

# opinion

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**A VERSE FOR TODAY**  
 But he who has done wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.  
**Colossians 3:25**

## Open the doors to our precious libraries

For years, the Jacksonville Public Library system has been succeeding and innovating on a scale that should make it a role model for organizations across our city.

In the last year, that “can do, will persevere” spirit has spurred the Jacksonville Public Library system to:

- Enable 130,000 Duval County school kids to obtain library cards.
- Improve the literacy levels of thousands of residents.
- Enable 20-plus adults without high school diplomas to earn them along with trade certifications.
- Open the doors of its Main Library and 20 branches to more than 3.4 million visits.
- Make it possible for library patrons to check out more than 5.7 million items.
- Offer thousands of programs and services.
- Receive the prestigious 2017 “Library of the Year” award from the Florida Library Association for its efforts to enrich and transform Jacksonville.

That’s just a partial list of what our library system is achieving every day.

And it’s doing so despite receiving inconsistent, often-reduced financial support from our city.

But why should it have to do so under such conditions?

Fortunately, City Council’s Finance Committee can begin to rectify this travesty during its current budget hearings.

It should back the Jacksonville Public Library’s request for \$1.9 million in additional funding.

In fact, the Finance Committee should do so with great enthusiasm given that it has four members — Garrett Dennis, Katrina Brown, Reggie Brown and Reggie Gaffney — who represent urban core districts that heavily use their neighborhood branch libraries.

And after that hurdle is cleared, the full City Council should make things official by formally approving the library system’s funding request.



Computer stations get a workout at the Brentwood branch of the Jacksonville Public Library system in March 2017. Library officials are trying to decide the future of these neighborhood branches. (Mike Clark/Florida Times-Union)



Abraham Lincoln, aka Dennis Boggs of Nashville, entertained students at the Main Library Downtown in January. The event is just one of many activities available at libraries. Library hours need to be expanded. (Bob Self/Florida Times-Union)

The library system plans to use the \$1.9 million to replenish a materials budget that has been repeatedly cut over the years, as well as add a sixth day of operation at nine branches that are now open only five days a week.

Libraries in cities like Jacksonville are open longer. It’s time for Jacksonville to catch up.

Ruth Ann Hepler summed it up well not long ago. Hepler was one of several Friends of the Jacksonville Public Library members who met recently with the Times-Union Editorial Board.

Over the years, the volunteer organization has done amazing and admirable work raising money to support the library system.

During the Editorial Board meeting, Hepler compared the Jacksonville Public Library’s \$1.9 million request to the actual contribution it makes toward advancing our city’s goal of turning Jacksonville into a place that fulfills its true potential and promise.

“It’s chump change,” Hepler said. Exactly.

### GUTTING THE BUDGET FOR LIBRARY MATERIALS

Because the Jacksonville Public Library system does not have an independent funding source, it largely relies on city funds to operate. But here’s how the system’s budget for materials — books, DVDs, research databases, e-books, audiobooks and other items — has sharply decreased because of funding cuts:

- Fiscal Year 2005: \$5.3 million.
- Fiscal Year 2017: \$3.4 million.

Source: Friends of the Jacksonville Public Library.

So it’s time for city officials to show they fully grasp the library system’s massive impact in providing hope, opportunity and empowerment for countless Jacksonville citizens.

It’s time for them to show they’re willing to provide the library system with resources that truly reflect its importance.

It’s time for them to show the money.

### Corporate taxes

## Reforms would boost the U.S. economy

U.S. tax law requires payment of taxes on foreign-earned profits by U.S. companies only after those profits are repatriated to U.S. territory.

As long as the profits are held offshore, no tax payment is due the IRS.

With an average maximum marginal tax rate across Western Europe at least 10 percentage points lower than in the U.S., it often makes economic sense for U.S. companies to accumulate large cash balances abroad to the detriment of the U.S. taxpayer.

How can the tax code be changed to allow companies to keep their funds wherever they are needed, yet not short-change the U.S. taxpayer?

One method of accomplishing such an objective would be to tax the global income of U.S. companies as earned with a rate of, say, 20 percent.

Such a low rate, combined with an immediate payment requirement, would significantly reduce the economic incentive to “stash” corporate profits in tax havens abroad.

It would also likely improve annual Treasury Department cash flows from corporations.

Another taxing proposal for foreign-earned profits would have the IRS immediately tax such profits in the year they are earned at some intermediate rate, like 15 percent.

The final tax accounting, including credits for foreign taxes paid, would come when these profits are repatriated to the U.S.

If Congress even considers a special tax holiday for corporate profits held overseas, it must first recall its experience with corporations.

In 2004, 843 of the largest American corporations reaped a \$265 billion tax windfall thanks to a one-time tax break aimed at bringing home profits stashed overseas.

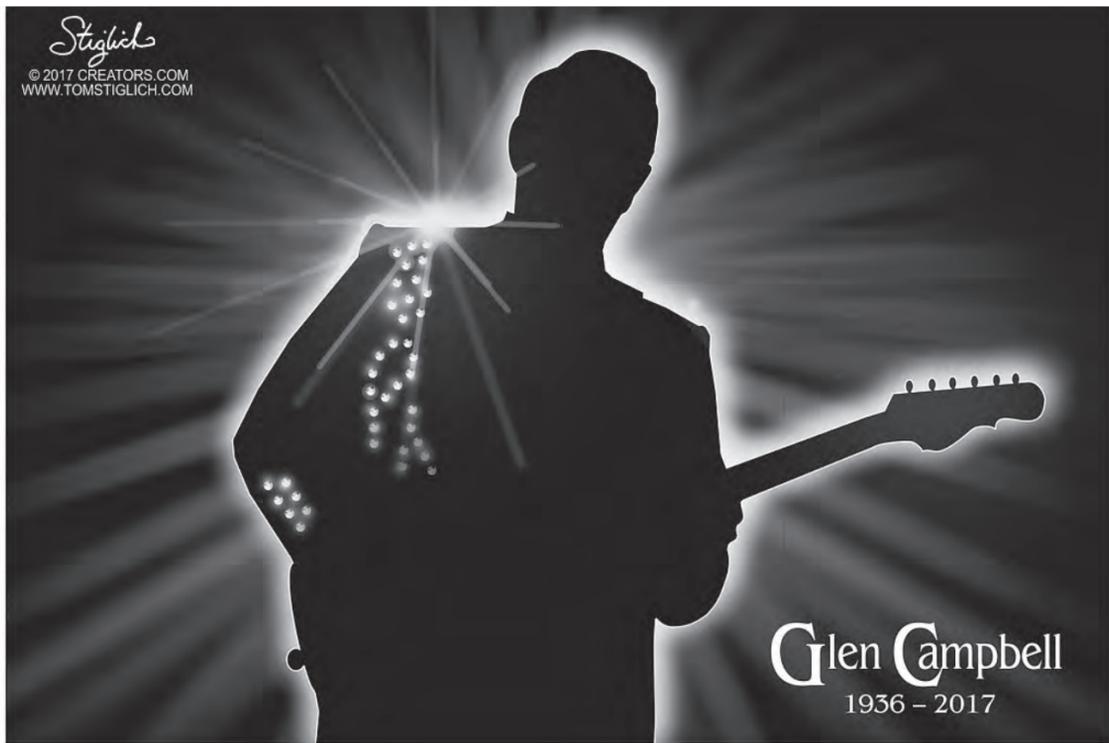
However, there is little evidence that the companies put the money into creating jobs or investing in United States operations.

Instead, these windfall funds went into pay raises, executive bonuses, increased shareholder dividends, stock buybacks, paying down domestic debt and general corporate purposes.

We desperately need a major overhaul and simplification of our 74,000-page tax code.

**Joseph Steinman**,  
 Retired finance professor,  
 Ponte Vedra Beach

### Another view: Tom Stiglich Creators Syndicate



### Letters from Readers

#### JOSHUA PHILLIPS

##### KEEP HIM IN PRISON

So the defenders of convicted child murderer Joshua Phillips say that he is a model prisoner.

Fine. Let him remain one until the day that he dies.

**Ralph Harding**, Orange Park

#### FOX NEWS

##### TOO MANY SCANDALS

First, Bill O’Reilly of Fox News was fired due to his alleged lewd comments and behavior to his female colleagues.

Now longtime Fox personality Eric Bolling — who would openly worship O’Reilly during his on-air talks with him — has been fired for allegedly sending lewd pictures to female staffers.

Doesn’t Fox News owe an apology to their viewers for allowing such sleaze to appear on the airwaves?

But this is what happens when a network that leans so far to the right has its hypocrisy exposed!

It seems that somebody — maybe the Federal Communications Commission — needs to cut Fox’s tail off.

Once and for all!  
**Carl J. C.-Hafner**, Jacksonville

#### FREE MARKETS, GOVERNMENT

##### WE NEED A BALANCE

The headline for Robert Ringer’s recent Viewpoint column could not have been more apt: “Government cannot provide happiness.”

Yes, it is true that government cannot legislate happiness. But it can ensure that there is both a fair pathway for attaining it and a healthy environment to sustain it.

The economies of Western Europe and the United States described by Ringer as a mixture of socialism and capitalism have produced the stability and growth that has produced the peace and prosperity of recent decades — along with advancements in science and technology and the expansion of human rights and freedoms.

Without the counterbalance to unbridled capitalism of government regulation, both the environment and human rights would be in jeopardy.

One need only be reminded of the recent Wall Street real estate bubble, the collapse of the American auto industry and the EpiPen scandal to see the effects of unregulated capitalism.

Ringer claims to trust “individuals” more than politicians and bureaucrats because both groups focus on keeping their jobs and leading the good life.

The same could be said of corporate CEOs whose bloated salaries and obligations to shareholders have created the huge gap in living wages for employees and the flight to overseas jobs for economic and environmental expedience.

It is just as foolish and short-sighted to kneel at the altar of profit margins and stock prices as it is to “kneel at the altar of the omnipotent state.”

While many government regulations are onerous and have produced unintended consequences, particularly for small businesses, they have also furthered civil rights, ensured safe and fair workplaces, preserved open spaces, protected clean air and water — and provided the opportunity for all of us to pursue happiness.

We need both the economic engine of capitalist investment and the protection of government regulation of it.

**Jean Tepas**, Jacksonville

#### REPLACING OBAMACARE

##### HERE IS A GOOD BLUEPRINT

A reader’s recent suggestions for replacing Obamacare were on target. However, he missed a few.

The efforts to replace Obamacare should start with the conditions that existed before Obamacare, not as they exist now.

With that in mind, here are additional suggestions for replacing Obamacare:

- Make insurance portable when changing jobs.
- Make the cost of individual insurance deductible on page one of IRS Form 1040, thus making individual tax treatment

comparable to that of employer-provided insurance.

• Ban insurance policies — such as for catastrophic illnesses — from being canceled in arbitrary fashion.

• Require hospitals to publish their prices and outcomes for procedures so patients can compare.

• Allow the establishment of small company pools for insurance coverage.

• Leave Medicaid for the poor as it was before Obamacare.

**Blair Haga**, Jacksonville

#### THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP

##### IT’S IFFY TO PLAY IN MARCH

The PGA Tour might want to reconsider moving the Players Championship back to March.

I am not a golfer. But I recall that one of the legitimate reasons cited for moving the tournament to May back in 2006 was because the weather in Northeast Florida is always so lousy in March.

I know this for a fact because it is my birthday month.

**Nancy Labry**, Orange Park

#### NORTH KOREA

##### LET’S NOT OVERREACT

Enough already about North Korea, their nuclear capabilities and their little dough boy leader, Kim Jong-un!

North Korea has nuclear capabilities, and there isn’t much we can do about it. So all of the media hand-wringing about it is getting old.

In addition, we are giving Kim Jong-un the attention he seeks. Former President Teddy Roosevelt’s “speak softly and carry a big stick” approach would be a better way to deal with this nut.

The United States has the sophisticated technology that enables us to monitor the North Koreans and any military action they may take.

If and when that happens, we can make a quick and appropriate response. But until then I wish the news media would leave it alone.

**Bill Boutwell**, Jacksonville

#### LETTER POLICY

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- Include a name, address, occupation and telephone number.

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letters@jacksonville.com  
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 The Florida Times-Union  
 P.O. Box 1949  
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