

**December 7, 2009**

## **SUBOPTIMAL FCAT**

In his Nov. 26 column, Thomas Friedman comments on whether China will "own" the 21st century. He says that it's unlikely in a country that still "controls its Internet and jails political prisoners."

Friedman points out that free "societies that can nurture people with the ability to imagine and spin off new ideas will thrive." But he also says that America has made "suboptimal" efforts to solve problems in education as well as in other important areas that will impact our future.

Here in Florida, in addition to drastic cuts in school budgets, the state's heavy focus on factors like the FCAT tests are producing "suboptimal" results. In fact for several years, our state government has done the very opposite of "nurturing" the ability of our young people to imagine creative new solutions to problems that we must solve if our society is to "thrive."

It is frightening to contemplate a future where our emerging young leaders will lack the mental flexibility and critical thinking skills to find these solutions. Instead, rigid and simplistic "one right answer" approaches will produce a declining America.

CAROLYN WEST, Ormond Beach

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**August 2, 2009**

## **HEART OF DARKNESS**

Wake up America! The real heart of the problem with America's health care system is not about socialism or our nation's obesity but rather the egregiously greedy fat cats and lobbyists who, with the blessing of Congress, run the pharmaceutical and health care industry.

**LINDA KALAYDJIAN, Ormond Beach**

**June 24, 2009**

## **Look to the sun for energy**

Kudos to your critical commentary ("Blowing Smoke . . ." June 16) on the slowness of Congress to activate the "20 by 20" plan. That goal would have 20 percent of U.S. energy generated from renewable resources by the year 2020. Renewable sources such as solar power will reduce our dependence on foreign oil as well as reduce the production of dangerous greenhouse gasses. But that goal is even now being revised and weakened. Could the oil and nuclear power lobbies be causing this foot-dragging?

The latest report to Congress ("Report: Climate Change Damaging" June 17) underscores the importance of reducing emissions that lead to global warming.

That climate change will affect Central Florida is already clear, as even the recent record rainfall might show us. The names Charley, Francis or Jeanne might also ring a bell --weather events that were never supposed to happen here. Rising sea levels themselves could destroy much of our state's economy by 2050.

On a recent trip to Europe, I noted that many rooftops had solar panels installed. Not only were nearly half of residential buildings involved, but also German farmers had placed the panels on their barns and even pig sheds!

Surely the Sunshine State would be an even better place to transform our sunshine into usable, safe electric power.

**CAROLYN WEST, Ormond Beach**

**June 19 , 2009**

### **HOLD ON TO YOUR WALLETS**

Our friendly investor-owned utilities are asking state regulators for a whopping 30-percent increase in their basic power rates, so they can improve their profitability. This is an outrage. Florida consumers are battling the toughest economy in a quarter-century, unemployment rates are very high and getting higher, and Florida ranks fourth among U.S. states in the number of home foreclosures.

Florida Power & Light already can count on earning about a 10-percent return on its investment. Very few of the rest of us are seeing those kinds of returns. But that's not enough for this company. It wants to dip deeper into our pockets -- much deeper.

If state regulators give the green light, Florida consumers will have to fork over as much as \$1.8 billion in higher utility costs -- \$1.3 billion to FPL alone.

Independent experts say this request is all about profitability. FPL's return on investment would rise from about 10.7 percent today to a range of 12 percent to 13 percent, according to company filings.

For a customer using just 1,000 kilowatt-hours of power per month, the rate increase requested by FPL would be about \$12.55 per month, or \$150.60 more per year. That's a 30-percent increase in basic rates. Many consumers use more than 1,000 kWh per month.

If you are still angry about recent rate increases requested by power companies to pay for higher fuel costs or nuclear power plants, don't be confused. The company's "base rate" requests have nothing to do with paying for nuclear power plants or for changing fuel costs.

Instead, these new and additional rate increase requests focus on the "base rate" portion of your bill, which makes up about 42 percent of the total.

AARP is calling on area residents to turn out and testify at public hearings scheduled by the Florida Public Service Commission to receive public comment. To allow those in the Daytona Beach area to speak, a hearing will be conducted 4

to 7 p.m. Tuesday at Daytona Beach City Hall, 301 S. Ridgewood Ave.

The best way to fight these rate increases is to show up in person, ask to speak, and explain how they will impact you and those you know. This may be local residents' last chance to have a say on this outrageous plan. AARP volunteers and staff will be present at the hearing to help guide anyone through the process of signing up to speak.

To learn more about this issue, please go to [www.aarp.org/fl](http://www.aarp.org/fl).

To sign up to attend and possibly speak to the Public Service Commission, visit [www.capitolconnect.com/aarp/alert](http://www.capitolconnect.com/aarp/alert) or phone 1-866-595-7678 toll-free and ask for an AARP Florida staffer working on the utilities issue.

**BILL TERNENT, AARP Advocacy volunteer, Port Orange**

**June 1, 2009**

### **WILL WE EVER LEARN?**

A few weeks from now we will be celebrating the birthday of our country. In every state we will be blasting and burning all kinds of air-polluting chemicals. We'll be cheering and choking as the earth-shaking, ear-jarring, lung-piercing, smoking pyrotechnics light up the sky.

We will be honoring our past but jeopardizing our children's future by boosting global warming. The frightened wise old owl high in the long-leaf pine tree must wonder if we are sane.

**GORDON WILLIAMSON, Holly Hill**

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**May 22, 2009**

### **GOLDBERG'S HOT AIR**

I was surprised at the overheated tone of Jonah Goldberg's recent column, "EPA rules strangling democracy" (News-Journal, May 9). He claims that the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the Environmental Protection Agency could regulate greenhouse gases has "launched a power grab over everything that burns, breathes, burps." In fact, that ruling occurred two years ago. How tardy seems his alarmist rhetoric (claiming for example, that "the president has suddenly gained sweeping powers over American life"). Was it that Goldberg preferred the Bush Administration's muzzling of the EPA, with its censoring of reports based on sound science rather than on Big Oil propaganda and the party line?

It seems strange that Goldberg fears more the Obama administration's modest efforts to bring about a cap-and-trade system (which he claims may result in "draconian impositions on business") than he fears that places like Wall Street eventually being swallowed up by the sea. Perhaps Goldberg lives in Iowa?

**CAROLYN WEST, Ormond Beach**

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**May 14 2009**

**CLEAN –AIR DEMOGRAPHICS**

In a ranting column against the Environmental Protection Agency, Jonah Goldberg tried to say the EPA was "strangling democracy." However, Goldberg hit upon a truth: Overpopulation (more people trying to breathe non-polluted air) is the root cause of our problem. If humans produce fewer offspring, we'll all have a chance to breathe purer air.

**NATALIE WILLIAMSON, Holly Hill**

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**May 4, 2009**

**FOR LACK OF COVERAGE**

The fallacies of our current system are most obvious now as we deal with a possible pandemic. Those among us without health insurance could be the cause of our own deaths. Even those in Congress who vote in favor of insurance care rather than health care are at risk from the uninsured and under-insured in our country. It is time to catch up with the rest of the world.

**CARLA CHRISTIANSON, Ormond Beach**

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**April 24, 2009**

**TEA PARTY ANTI - PORK**

Re "Lemmings in the tea" letter Tuesday:

I know no one who went to the tea party to protest paying taxes for education, police and fire protection. However, there were those there protesting the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program with \$344 billion of our tax dollars going to Citigroup, Bank of America, AIG, etc., which was reported on the front page of the newspaper on the same day of "Lemmings in the tea."

Maybe there were those at the tea party questioning why their hard-earned money may be finding its way out of our country to UBS, which has reportedly helped wealthy Americans evade paying hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes. There were people at the tea party protesting pork and TARP. There were those at the party who want the Fair Tax, which would result in those who do not now report their income paying their share.

Most of the people I know went to the tea party because they want our government to be accountable for our tax dollars so we will not have "fewer police, less fire and ambulance services, bigger potholes, more unsound bridges, worse crumbling schools . . ."

## **BARBARA SANDBERG, Ormond Beach**

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**March 31, 2009**

### **BLAME FOR DRUG TRADE**

During his prime-time news conference March 24, the president pledged to send more money, technology and manpower to help Mexico fight the drug cartels. In a subsequent committee hearing, Sens. Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham safely predicted more resources would be needed. All of them missed opportunities to emphasize the core problem.

On the following day, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recognized the U.S. share of the blame. She said, "Our insatiable demand for illegal drugs fuels the drug trade. Our inability to prevent weapons from being illegally smuggled across the border to arm these criminals causes the deaths of police officers, soldiers and civilians." She vowed to repeat this as loudly and often as needed during her visit to Mexico City and Monterey.

Thanks, Hillary.

## **ED FLANAGAN, Ormond Beach**

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**March 18, 2009**

### **PREACHER AT CAMP**

Sunrise at Church Camp, a bunch of kids from everywhere stumbling to the lake to sing together. Why? Because we all loved Preacher Marchman. Together with a few other volunteers, it was my great honor to rise earlier than the rest to be with him in the kitchen as he sang and cooked 15 pounds of bacon and hundreds of eggs for all of us. Every activity was blessed with his presence: from lake skiing to evening skits in the mess hall.

That was 1961. I was 11. I knew somehow my life would never be the same after that summer and asked Preacher Marchman to baptize me. It never was the same. Even though I have studied many religious traditions and have traveled afar, no one has inspired me as deeply as this wonderful man with his genuine love and endless service to humanity. No, not humanity, just the person next to him, all of us.

## **LANI VAN PETTEN, Ormond Beach**

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**MARCH 15, 2009**

### **DESTROYING NATURE**

Kudos to Gordon Williamson! To paraphrase Chief Seattle: As we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves. And we're doing a horrendously successful job of it, including the destruction of the ability of ocean phytoplankton (where 60-70 percent

of O<sub>2</sub> is produced) to maintain the CO<sub>2</sub>-O<sub>2</sub> cycle, thanks mainly to the improperly treated sewage from 6 billion humans.

**WALT DeYOUNG, New Smyrna Beach**

**March 10, 2009**

**OVER DUE ACTION**

Floridians must cease allowing expansive sprawl that destroys our valuable, irreplaceable wilderness and wetlands, using them as raw materials for development and growth. Corporate profit derived by a few becomes a terrible loss for all. We must join together to find an economic engine to replace development sprawl. We need an economy that provides jobs and yields our basic monetary needs without using vital and finite raw materials.

Loss of wilderness has a profoundly damaging effect because in a natural forest every plant works to sustain the balance of the planet. Trees and ground-cover moderate climate, help absorb terrestrial and marine pollution, store the major polluting gas, carbon dioxide, and release life-essential oxygen and necessary water vapor. It is impossible to calculate their value -- without them we would not survive. Next to the sun, they are our most valuable assets.

We have already experienced unwelcome bad weather which scientists attribute in part to loss of trees and plants. Some say changes in weather occur because of additional exposed ground surfaces and other development features reflect solar rays, which become heat shafts that rise up in the atmosphere. There they mix with other climate factors to create violent weather. Dry air from cleared and developed areas helps cause drought conditions, which slow and stunt green growth and dry up marine habitat.

Any development that destroys irreplaceable nature is not worthwhile or beneficial because the odds are what it destroys was more valuable than the replacement. Beginning now, all should agree that not another acre of wilderness will be bulldozed.

Earth's green cover must be considered the property of every citizen.

**GORDON WILLIAMSON, Holly Hill**

**February 7, 2009**

**REMINDER OF STATE'S DUTY**

The League of Women Voters of Florida has had positions on education equity and financing in Florida since 1947. The league has supported a free and public education for all children and in 1971 its position included state funding as "the source of major financial support for education including capital outlay." Through the years, the Florida league and the Volusia County league have supported the Florida Education Finance Program as the mechanism for funding public education and added that all state-mandated programs be fully financed. The league remains

committed to these positions.

The Volusia County league is dismayed our Legislature reduced the funding to our schools as a result of the state's current budget deficit. Our children are facing a decrease in the quality of education that we have the right to expect, as well as possible deletion of excellent academic programs and athletics.

We encourage all residents of Volusia County to join the School Board and teachers in sending a unified message to Tallahassee, demanding the restoration of funds to public education and emphasizing the urgency of this need. Our government must develop alternative methods of generating funds to provide all its citizens with a free and public educational system.

If Florida is to remain competitive, if the students are to remain part of the intellectual wealth of our state, it is indeed time to stand behind Article IX of the Constitution of the state of Florida which states that it is, "a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children. . . ."

**MARITZA N. PATTERSON, Vice President, League of Women Voters of Volusia County**

**January 21, 2009**

**FOR MARTIN'S BIRTHDAY**

I don't know if there is a God or heaven or hell. But if there is a heaven and we all had to join Martin Luther King Jr. today, what an awesome gift we would be giving him in the inauguration of Barack Obama as our president. Can you imagine his heavenly joyful feeling and how grateful he would be to all of us? Even though we didn't always treat him well when he was with us, he would forgive us. He probably would say the same thing our new president has said: "It's not about me; it's about you." What a day, what a time, what a moment to be an American! It is not only us who are joyful and proud, but the rest of the world is joyful and proud for us.

**PANOS STROUMPIS, Daytona Beach**

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Welcome to

**The Unitarian Universalist Society**  
**of the Daytona Beach Area**