

In Our View

Golden Years

Texas students raise money for janitor, 80, forced to return to work

For most of us, a happy and financially secure retirement is a big part of the American Dream

The dream remains. Happy and financially secure? Not so much.

A lot of seniors are struggling. Prices for everything from rent to food to medication have gone up, while retirement incomes have no kept up.

One of those affected was an 80-year-old former school janitor in Callisburg, Texas, north of Dallas.

Known to students as Mr. James, he was forced to go back to work after his rent increased by \$400 a month.

According to a story published last week by Fox affiliate KDFW, some stu-

dents at Callisburg High didn't think that was right. So they set up a Go Fund Me account for Mr. James. They wanted to raise \$10,000 to help the senior with his rent.

Well, it turns out a lot of folks wanted to help. More than 8,000 in fact. As of Friday, the campaign has raised about \$270,000.

That should help Mr. James enjoy his golden years.

Hats off to the students at Callisburg High and the donors who made this possible. The money is important. But we bet Mr. James is just as thrilled by the outpouring of love, caring and support after so many years of service.

Is Gov. Sanders' school bill against indoctrination of students or not?

"Education, not indoctrination" has been a theme in the rollout of Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders' LEARNS education reform plan, which the state Senate has passed and seems on track to soon become law.

A substantial portion of the 144-page bill sets out just what that means.

It would forbid public school "teaching that would indoctrinate students with ideologies, such as Critical Race Theory ... that conflict with the principle of equal protection under the law or encourage students to discriminate against someone based on the individual's color, creed, race, ethnicity, sex, age, marital status, familial status, disability, religion, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by federal or state law."

Another cornerstone of the bill, however, would not only promote such indoctrination, but also force taxpayers to fund it.

The Arkansas Children's Educational Freedom Account Program — a voucher scheme touted as giving parents unlimited school choice — would funnel public funds to private Christian schools whose explicit mission is to provide religious indoctrination, and that operate under loose nondiscrimination standards.

Private Christian schools are free to indoctrinate students with religious ideologies that the public school standard would prohibit.

Teaching that same-sex marriages are illegitimate conflicts with the principle of equal protection under the law, at least according to the Supreme Court, and encourages discrimination based on familial status.

Teaching that women should be subordinate to men encourages sex-based discrimination. Teaching that divorce is sinful encourages discrimination based on marital status.

Teaching that humanism is immoral encourages creed-based discrimination, and of course, teaching that any Christian denomination is the only correct one encourages religious discrimination.

There are plenty more dogmas that students in private Christian schools are indoctrinated with every day, and that a reasonable taxpayer could object to — from creationism taught in science



Karl Richter

GAZETTE COLUMNIST

classes, to debunk claims that the U.S. was founded as a Christian nation, to the dangerous idea that religious beliefs trump the rule of law.

Apparently, ideas only count as ideologies, and education as indoctrination, when Sanders and other supporters of the bill don't like what's being taught.

I'm tempted to ask how they would feel about being forced to pay for students' education in an Islamic madrasa, but hypotheticals are unnecessary. Christians need only read the list of Arkansas private schools eligible for voucher funding to find at least one kind of Christianity they would prefer not to subsidize.

If you're Catholic, for example, do you want to be forced to fund a Protestant school teaching students that your faith is heretical, or vice versa?

Despite such objections, a large proportion of Freedom Account funds would go to Christian schools.

To participate in the program, a school must meet "accreditation requirements established by the State Board of Education, the Arkansas Nonpublic School Accrediting Association, Inc., or its successor, or another accrediting association recognized by the state board," according to the LEARNS bill.

The ANSAA's 2022-2023 directory lists 64 accredited or associate schools that would meet that criterion. Of those, 60 — 94% — are Christian schools. No other religion is represented.

Because the LEARNS bill establishes nondiscrimination rules for private schools weaker than those for public schools, that means most private schools receiving voucher money could turn students away for religious reasons. And no one should be sur-

prised when they do. According to the bill, Arkansas public schools must abide by Title IV and Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which together prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex or religion.

But private schools eligible to receive Freedom Account money must certify only that they will not discriminate according to one clause in Title VI. That section prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin — leaving sex, religion and other protected statuses out of the equation.

ANSAA accreditation standards require schools to write and publish nondiscrimination statements but are silent about what they should include.

How much choice does a parent really have if, potentially, the best academic option for their child can refuse them admission because they hold the "wrong" religious beliefs? Or because a church otherwise disapproves of them?

None of the above problems with the LEARNS bill have been much discussed, likely because a 2022 Supreme Court decision foreclosed any remedies.

In Carson v. Makin, the court ruled that Maine, as SCOTUSblog put it, could not refuse "to make public funding available for students to attend schools that provide religious instruction."

In a dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the court has shifted "from a rule that permits States to decline to fund religious organizations to one that requires States in many circumstances to subsidize religious indoctrination with taxpayer dollars."

Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, agreed in an amicus brief, saying the court "is forcing taxpayers to fund religious education."

Refusing to do so once was one of Arkansas' founding principles.

Article 2, Section 24 of the state Constitution holds that no one "can, of right, be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship; or to maintain any ministry against his consent."

Sanders and her supporters should explain why they disagree.



@Ramireztoons michaelpramirez.com

Putin can win if isolationists multiply

WASHINGTON — In autumn 1941, a few German units in Hitler's drive toward Moscow reached the city's outer suburbs, close enough to see the Kremlin's spires. Then Soviet forces counterattacked against a German army that lacked winter clothing because the high command had promised that the Soviet Union would fall before snow did.

A year ago, Vladimir Putin launched what he believed would be a quick dash to Kyiv. A few army units briefly touched the city's suburbs.

Russia's estimated 60,000 military deaths so far are more than U.S. deaths in eight years in Vietnam, and four times what the Soviet Union lost in a decade in Afghanistan. The "Putin exodus," which began well before the invasion and is accelerating, has cost Russia hundreds of thousands of mobile, educated young civilians. Strategy scholar Eliot A. Cohen writes in the Atlantic that elements of Putin's army "have to be kept at the front by the fear of blocking units that will gun down soldiers fleeing the battlefield." Putin's gangster regime has scrounged for cannon fodder in Russia's prisons, finding criminals to wage a war conducted as a war crime.

Hence the pertinence of Nuremberg, where in 1946 the first of the charges against some Nazi defendants was of aggression, which the tribunal called "the supreme international crime" because "it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." Other charges included war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. These categories are ancient enough to include Putin's indiscriminate rocket and artillery attacks on civilian concentrations and infrastructure, and the rapes and tortures inflicted by his rab-



George Will

WASHINGTON POST WRITERS GROUP

ble soldiery. Putin can win only by Ukraine's allies choosing to lose by not maximizing their moral and material advantages. He is counting on Western publics' support for Ukraine being brittle, and especially on the multiplication of Josh Hawleys.

This freshman Republican senator and probable presidential aspirant exhorted the Jan. 6 mob moments before he did what it demanded, trying to block some states' electoral votes. Now, continuing his pandering to the most primitive portion of the GOP base, this Missouri Meternich is opposing what no one is proposing — giving Ukraine a "blank check." He evidently has not noticed the excruciating incrementalism of NATO allies' aid to that valorous nation. Perhaps Hawley, advocate of nanny government "conservatism," has been too busy promoting his plan to make the federal government not Big Brother but Big Parent, taking over parenting with a law against children under age 16 using social media.

Hawley, a caricature of a (rhetorically) anti-Washington demagogue, is a human windsock, responsive to gusts of public opinion. An Associated Press poll shows that public support for aid-

ing Ukraine militarily has declined from 60 percent last May to 48 percent today and to 39 percent among Republicans. So, Hawley says the U.S. policy of supporting Ukraine's survival "has to stop."

The invincibly ignorant Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) has 10 co-sponsors, all Republicans, for a resolution calling for an end to aid for Ukraine. Their geopolitical thinking probably is of Tucker ("Has Putin ever called me a racist?") Carlson sophistication. They might eventually join hands across the barricades with some progressives who begrudge every federal nickel not devoted to feeding government-dependent Democratic factions. But Putin's congressional caucus will remain a mostly Republican rump.

Putin will be disappointed by the caucus's anemia. Few Republican legislators would be comfortable in the company of the likes of Hawley and Gaetz. And as Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said last week, "Don't look at Twitter, look at people in power... Look at the top Republicans on the Senate and House committees that handle armed services, foreign affairs, appropriations, and intelligence." They support Ukraine.

In 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower ran for president primarily to protect the Republican Party and the Republic from Robert A. Taft, who had been wrong about prewar preparedness and about postwar collective security. Taft was a formidable intellect and legislator whose views resonated with the many Americans who were isolationists before the war's comforts for isolationism's comforts afterward. He sought the presidency three times (1940, 1948, 1952), winning it as often as Hawley will.

Let's pretend that Biden says 'sorry'

For hour upon hour and multiple days before he gave his recent State of the Union speech, President Joe Biden repeated all 7,224 words over and over, thereby avoiding most of his usual verbal flubs. Also, for 40 years as a senator, a vice president and a president, he learned what can be important in political oratory: avoiding the truth.

After all, politicians are not successful out of pure luck, and twisting facts in a big-time speech just might help induce public gullibility and keep supporters fooled in 2024 voting booths, if it comes to that.

Of course, even with Biden's history of exceptional deceptions, some deny his misbehavior, and yes, there have been equally errant State of the Union speeches without his excellent moments. That's still no excuse, and for America's sake, he must remorsefully return to the pulpit with a second, self-correcting sermon, and, wait, look! In my imagination, there he is! Forget the TV set. Just read my partially fake transcript.

"Hello my fellow Americans and even the MAGA Republicans I have atrociously attacked as anti-democratic semi-fascists while I pretended to be a unifier. Pernickety commentators having afflicted my conscience on such matters, I am here to discuss a few of the faults in my state of disunion onslaught.

"As you may have noticed, for instance, I blamed our inflation on the rest of the world, but I confess that I have been a powerful force in making some of you give up eggs for breakfast. Before I



Jay Ambrose

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

took office, a bipartisan Congress allotted sufficient funds for COVID-19 help and I then allotted dollars enough to create excessive demand with too few supplies, a case of two plus two equaling price increases.

"I misled you by saying that 'inflation is coming down' when it is going up, just not as fast as it had been. If you don't believe me, look it and some other assertions up in the New York Times fact check. I also gave my administration credit for a historic \$1.7 trillion deficit drop that happened chiefly because COVID programs were ending. Through my fiscal impropriety, the deficit is once more heading for outer space, however.

"Forever in search of adulation, I bragged about helping to create 12 million jobs in two years, something no other president has done even in a full four-year term. But it has been pointed out that if you consider the number of jobs as a percentage of the population, bunches of presidents have whupped me in four years, including Obama, Clinton, Reagan and Carter.

"A daily whiner, I couldn't help insisting the rich are not paying their fair share of taxes. Actually, they pay a ton. We have the most progressive tax system out there, and our middle-class median income is a lot higher than in Europe where the middle classes also pays higher taxes for more welfare. Based on seeming suppositions of a left-wing outfit, I said 55 highly profitable corporations paid no taxes without observing that all corporations put together paid \$370 billion in 2022, the highest amount in 15 years.

"I plead guilty to neglect of the southern border. Because of inadequate security, a Mexican horror has been Mexico cartels smuggling Chinese-made fentanyl into our country, killing 70,000 mostly young Americans a year. FDR went to war with Japan for killing some 2,400 Americans at Pearl Harbor and I've been scratching my nose.

"I want to say, too, that it was hooey when I made it sound as if Republicans wanted to cut Social Security when they know we Democrats would whack them to pieces if they tried. We've played that game to the point where the program is becoming ever less sustainable without economic mayhem.

"Sorry, and so long for now."

Thanks for an encouraging if unreal start, President Biden, although we also might have mentioned that, unlike Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi after a Donald Trump speech, Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy did not tear your previous speech apart.

Texarkana Gazette

ELIZA HUSSMAN GAINES P.O. Box 621, Texarkana, Texas 75504
 Publisher

JAMES BRIGHT
 General Manager and Editor

An independent Sunday and daily newspaper serving the Texarkana area since 1875.

Clyde E. Palmer (1876-1957)
Walter E. Hussman (1906-1988)
Walter E. Hussman Jr. (1947-2022 ret.)

Russell McDermott
 Editorial Page Editor

Jason Hopkins
 Digital Audience Development Director