

opinion

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Editorial board: Those at left, Bobby Martin, editorial
writers Roger Brown and Paula Horvath; also Hank
Coxe, Abubakr Hassan, The Rev. Vaughn McLaughlin,
Tala Reynolds, J.R. Ross and Ron Salem.

A VERSE FOR TODAY
Repay no one for evil. Have regard for good
things in the sight of all men.
Romans 12:17

Protect Florida's precious environment

Florida is a place like no other with natural enchantment stretching from white sand beaches to azure springs to rivers of grass that extend as far as you can see.

But the backdrop to that environmental beauty involves the houses, offices and shopping malls that gobble up too much of Florida's green and blue treasures. Most of that development is driven by the pressure built by an increasing population.

And the state's population, now estimated at about 20 million, is on an uphill climb.

By 2050, there will be some 31 million people making their homes here, making this state one of the fastest growing in the nation.

Jacksonville will be at the forefront of that population and development growth. It is one of four mega-regions here where growth will be most intense, according to America 2050, a project of the American Planning Association. The others are Dade-Broward-Palm Beach counties, the Orlando area and the Tampa area.

That's why it's so crucial for Floridians to advocate for the preservation and protection of Florida's natural places.

Now!
"There are some questions that Floridians need to be asking themselves, and the first is, 'How can I make a difference?'" former Sen. and Gov. Bob Graham says. "Our democracy was based on citizens actively getting involved in their communities."

What Graham and other environmental advocates would like to see is Floridians becoming more involved in protecting this beautiful state. He was in town for the recent Speak Up for Florida Forever event.

In fact, he helped lead an advocacy training session here for people who want to make their voices heard.

Although the former governor, who is the founder and current chairman of the Florida Conservation Coalition, has been active for decades in preserving Florida, he admits this is a pivotal point for the state.

Not only does an increasing population mean more

vacant land will be paved over and built upon, it also means a fight for clean water. While the state is crisscrossed with rivers and rests upon a gigantic aquifer, water is becoming both increasingly polluted and increasingly limited.

That can easily be seen in Jacksonville, where a ticking time bomb of septic tanks, many quite antiquated, threatens to pollute.

It's also here that waterfront industries, which once thrived along the St. Johns River, have left toxic footprints that leach into the waterways.

Meanwhile, an increasing city population has done relatively little to conserve what clean water there is.

Every Floridian should be concerned — appalled — at the situation.

Graham, who has 11 grandchildren, says he always thinks of them and their offspring when looking toward the protection of Florida's water and land.

"This state is a treasure. God has given us the privilege of living here for a period of time, and we really have a Biblical responsibility to protect it."

But first, Floridians should make themselves aware of the treasures all around them.

Hike the many trails available across the state.

Kayak or canoe its pristine waterways. Duval County is dotted with them.

Explore the countryside that still exists much as it did centuries ago.

Visit this state's parks, preserves and historic sites.

And be amazed at what still exists here despite the 20 million of us who call Florida home.

Then take a stand for wild Florida.

Join one or several of the many organizations that are fighting for wild Florida. Then gather like-minded people around you and push for preservation.

Talk to your local elected representatives. Talk to your state representatives.

Now!

Tell them that you've joined the battle to protect Florida and that you plan on winning.

After all, we can't afford to lose this battle.

SOME ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, WEBSITES

■ The Conservation Trust for Florida: Working with landowners to save the state's wild landscapes. Conserveflorida.org

■ Silver Springs Alliance: Working to protect, restore and preserve the Silver Springs ecosystem. Silverspringsalliance.org

■ Center for Biological Diversity: Working to reverse species decline. BiologicalDiversity.org/Florida

■ St. Johns Riverkeeper: Working for a healthy river. SJRK.org

■ North Florida Land Trust: Working to ensure the protection of Florida's natural heritage. Northfloridalandtrust.org

■ 1000 Friends of Florida: Working to fight sprawl and build better communities. 1000friendsofflorida.org

■ Timucuan Parks Foundation: Working to support Duval County's immense park system. TimucuanParks.org

■ Paddle Florida: Working to inspire meaningful adventure on Florida's waterways. Paddleflorida.org

■ Imagine Our Florida: Working to protect Florida's natural resources, wildlife and land. Imagineourflorida.com

■ Defenders of Wildlife: Working to defend, protect and restore native wildlife. Defenders.org

■ North Florida Bicycle Club: Working to inspire bicycling on Florida's trails. Nfbc.us

■ Sierra Club: Working to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world. Sierraclub.org

■ Center for Earth Jurisprudence: Working to create laws that protect nature. EarthJuris.org

LSU-UF football

The Baton Rouge point of view

With all of the recent drama surrounding LSU's "lack of cooperation" in the rescheduling of the Florida football game, I feel compelled to present a view that I think many folks in this area are not considering.

Early in game week, as it became clear that the game could be impacted by Hurricane Matthew, LSU officials set about trying to discuss contingency plans with UF.

They explored many options, the best of which was to move the game to Sunday or Monday in Gainesville, even offering to fly in and out on the day of the game.

Numerous alternatives were offered by LSU officials. Inexplicably, they were met with great resistance and an utter refusal to even consider a contingency plan.

University of Florida Athletic Director Jeremy Foley made it clear that the game would be played on Saturday in Gainesville or not at all.

In the aftermath, it soon became clear that LSU was expected by UF and the SEC to buy out South Alabama and lose a home game, costing the Baton Rouge economy the significant boost that comes with it.

Speaking of the local economies of Baton Rouge and Gainesville, only one of these two cities was recently devastated by a natural disaster, and it was not Gainesville.

Baton Rouge is still reeling from the historic flooding there just two months ago, and the recovery will be a long, painful process. Many good folks have lost everything and will never fully recover.

Conversely, Gainesville was nearly 100 percent spared by Hurricane Matthew.

Baton Rouge needs every possible positive impact it can get.

So when push came to shove, Joe Alleva took a hard-line stance on losing a home game only because he had already bent over backward and offered many alternatives in an attempt to get the game played on the scheduled weekend.

It was Florida's failure to have a contingency plan and the refusal to consider the many other reasonable alternatives that led to the postponement.

Why then should LSU be forced to lose a home game and the economic impact to an area in such desperate need of any positive impact possible?

In the end, Alleva made it clear that he works for LSU, not the SEC, and he proceeded with LSU's best interests in mind.

He refused to let LSU be punished for the inaction of the UF administration when he had done everything in his power to try to prevent the whole fiasco.

And I, along with many thousands of other Tiger fans, tip my hat to him for it.

Shawn Price, Jacksonville

Another view: Dave Granlund Cagle Cartoons



Letters from Readers

DEATH PENALTY

SUPPORT FOR COURT

Rep. Charles McBurney is wrong in writing that the Florida Supreme Court decisions requiring that juries must be unanimous for the death penalty to be imposed constitute the court making policy that should be set by the Legislature.

To the contrary, the decisions constitute well-reasoned applications of constitutional law that were both long overdue and required by the 7-1 U.S. Supreme Court decision earlier this year in *Hurst vs. Florida* and other decisions dating at least to the 2002 decision in *Ring vs. Arizona*. How a death penalty enacted by a legislature may be determined in court is a matter of constitutional due process for the judicial system to decide.

Whether to have a death penalty at all is initially a policy decision for the Legislature, though the history of the death penalty in Florida and the United States shows that it has been applied so inconsistently and often arbitrarily that any death penalty may violate due process of law.

Gray Thomas, attorney, Jacksonville

NEW TRAFFIC LIGHT

THANKS TO CITY OFFICIALS

A little more than a year ago I moved to a condo on Baymeadows near Gate Parkway. My condo association and other businesses and groups in the area have been trying to get a traffic light at our back entrance after a bad accident there.

Recently, Councilman Danny Becton had a meeting with us to announce that the light has been approved and should be up in about six months.

At the meeting, Becton mentioned how he had worked with previous administrations about this light, but it took the cooperative efforts of Mayor Lenny Curry and others in city offices to make this happen. Thanks to him for his persistence and also to the city officials.

This is how government should work! Are you taking notes, School Board?
Rhoda London, Jacksonville

SECOND AMENDMENT, ABORTION

REASONS TO OPPOSE CLINTON

Did you hear hypocritical Hillary Clinton during the last presidential debate totally distort and fabricate a story that the U.S. Supreme Court "Heller" case as a "threat to toddlers?"

The case had nothing to do with toddlers but everything to do with her political opposition to the Second Amendment.

What she's against is the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

But it gets worse. She claims she wants to protect toddlers but at the same time supports the barbaric procedure of partial birth abortion that kills babies exiting the birth canal as late as days before a viable natural birth.

Every American, certainly every Christian, cannot possibly support a presidential candidate so blatantly "cruel and unusual" as to willingly kill a baby as it exits the birth canal, which is what "partial birth abortion" accomplishes. Clinton reflects the absolute human monstrosity a politician will descend to support a posi-

tion that provides political advantage.

How in God's name can anyone defend this brutal "partial birth abortion" procedure let alone vote for Clinton, who would select Supreme Court members to defend it?

God help us, have we gone this far into the gutter of hopelessness?

Harry Riley, Crestview

PRESIDENCY

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Another presidential election is round the corner. Of late the White House is becoming a family property.

With the likely Clinton victory, it would be occupied by two families, except for the Barack Obama years, from 1988 to 2024 and possibly beyond as another Clinton, Chelsea, may be ready.

It is said the United States is the oldest democracy in the world. Anything old like a house or a car needs to be fixed by modernizing with the passage of time.

Term limits, some restrictions on immediate family members running, avoiding the elections becoming entertainment could be some of the things that could be proposed.

Otherwise I am afraid U.S. elections may become the political Olympics.

Gopal Chandran, Jacksonville

DUVAL SCHOOL BOARD

PAY FOR MEDIATOR

So this is the second article about the School Board members this week. The contentious group seems to have problems getting things done and getting along.

I just checked to see if they are paid and they are. They make \$41,000 a year. I was so glad because I think if these women and men can't get along and they need a mediator, then I am all for it.

I think it behoves the board to pay for their own mediator and not hit up the taxpayers.

Maryann Douglass, Ponte Vedra Beach

LETTER POLICY

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