plan



**ron littlepage**  
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It was a noble sounding concept that took center stage month after month.

"Shared sacrifice" was touted as the equitable way out of the massive city debt owed to the Jacksonville Police and Fire Pension

Fund. It was a major theme of the Retirement Reform Task Force as it met in 2013 and 2014.

And it was the clarion call as the City Council and Mayor Alvin Brown's administration tried to deal with what was then a \$1.6 billion debt the city owed the fund, a debt that was stifling the city's ability to pay for critical services.

The idea was the police and fire unions would sacrifice some benefits that had grown too costly and the public would sacrifice by finding money to reduce the debt by paying it down more quickly. Legislation finally passed in 2015 that

committed to that "shared sacrifice."

Taxpayers would put up more money, and police and firefighters would accept reduced benefits for new employees and adjustments in benefits for some current employees.

Targeted were benefits that had helped to put the city deep in debt.

A guaranteed annual Cost of Living Adjustment of 3 percent for retirees was changed to more accurately reflect inflation.

With the Consumer Price Index consistently running well below 3 percent, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that the guaranteed COLA amounted to raises for retirees that, with compounding, would soon have them making more in benefits than they earned while working.

Also changed was the 8.4 percent guaranteed return on money retirees stashed in their Deferred Option Retirement Program accounts.

Is there anyone out there who wouldn't yearn for an 8.4 percent return on investments today?

Last week, Mayor Lenny Curry tossed the idea of "shared sacrifice" out the window.

During negotiations with police and fire unions on new retirement benefits, Curry offered to restore the 8.4 percent return on DROP accounts and the 3 percent COLA for all police and firefighters hired before next Oct. 1.

The public would still be on the hook for paying off the pension debt — at least those taxpayers who are here when Curry's sales tax pension debt plan goes into effect in 2031.

Curry's offer is dependent on the unions agreeing that after Oct. 1 new employees will go into a 401(k) plan instead of the current defined benefit plan.

His offer to get current employees to go along with that for new employees is, to say the least, sweet.

First would come a 3 percent lump sum paid to current employees followed by a 20 percent pay increase spread out over three years.

The first raise would be 6.5 percent

next Oct. 1 with additional bumps the next two years of 6.5 percent and 7 percent.

Of course, with compounding, that's more than 20 percent.

And those hired after Oct. 1 would contribute 8 percent of their salaries to their new 401(k) plans while the city would put in 25 percent.

Don't bother to look to see if there is such a match in the private world.

As these negotiations continue, more than a few questions come to mind.

What will be the reaction of City Council members who complained loudly about the 3 percent COLA and the 8.4 percent return on DROP?

How much will Curry's plan cost the taxpayers?

For now the Curry administration is not saying. Until it does, Curry can't expect the public to support it.

And the public likely will ask this: What happened to "shared sacrifice"?

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## Trump's enemies see an opening in Russia attacks



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"Fake news!" roared Donald Trump, the work of "sick people."

The president-elect was referring to a 35-page dossier of lurid details of his alleged sexual misconduct in Russia,

worked up by a former British spy.

A two-page summary of the 35 pages had been added to Trump's briefing by the CIA and FBI and then leaked to CNN.

During the primaries, anti-Trump Republicans hired the ex-spy to do "oppo research" on Trump, to dig up dirt.

The spy contacted the Russians. They told him that Trump, at a Moscow hotel in 2013, had been engaged in depraved behavior, that they had the films to blackmail him and that Trump's aides had been colluding with them.

### HUGE STAKES

When Trump won the nomination, Democrats got the dossier and began shopping it around to the mainstream media.

Some sought to substantiate the allegations. None could. So none of them published the charges.

In December, a British diplomat gave the dossier to Sen. John McCain, who personally turned it over to James Comey of the FBI.

On Jan. 7, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and his colleagues at the NSA, CIA and FBI decided the new president needed to know about the dossier. They provided him with a two-page synopsis.

Once CNN learned Trump had been briefed, the cable news network reported on the unpublished dossier, without going into the lurid details. BuzzFeed released all 35 pages.

The story exploded. The stakes are becoming huge.

### LIMITING TRUMP ON RUSSIA

Clearly, Trump hopes to work out with Vladimir Putin the kind of detente that President Nixon achieved with Leonid Brezhnev.

Russia is a great power with great power interests. But Russia does not seek to restore a global empire or remake the world in her image.

U.S.-Russian relations are thus ripe for change. But any such hope is now suddenly impaired.

The howls of indignation from Democrats and the media have begun to limit Trump's freedom of action in dealing with Russia.

When Secretary of State-designate Rex Tillerson went before the Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Marco Rubio demanded to know why he would not publicly declare Putin a "war criminal."

The sort of investigation for which McCain has been clamoring could make it almost impossible for Trump to work with Putin. The Washington Post seeks a Watergate-style committee like the one that investigated the Nixon White House — or a commission like the ones that investigated 9-11 and the JFK assassination.

When the investigation begins, Trump must produce the evidence to establish his innocence.

This city is salivating over another Watergate, another broken president. But President-elect Trump should be aware of what is at stake.

As The Wall Street Journal writes: "Mr. Trump's vehement denials (of collusion with Moscow and corrupt behavior) also mean that if we learn in the future that Russia does have compromising details about him, his presidency could be over."

Yes, very big stakes.

## Another view: David Fitzsimmons Arizona Daily Star



## Another view Bill Schorr Cagle Cartoons



# Remembering King's words

**point of view**  
adon taft

Friday, will mark the end of the presidency of Barack Obama, the first African-American ever to serve in that office.

On Monday, the country will celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., the African-American preacher and civil rights leader whose life and accomplishments — perhaps more than any other factor — made possible the election of Obama.

Hailed by many for his own eloquent speeches, Obama would be among the first to acknowledge that it was the mesmerizing and memorable oratory of King that made his candidacy for the highest office in the land acceptable across racial and political lines.

I had occasion to interview King a half-dozen times, was present during nonviolent protest marches he led in Selma, Ala. and St. Augustine, and saw him in action at a Miami meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference he headed.

### DETERMINED TO LIVE HIS FAITH

So I have a pretty good sense of the spirit of the man who even then was one of the few persons of color recognized by virtually all Americans as a national leader.

Often lost in that admiration of the youngest recipient ever — at age 35 — of the Nobel Prize for Peace is that King's drive for equality of the races and concern for the poor grew out of his determination to live out a Biblical faith he preached as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala.

The son and grandson of Baptist preachers, King came by his skills as an orator naturally.

Those talents and a sharp intellect were honed at the legendary black Morehouse College, Crozier Theological Seminary (a predominantly white Baptist school where King was valedictorian) and the

*King's spiritual message had a lasting resonance.*

Methodist-connected Boston University (where he earned his Ph.D. in systematic theology).

Despite all the fame and admiration, King never strayed far from the central theme of two of his most famous sermons, "What Is Man?" and "The Dimensions of a Complete Life."

They could be described as a summary of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth whom Christians recognize as the Prince of Peace:

### A MESSAGE WORTH EMBRACING

Love yourself properly, love your neighbor as yourself and God with all your heart.

To be concerned for the souls of men and not their physical needs is as false a religion as to be concerned for the physical needs of men and not their souls, he would contend.

"So I say to you, seek God and discover him and make him a power in your life," King preached. "Without him, all of our efforts turn to ashes and our sunrises into darkest night. Without him, life is a meaningless drama with the decisive scenes missing.

"But with him, we are able to rise from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope. With him, we are able to rise from the midnight of desperation to the daybreak of joy."

It is a message President-elect Donald Trump — and all of us — might well take to heart.

It is a noble message of peace that could lead to solving many problems both home and abroad.

Adon Taft was the religion editor of The Miami Herald for 37 years. He is retired in Brooksville,

## What would Jesus say about Trump's tweets?



**leonard pitts jr.**  
mclatchy newspapers

How about if we let Jesus answer Kellianne Conway?

Donald Trump's tireless apologist was at it again recently on CNN, defending her boss against Meryl Streep.

The 19-time Oscar nominee got under Trump's famously thin skin with a speech at the Golden Globes.

In it, Streep chastised him for mocking Serge F. Kovalski, a New York Times reporter who has arthrogryposis, a congenital condition that causes abnormal muscle development and severely restricted joint movements.

### LYING — AS USUAL

Trump, lying as usual, has frequently denied what he did even though the proof is as near as a Google search. He denied it again while tweeting about Streep.

Conway, appearing on CNN, took umbrage when anchor Chris Cuomo expressed skepticism. "Why don't you believe him?" she asked.

"Why is everything taken at face value? You can't give him the benefit of the doubt on this and he's telling you what was in his heart? You always want to go by what's come out of his mouth rather than look at what's in his heart."

### NOT TAKING HIM SERIOUSLY

It bears repeating. Because even by the standards of Trump World, it's a humdinger. Don't listen to what the president-elect says, Conway said. Go by what's in his heart. Jesus saw that one coming 2,000 years ago.

"A good man," he taught, "brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

So it's funny but frankly also chilling to see Conway scurrying around at this late date — in effect asking America to grade Trump on a curve.

Don't go by what comes out of his mouth?

Seriously? She does know this man is about to be president, right?

She realizes, doesn't she, that a president's words can:

- Incite revolution?
- Move the stock market?
- Get people killed?

### PRESIDENT'S WORDS MATTER

Yet this woman thinks the problem with Trump's diarrheal mouth is the fact that we listen to it.

To hear Conway tell it, some combination of Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama has been hiding in plain sight all along — except that somehow, Trump's unruly mouth has failed to properly represent Trump's saintly heart.

The trouble is inconvenient realities like this one insist on telling a different story.

Indeed, the Kovalski case is the whole tragedy of Trump in microcosm:

- The scorn.
- The bullying.
- The pettiness.
- The lying.
- The self-delusion.

In the face of that, Conway's entreaty to disregard Trump's mouth — and to look into Trump's soul — is beyond asinine.

Sorry, but Jesus was right: "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

Trump's mouth has made it starkly clear what fills his heart.

And, sadly, what does not.

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