

OUR OPINION

Mid-course correction

The *Miami Herald* reported last fall that a sizable number of South Florida residents were still in line waiting to vote well into the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 7, even after the presidential election had been called for Barack Obama. Some were in line as long as seven hours. Others reportedly gave up and went home.

As if that weren't bad enough, it took three days to total up the votes state-wide and certify the results. Swing-state Florida was relegated to total insignificance on election night.

Some attribute the long lines and at least some of the confusion to a 2011 state law reducing the number of early voting days from 14 to eight.

Gov. Rick Scott, who signed the law and spent \$500,000 of taxpayer money defending it in court, has changed course, asking now that early voting be restored to a full two weeks. Beyond that, Scott wants lawmakers to expand early-voting hours from 96 to 168 and to allow more polling places. In addition, voting would be allowed, at the local supervisor's discretion, on the Sunday before Election Day.

For the record, Scott now denies ever supporting the 2011 law, saying he "didn't have anything to do with" passing it.

Most of the reforms Scott now seeks would benefit the more populated parts of the state, which generally have a different take on state and national politics than rural areas like ours.

Still, that kind of thinking cannot enter the equation.

Voting is a sacred right in our republic, no matter what your views.

Besides, we're tired of looking like a laughingstock to the rest of the nation.

Scott was right to change his mind, even if he won't admit it.



Secretary Clinton's 112 trips

When Secretary of State Hillary Clinton returned to work after her hospitalization for a concussion, her staff gave her a "gag gift" — A T-shirt with the numbers 112 on it. The number 112 refers to the 112 trips out of the country Secretary Clinton has made, the most ever for a U.S. Secretary of State (by some accounts).

This took me back to the 1950s, when presidential candidate Adlai E. Stevenson spoke to a large crowd in Lake City's Olustee Park.

In his speech, Mr. Stevenson took a small shot at President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, who also did a lot of foreign travel.

Said Mr. Stevenson, "Secretary Dulles has traveled so far so often and so fast, he hardly has time to contradict himself twice in the same country."

Museum thanks

■ To Isaac (Ike)



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McDonald for a 1953 Columbia High School graduation program (Phyllis Dawsey Ramsey was valedictorian, William F. (Bill) Fletcher was salutatorian) and a 1949 Baccalaureate program (Church of God pastor, the Rev. Vep Ellis was the speaker).

Ike also donated an 8-by-10-inch photograph of the CHS class of 1948 when they were second-graders and their teacher was Clarice Johnson (later Clarice Evans).

■ To the CHS Class of 1961 for a generous donation in loving memory of classmates Barbara Susan Griffin (daughter of Carolyn Griffin) and Gail Hosford Acosta, delivery courtesy of Calvin C.

Creamer.

■ To Gigi Witt Register for donating several items that belonged to her late grandmother, Genevieve Nelson (CHS 1934), including two 1934 year-books and Genevieve's cheerleader megaphone when she was cheering on the Tigers those many years ago.

Skipping around

■ I did not know Eva Mae Brown but I know I would have liked her. One line in her obituary won my heart: She enjoyed raking leaves and picking up pecans. My mother would have liked her too.

■ Think Larry Law isn't a heart-and-soul Gator fan? When he got a new dog, he immediately named him what else? — Tebow!

■ According to Calvary Baptist Church pastor Ivan Clements, he lived on the east-most part of Baya Avenue back in the day, and that road was so rough people called it Washboard Avenue.

■ The Mascot for the current Fort White High School is the Indians;

the mascot for the "old" FWHS was Eagles.

■ Kudos to County Judge Tom Coleman who shows great honor and respect to the jurors who serve in his courtroom. He asks that all present stand when the jurors leave or return during their deliberations.

■ CHS offensive lineman Laremy Tunsil is a first-team selection on the prestigious MaxPrep national team.

■ Thanks to Gwen and Lowell O'Steen for giving me a comprehensive history of Bethlehem Baptist Church (located on Highway 100), which includes a timeline of improvements to the physical plant and a list of former pastors. Gwen also gave me a picture of longtime local teacher Fannie Hobbs when she was about age 30.

■ Rumor: A new pistol has been invented and called "The Congressman." It won't work and you can't fire it!

■ Morris Williams is a local historian and long-time Columbia County resident.

Are MLK's values welcome today?

The Rev. Louie Giglio, designated to give the benediction at this year's presidential inauguration, has withdrawn, under apparent pressure, after the surfacing of remarks he made, some 25 years ago, about the sinfulness of homosexuality.

Note that the pastor of the evangelical Passion City Church in Atlanta has been pushed off the stage not because of a deed, but because of words he said — words expressing a widely held Christian belief that homosexuality is a sin. Let's recall that freedom of religion appears in the First Amendment of our constitution, alongside the protection of freedom of speech.

So what kind of irony do we have before us that two key aspects of American life, protected by our constitution, are up in smoke and the venue is inauguration of an American president, who will put his hand on a Bible and swear to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States"?

Adding more bitter irony, Rick Warren, who gave the benediction at the 2009 inauguration of this same president, America's first black president, recently said that "the battle to preserve religious liberty for all, in all areas of life, will likely become the civil rights movement of this decade."

And in what context did Warren — pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. — make this observation? In context of the refusal of Hobby Lobby, a firm owned by evangelical Christians, to comply



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with a new mandate, signed into law by this president, forcing firms, regardless of their religious convictions, to pay for employees' contraception and abortion-inducing pills.

What we have is the ongoing march forward of tyranny in America, a tyranny of the left, in which moral chaos and political power are becoming a new national religion, and what was once understood as religion and tradition is now called bigotry and pushed off the stage.

One wonders if the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday coincides with this second inauguration of America's first black president, would not himself wind up today pushed off the stage because of his Christian convictions.

A hint of how to think about this may be gleaned by visiting the new memorial in Washington, D.C., honoring King.

Visiting the memorial, what immediately struck this black Christian was the complete absence of any hint that King was a Christian pastor, who founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and who led a movement animated and inspired by biblical conviction and imagery.

No, the King celebrated at this memorial on the National Mall is a political activist and community organizer. Try to find a hint that this was a pastor, try to find a biblical quote, try to find a reference to God.

Absent is the King who concluded his "I have a dream" speech on the same National Mall pleading for the day "when all of God's children ... will be able to join hands and sing the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last.'"

In King's famous letter written in 1963 while he was locked in a jail in Birmingham, Ala., he begins with the salutation "My fellow clergymen" and asks, "How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust?" The answer given by King was this: "A just law is a manmade code that squares with the moral law or the law of God."

Would a law such as the one forcing the evangelical Christian owners of Hobby Lobby to pay for contraception and abortion-inducing pills of employees, and exposing them to fines of \$1.3 million per day for non-compliance — qualify as "just" under King's definition?

Would King be ejected from the stage of this president's inaugural if he called this law, produced by this administration, unjust?

Would there even have been a civil rights movement without the Christian values that today's left calls bigotry?

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