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Trump, pope set differences aside, focus on peace

“A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian.”

Pope Francis
about Donald Trump during the presidential campaign



Pope Francis meets with President Donald Trump Wednesday on the occasion of their private audience at the Vatican. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino, Pool)

President, pontiff put positive face on meeting

By Jonathan Lemire, Nicole Winfield & Julie Pace
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY | Handshakes, gifts, friendly small talk and big hopes for peace. Setting aside past differences and rude comments aside, President Donald Trump and Pope Francis put a determinedly positive face on their first meeting Wednesday at the Vatican.

The two global leaders,

vastly different in temperament and views of the world, talked seriously and extensively in a 30-minute private meeting about terrorism, the radicalization of young people, immigration and climate change, officials said.

But all was upbeat in public, peace the overarching theme.

Francis gave Trump a medal featuring an olive branch.

“We can use peace,” said

the president, acknowledging the symbolism.

He gave the pope a custom-bound, first-edition set of Martin Luther King Jr.’s works, an engraved stone from the King Memorial in Washington and a bronze sculpture of a flowering lotus titled “Rising Above.”

“I think you’ll enjoy them. I hope you do,” Trump said.

TRUMP continues on A-4

Gov. Scott vetoes bill to repeal ‘liquor wall’

Measure would have allowed big retailers to offer hard spirits

By Jim Turner
The News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE | Pointing to concerns about preserving small-business jobs, Gov. Rick Scott on Wednesday vetoed a heavily debated and lobbied measure that supporters said would repeal a relic of the nation’s emergence from Prohibition.

The so called “liquor wall” law, which requires hard spirits to be sold in separate facilities from most retail goods, will remain in place after Scott’s veto of the repeal bill. The veto was a victory for independent liquor-store owners, ABC Fine Wine & Spirits and Publix Super Markets, which fought the bill during the legislative session that ended May 8.

Scott’s decision on the proposal (SB 106) also ends for now the noisy legislative battles about the issue. Supporters of eliminating the law, including retailers Target, Costco and Wal-Mart, argued that a repeal would promote free markets and customer convenience.

“We have made tremendous progress in the last four years, and there is a clear momentum in Florida for this common-sense approach to liquor sales,” said Michael Williams, a spokesman for the group

LIQUOR continues on A-4



Participants gather underneath the Treaty Oak before the start of the “God Belongs in My City” prayer walk in August 2015. Parks like Jessie Ball duPont Park, home of the Treaty Oak, make up 14 percent of land in Jacksonville. (Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)

No walk in the park

Report ranks Jacksonville’s parks 90th out of 100 biggest U.S. cities

By David Bauerlein
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Jacksonville can lay claim to having one of the nation’s largest parks systems, but it’s a long way from having one of the best, according to rankings released Wednesday by the Trust

for Public Land.

Jacksonville ranked 90th in ratings of the 100 most populous U.S. cities.

The Trust for Public Land takes Jacksonville’s measure as a city with a large amount of land set aside for parks and open space. But Jacksonville

falls short of the mark when it comes to accessibility — not enough parks are within convenient walking distance of where residents live. And Jacksonville falls short of other cities in how much it spends on its parks, according to the report.

City Councilman Scott Wilson said the city’s low ranking surprises him.

“I believe we have a good park system,” Wilson said. “I would say that in the past eight, nine years, our dollars for

maintenance have continued to dwindle, which makes it difficult to maintain the system we have. That is probably the lion’s share of the issue is our maintenance dollars.”

He said there’s “probably some truth” to the Trust for Public Land’s assessment that most Jacksonville residents live more than a 10-minute walk from the nearest park. He’s trying to get a park built on land

PARKS continues on A-4

Weather
Clearing winds
Forecast on A-2

82 Today's high

63 Thursday morning's low



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Former allies on school choice now divided by budget

\$250 million set aside for scholarships and private school tuition assistance

By Geoff Mulvihill
Associated Press

President Donald Trump's budget proposal to provide federal tax money for private-school scholarships is getting pushback from an unconventional source: groups known for promoting school-choice initiatives.

The plan promoted by Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos widened a divide in the school-choice movement and brought swift condemnation from people who support more competition for public schools in the form of charter schools but oppose sending tax money to private institutions.

"I think it's an affront to the American dream," said Jonah Edelman, CEO of the pro-charter group Stand for Children, which planned to align with a frequent adversary, one of the nation's largest teachers unions, to oppose the plan.

The administration's budget proposal sets aside \$250 million for the scholarships. That's a tiny sliver

of the \$4.1 trillion spending plan released Tuesday, but if approved, it would mark the first time the federal government has helped pay private-school tuition for K-12 students in a nationwide program.

The budget also calls for \$1 billion for a new program encouraging school districts to give parents options in choosing a public school for their children. And it increases grants for charter schools.

Trump has said he eventually wants federal school-choice programs to expand to \$20 billion a year.

"This administration understands that educational choice is an essential component to ensuring every child can access a quality education," said Tommy Schultz, spokesman for American Federation for Children, the school-choice advocacy group headed until last year by DeVos.

She and the group support using public money to help parents pay tuition for private schools, includ-



Education Secretary Betsy DeVos (left), accompanied by Education Department Budget Service Director Erica Navarro, looks over her notes Wednesday on Capitol Hill. DeVos and Navarro testified before the House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies subcommittee hearing on the Education Department's fiscal 2018 budget. (Carolyn Kaster/Associated Press)

ing religious ones, through vouchers or tax credits. The tax credits would go to parents who qualify based on their income or to corporations that provide private-school scholarships.

Critics say the approach will divert money from public schools that need it.

They find it especially objectionable because it's

on a short list of spending increases in a plan that otherwise cuts the Education Department's budget by 14 percent. Trump's budget proposal reduces funding for after-school programs, arts education and college work-study programs.

"Under the guise of empowering parents with school choice," the admin-

istration's budget "would hurt the very communities that have the most to gain from high-quality public school options," Eli Broad, a Los Angeles billionaire and major proponent of public charter schools, said. "Public school choice cannot come at the expense of all public school families and students."

An Associated Press data analysis published earlier this month found that Broad and DeVos were among about four dozen wealthy Americans who have largely funded the school-choice political movement.

The contributors have generally fallen into two camps — those who support public charter schools and those who promote both charters and private-school vouchers. They have worked together to pass school-choice initiatives in the past and generally have butted heads with teachers unions.

DeVos' elevation to education secretary and her push to funnel public money into private schools have caused a split that became more apparent after this week's budget release.

Edelman of Stand for Children said his group is coordinating with teachers unions to oppose vouchers. An official at the American Federation of Teachers said the union is working with Stand for Children on the issue. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the partnership has not been announced publicly.

2 black jurors among those who will hear Cosby's case

By Joe Mandak
& Maryclaire Dale
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH | The jury that will hear the sex assault case against Bill Cosby will include two blacks among its 12 members in a case Cosby believes could be racially motivated.

Prosecutors and the defense team on Wednesday also chose six alternate jurors, two of them black.

"It's a terrific jury made up of people of all demographics," Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele said. "We're past this nonsense about the optics and things."

Cosby's lawyers had

complained this week that prosecutors were trying to keep blacks off the jury with their seven strikes. The judge, though, found prosecutors had other valid reasons to strike two black women earlier this week. The jury makeup of 17 percent is higher than the 13 percent black population in Allegheny County.

The 79-year-old black actor-comedian once known as America's Dad for his beloved portrayal of Dr. Cliff Huxtable on "The Cosby Show," is charged with drugging and molesting a Temple University women's basketball team manager in 2004. He has called the encounter consensual.

LIQUOR

Continued from A-1

Floridians for Fair Business Practices, which supported the repeal. "While Governor Scott ultimately chose to veto Senate Bill 106, we look forward to working with state leaders in the future to finally put an end to this outdated, Prohibition-era law."

Scott, in a letter accompanying his first vetoed bill of the year, said the proposal's impact on small businesses outweighed his desire to further cut regulations.

"I carefully reviewed this bill and I have met with stakeholders on both sides," Scott said. "I listened closely to what they had to say and I understand that both positions have merit. Nevertheless, I have heard concerns as to how this bill could affect many small businesses across Florida. I was a small business owner and many locally owned businesses have told me how this bill will impact their families and their ability to create jobs."

Opponents of the bill argued that a repeal would hurt small liquor stores, eliminate jobs, result in a greater ability for minors to get liquor and lead to more impulse-buying of alcohol.

"We applaud Governor Scott for saving hundreds of Florida small businesses that employ thousands of Floridians, while at the same time keeping safeguards in place for minors," ABC Fine Wine & Spirits Chief Executive Officer and President Charles Bailes said in a prepared statement.

Along with the independent liquor stores, Publix has been involved because it operates stand-alone liquor stores in many of the same shopping centers as its grocery stores. Meanwhile, retailers such as Target and Wal-Mart — battling

online sales — have been looking to sell liquor in the same stores where shoppers pick up groceries and other goods.

The bill was highly controversial, passing the Senate in a 21-17 vote and the House by a 58-57 margin.

Members of the Florida Independent Spirits Association, which also opposed the repeal, mobilized after the bill received final legislative approval April 26.

"More than 1,000 letters and 3,000 petitions from around the state were delivered to the governor with the message that vetoing this bill would save our Florida small retailers and jobs that help our local economies," Florida Independent Spirits Association President Rory Eggers said in a release thanking Scott.

In addition to repealing the Depression-era law, the bill would have prohibited new package stores from being licensed within 1,000 feet of schools; required small bottles, 6.8 ounces or less, to be displayed only behind the counter; and required that checkout clerks under the age of 18 be supervised by people 18 or older when alcohol is purchased.

To help Publix with its existing leases, the bill would have staggered the repeal, limiting the percentage of liquor that could have been stocked in chain stores over a four-year period.

Scott had until Wednesday to act on the bill. As the deadline approached, he offered little as to what he would do.

Scott on Tuesday scheduled a telephone call with Wal-Mart President and CEO Greg Foran and a meeting at the Capitol with Bailes of ABC Fine Wine & Spirits.

Bailes said after his meeting he had no indication how Scott would handle the bill.

PARKS

Continued from A-1

set aside years ago off Touchton Road.

"The reality is that we have a lot of parks, but we also are a very large city," said Wilson, who is chairman of the Neighborhoods, Community Services and Investments Committee, which oversees parks.

Mayor Lenny Curry's office did not respond to questions about the report.

The Trust for Public Land ranked Minneapolis as the best city in the nation for parks, followed by St. Paul, Minn., San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Portland, Ore.

Among Florida cities, St. Petersburg ranked 16th, Tampa 40th, Miami 48th, Orlando was at 53, and Jacksonville tied with Hialeah at 90.

Minneapolis topped the list based on the quantity and quality of its parks. Park land makes up 15 percent of the city's acreage, and 97 percent of Minneapolis residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park.

In Jacksonville, parkland makes up 14 percent

HOW JACKSONVILLE PARKS MEASURE UP

Jacksonville is better than the national median in some categories, but falls short in others.

Acreage: 14 percent of Jacksonville is park land, better than national median of 9.3 percent

Spending: Jacksonville spends \$32.66 per resident, lower than median of \$80

Basketball hoops: 1.8 per 10,000 Jacksonville residents, lower than median of 2.6

Accessibility: 32 percent of Jacksonville residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, lower than median of 66 percent

Playgrounds: 3.3 per 10,000 Jacksonville residents, better than median of 2.4

Dog parks: 0.6 per 100,000 residents, lower than 0.9 median

Recreation/senior centers: 1.4 per 20,000 Jacksonville residents, better than median of 0.8

Source: Trust for Public Lands Parkscore

of the city, including vast stretches of the Timucuan Preserve on the Northside, the report says. But just 32 percent of residents live less than a 10-minute walk away from a park.

"Ideally, a good park system has a mix of both preserves and destination-type parks, as well as your small local neighborhood parks that have a playground and benches," said Alexandra Hipple, research associate for the Trust for Public Lands.

In addition to building more neighborhood parks so residents can walk to them, cities also have been partnering with school districts to make use of schoolyards and facilities after regular school hours and on weekends, she said. "That can be a really good way to utilize assets that are already there when it might be difficult to squeeze in a whole new park," she said.

Mark Middlebrook, who was executive director of

the Preservation Project when the city launched large-scale acquisition of conservation land, said the benchmarks used by the Trust for Public Lands "are very useful tools for planning." But he said he doesn't think Jacksonville's parks are 90th in the country.

"I don't think that's a fair assessment of where this park system is and where it can evolve to be," Middlebrook said.

He said the Preservation Project originated with the aim of land preservation. He said there is a "regional reserve" within a 15-minute drive of residents in different areas of the city, and then some even bigger tracts stretched in a band across the Northside dipping into the Westside.

"I don't think anyone would debate that it's not the most walkable city," he said. "It's 840 square miles and things are very spread out. Trying to drop a 200-acre preserve into the middle of a big suburban area would be very difficult. We were lucky to get the ones we got."

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TRUMP

Continued from A-1

The pope's other gifts could be taken as offering a more pointed message, though Francis is known to give them to other visitors, too.

He gave Trump three bound papal documents that he has written that to some degree define his papacy and priorities. One focuses on the environment, demanding an end to a "structurally perverse" economic system that has turned Earth into an "immense pile of filth." He frames climate change as an urgent moral crisis and blames global warming on an unfair, fossil fuel-based industrial model that harms the poor the most.

Trump has expressed

skepticism about global warming and possible causes, and he has promised changes to spur more coal and oil production in the U.S.

The president is midway through a grueling nine-day, maiden international journey that has included Middle East stops in the cradles of Islam and Judaism.

In Saudi Arabia, he addressed dozens of Arab leaders and urged them to fight extremists at home and isolate Iran, which he depicted as a menace to the region. In Israel, Trump reaffirmed his commitment to strong ties with the longtime U.S. ally, and urged Israelis and the Palestinians to work harder toward peace.

While Trump received warm welcomes in Riyadh

and Jerusalem, the reception could grow cooler now that he's reached Europe, site of widespread protests after his election. Climate change activists projected the words "Planet Earth First" on the massive dome of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Tuesday night, and protests are expected when he attends a NATO meeting in Brussels and a G-7 gathering in Sicily.

As for the Trump-Francis relationship, during the presidential campaign the pope was sharply critical of the candidate Trump's pledge to build an impenetrable wall on the Mexican border and his declaration that the United States should turn away Muslim immigrants and refugees.

"A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and

not building bridges, is not Christian," Francis said.

Trump retorted that it was "disgraceful" for the pope to doubt his faith.

There was none of that on Wednesday.

The visit began with a handshake after each man arrived, Trump in a lengthy motorcade, Francis in a Ford Focus.

Their private meeting ended when Francis rang the bell in his study. The pontiff was then introduced to members of Trump's delegation, including his wife, Melania, his daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner, as well as aides Hope Hicks and Dan Scavino.

"We had a fantastic meeting," the president said afterward. He tweeted later that it was the "honor of a lifetime."