

viewpoint

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Environment, economy coexist



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Since tunics have pretty much gone out of style, we no longer have to gird our loins to prepare for battle.

But for those who care about the environment, now is the time to fight. What's ahead is bleak.

President Donald Trump's choice to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, has fought the EPA for years, sometimes abetted by our own attorney general, Pam Bondi.

And Trump has promised to cut 75 percent of all regulations with most of those targeted likely being environmental protections.

Trump has also said that for every new regulation put in place, two have to be cut.

The babble coming from the wind-up dolls who incessantly decry the EPA always labels environmental regulations as "job killers," although numerous economic studies have shown that is not the case.

You hear some of that babble in the words used by Matt Gaetz, a first-term congressman from West Florida, when he recently proposed legislation that would abolish the EPA. Makes you proud to be a Floridian, doesn't it?

"Today, the American people are drowning in rules and regulations promulgated by unelected bureaucrats," Gaetz wrote in a letter seeking support for his proposal, "and the Environmental Protection Agency has become an extraordinary offender."

He continued: "Our small businesses can't afford to cover the costs associated with compliance, too often leading to closed doors and unemployed Americans."

The best thing about Gaetz being in Congress is that he's no longer in the Florida Legislature bowing down to the National Rifle Association.

The downside is he's in Congress.

Unfortunately, in Trump dominated Washington, "alternative facts" rule — and Gaetz will fit right in.

A report released last month by the Environmental Integrity Project, a non-profit, nonpartisan organization, was titled "Don't believe the 'job killer' hype.

Decades of economic research show that environmental regulations are good for the economy."

Yes, some jobs are lost, for example, when regulations require tougher pollution standards.

But the report quotes from a study done in 2005 by two economists who looked at the impact on jobs from higher fuel efficiency standards.

They found those standards would cut some jobs in areas like petroleum pipelines and refineries but would create jobs in other sectors.

They predicted that 86,000 jobs would be lost by 2020 but that 433,000 jobs would be created to meet the new standards, a net gain of 347,000 jobs.

And other studies have found that switching to clean energy sources, such as solar and wind, is producing more and higher paying jobs than those lost.

The scariest part of Gaetz's proposal for Florida is that the EPA would be abolished on Dec. 31, 2018, and the power to enforce environmental regulations would flow to the states, presumably to the Department of Environmental Protection in Florida's case.

We've already seen how that would work out. The DEP has become nothing more than Gov. Rick Scott's puppet since Scott has been in office.

Developers want to fill in fast-disappearing wetlands to build houses and shopping centers? Go for it.

They want to drain water from an already depleted Floridan aquifer? Sure.

Instead of enforceable rules for farmers, how about a "trust us to do the right thing" approach instead?

If you are tired of algae blooms, tired of fish kills, tired of beaches and estuaries that are spoiled, tired of poisonous chemicals being dumped into our waterways, now is the time to find a tunic and gird your loins.

Yes, the upcoming battle against further degrading our environment will be difficult. But losing is not an option.

Gaetz wrote that he's worried about Americans "drowning in rules and regulations."

With people like him in office, Florida should be more worried about drowning caused by climate change.

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HRO is a threat to our liberties

point of view

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To reassure a skeptical electorate, sponsors of the "new" HRO pledged to craft legislation that would uphold the constitutionally-guaranteed rights of people of faith, citizens who wish only to practice their religions unmolested by government.

Although all governmental units are bound by the U.S. Constitution to defend (not annul) its enumerated rights — including the "free exercise of ... religion" and the "freedom of speech" — the new HRO would punish their practice.

The HRO's "religious exemption" conflicts with existing nondiscrimination ordinances, through a too-narrow concept of "church." Only churches and "affiliated" ministries get "protection."

- Not exempt are religion-based organizations that are independent of "churches" — ministries and charities that provide crucial social services.

- For these religious entities, the law would control human resources practices. And it would allow men claiming womanhood access to intimate facilities intended for women — showers and dressing, locker and bathrooms, as well as lodging in women's dormitories and abuse shelters. The mingling of sexes will greatly increase legal liability.

- In some cases males will be allowed to partake in girls' sleeping arrangements and to enter girls' dressing, locker and shower areas, to expose themselves and to view girls in all stages of undress.

Rational concerns for modesty, privacy and safety will be re-categorized as "discrimination" under the ever-evolving concept of "gender identity."

- The law would redefine "male" and "female" for nurseries and preschools, even religious schools offering Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

- All gender "expression" is protected, the protected person being the sole arbiter of what "expression" is acceptable.

Such "expression" will be on display within public and religious venues, undermining the moral and religious training and values of children.

Thus, the HRO thwarts the principal obligation of parents:

To protect their children.

The proposed code provides NO pro-

tection for devout individuals who run businesses or nonprofits. A Christian business owner in the wedding industry would be forced to participate in same-sex weddings when his faith considers such collaboration sinful.

Go to tinyURL.com/LGBTtyranny to see how this is a too-frequent event.

The HRO will nullify Constitutional "Freedom of Speech" by punishing some speech as "discrimination". Any unwelcome language uttered by employees, visitors or tenants may be considered actionable "discrimination," if deemed offensive solely by the official "victim". Even using the wrong gender pronoun may be actionable.

Government will become protector of feelings for countless "gender identities" — 14 genders according to Williams Institute, the foremost LGBT thinktank, plus the ultimate unknowable category "gender non-conforming."

The legal consequences are uncontrollable since standards for "sexual orientation," "gender identity," "expression" and "discrimination" are subjective and indefinable.

Tax increases will be needed to prosecute "offenders", to meet demands for LGBT liaisons in the mayor's and sheriff's offices, and to establish anti-bullying regulations and "LGBT sensitivity" courses for administrators and employees.

This law, for which sponsors provide no objective documentation of discrimination, is part of a nationwide LGBT movement to chain the U.S. in dissolute LGBT favoritism laws, elevating LGBT's to a special rights status over other citizens. The LGBT goal is widespread recognition as normal.

But statistics-savvy LGBT leaders know that the "normal distribution curve" can never grant normalcy to LGBT lifestyles.

So they seek an alternative:

Employ the blunt force of government to fabricate normalcy's illusion and crush all opposition.

To gain these ends, their contemptible government allies eagerly nullify the Constitution, endanger children and swell the taxpayer burden.

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