

West Marion Messenger
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Opinion

Our Message

Amendment 11 isn't for us

Last week, the Marion County Commission voted 3-2 to reject the cuts in property taxes authorized by Florida Amendment 11, which passed with 61 percent of the vote last November.

Newcomers Earl Arnett and David Moore voted for the cuts, while the three "veterans" of the commission, Kathy Bryant, Stan McClain and Carl Zalak vote no.

Last year when the amendment was on the ballot, we recommended defeat, saying the effect would be minimal on the public if passed but would hurt the local tax base.

We stand by that. The majority of the commissioners apparently agreed, saying, as we did last year, that the county and schools couldn't afford to take another hit on the taxes.

Some of the objections to the county's decision have been vocal, almost to the point of being irrationally passionate.

Some people fail to examine the issue more closely. They claim, loud and long, that the county is going against 61 percent of the voters in Florida.

Actually, that's not correct. The county is doing exactly what the amendment authorized.

Go back and read the amendment again and you'll find it authorized county and city governments to vote on whether to grant the new exception, and that's exactly what the county did. The fact that some people don't like the way the county voted doesn't mean the county rejected what the voters of the state approved.

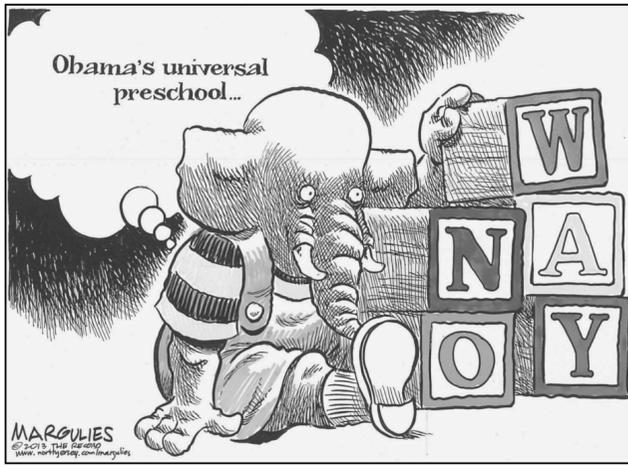
The new proposed tax exception carries three stipulations. The first is that the home must be valued below \$250,000. We'll agree that applies to many homes in this area.

The second sets an income threshold for the homeowner. There may be some people who fall into that category.

The third condition, however, is the one that would make the rule difficult to follow in this area. The person receiving the exemption must have lived in the same house for 25 years. That means that, if you qualify on the other two rules, you either have moved into your house either in 1988 or before. Otherwise, you don't qualify.

That, we expect, would eliminate a lot of people. So before everyone starts throwing stones, they should sit back and cool off. They may find that their protests are unnecessary.

Being a county commissioner means making some tough decisions. In this recent vote, all five voted their conscience. You can't ask for much more than that.



Auto racing safer to watch at home

The events of this past weekend emphasized to me that I wonder why people go to auto races and sit down low, but it's not just for the reasons you might expect.

True, the safety factor is a consideration, especially after Saturday's crash in the Nationwide series race, which usually attracts only about a five-second mention on most sportscasts. But when you count the number of races and then count the incidents such as this, you'll see how rare it is.

To me, though, the ability to follow the race is more important. When you sit down low, the cars go flying by at 180 mph or better, almost a mere blip, and then they're gone again for a while until they come around again. Meanwhile, the lead could have changed a couple of times, or there could have been an accident on the far reaches of the track that slow the cars down by the time they get to you.

If I were going to a place like Daytona, I'd want to sit high where I could see everything.

Better still, stay home and watch it on television. If you know a lot about auto racing, mute the announcers and just watch the race while carrying on a conversation with those around you. If something happens, you can quickly "unmute" the TV. You know they're going to show a replay a dozen times or so, anyway.

Saturday's crash was devastating to a lot of people. Although none of the injuries was classified as life-threatening, you can imagine that the pain of injury will continue for a long time. For those who had a narrow escape, the thought of what might have happened will linger.

Now the attention turns to prevention, as NASCAR looks to ways to protect the fans from the debris after a violent crash such as this one.



Among Friends
Jim Clark

Some have suggested an additional fence a few feet away from the existing one, but it's already been pointed out that some fans might not like being moved further away from the track.

It's worthy of note, however, that NASCAR has taken great pains over the years to make the cars safer for the drivers. In this case the focus has been, rightly so, on the spectators, as the engine and wheels of a car went flying into the grandstand.

But consider the driver. This was a violent crash that literally sheared the car in two. Had the wheels and engine stayed on the track, we would have been praising the safety features that allowed the driver to climb out and walk away from the accident while parts of his vehicle were scattered all over.

I'm glad everyone will eventually be all right after this accident, but let's face reality. Accidents are why a lot of people tune in to auto racing in the first place. They'll call it a "dull" race if there are no caution flags.

As for me, I'll stay home and watch on TV. There's no flying debris in my living room, and there's a "pause" button if I have to leave the room to prepare a snack.

Jim Clark is the editor of the West Marion Messenger.

Guest column

Real spending cuts needed

BY SHELDON RICHMAN

President Obama and other so-called progressives insist that the American people are not overly dependent on government. They also predict dire consequences if the automatic budget "cuts" known as sequestration take place March 1.

Both claims cannot be true. If modest across-the-board "cuts" — mainly cuts in the rate of growth — in military and domestic spending pose a threat to the American people and the U.S. economy, then the country is alarmingly dependent on government.

Federal spending has grown dramatically since the 1970s, with the biggest increases coming during Republican administrations. Spending today is hundreds of billions greater than in 2008 and much higher as a percentage of the economy. True, it is lower now than in 2009, but that year, a combination of George W. Bush and Obama "stimulus" spending, set a record.

The sequester consists of \$1.2 trillion in across-the-board cuts in non-entitlement spending growth over ten years. To put that in perspective, Reason editor Nick Gillespie writes, "Remember that we're talking about \$1.2 trillion dollars taken out of a projected \$4 trillion or so in spending. What kind of budget discipline is that?"

As that March 1 sequester approaches, the Obama administration warns of severe consequences for national security and economic security.

It is hard to take seriously the claim that even a small and temporary decrease in Pentagon spending would endanger the American people. Military spending has skyrocketed since the year 2000, and the United States spends almost as much on the means of war as the rest of the world combined — indeed, it spends more than it did at the height of the Cold War. The U.S. military is now out of Iraq and is beginning to leave Afghanistan. One should expect a fall in spending under those circumstances — unless the government plans to invade more countries.

Yet Obama and outgoing defense secretary Leon Panetta foresee great danger. Nonsense. As analyst Veronique de Rugy writes, "Defense spending has almost doubled in the past decade in current dollar terms and will continue to grow in spite of automatic cuts." Summarizing Rugy's findings, Gillespie writes, "Assuming maximum sequestration, Defense would increase only 16 percent in current dollars over the next decade, rather than 23 percent without sequestration." Some cut.

Of course, much could and should be

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Reader Opinions Invited

- The opinions expressed in West Marion Messenger editorials are the opinions of the editorial board of the newspaper.
- Viewpoints depicted in political cartoons, columns or letters do not necessarily represent the opinion of the editorial board.
- Groups or individuals are invited to express their opinions in letters to the editor and guest columns.
- Persons wishing to contact the editor should call 352-854-3986.
- All letters must be signed and include a phone number and community name, including letters sent via e-mail. Names and communities will be printed; phone numbers will not be published or given out.
- We reserve the right to edit letters for length, libel, fairness and good taste. Not all contributors are printed.
- Letters longer than 350 words may be regarded as columns and printed on a space-available basis, and writers will be limited to one contribution per month. The deadline is one week prior to each Wednesday's issue.
- Send letters to: The West Marion Messenger Editor, 8810 S.W. State Road 200, suite 103, Ocala, FL 34481; or e-mail editor@westmarionmessenger.com.

WEST MARION
Messenger

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Saturday, March 9

Women's Spring Break

Join the Women's Ministry at the annual Women's Spring Break event, "Is the Power Back On?"

Guest speaker will be Gaye Martin. Special Sessions: Card Making ('Make and Take' Class), Quilt Making (Demonstration), Bible Study and Devotion (How To), Continental Breakfast - Lunch - Door Prizes - Childcare available. Saturday, March 9, 9 a.m.

This is a free event for all women; a freewill offering will be taken for the guest speaker.

Registration required. Contact Christ's Church of Marion County, 6768 S.W. 80th St. (off State Road 200), Ocala, 352-861-6182, www.ccomc.org/.

Sunday, March 10

Dramatist at Nazarene Church

Professional dramatist Chuck Neighbors will be performing his one-man drama, In His Steps, at Ocala West Church of the Nazarene (5884 S.W. 60th Ave., Ocala on March 10 at 10:30 a.m.

Religion

Temple B'nai Darom

Temple B'nai Darom will hold a traditional first seder on Monday evening, March 25 at Silver Springs Restaurant, 5300 E. Silver Springs Blvd. The seder will be conducted by Rabbi Sherman Stein. The cost is \$28.50 per person which includes a full seder dinner with choice of brisket or salmon. All reservations must be received by Friday, March 15. For reservations or additional information please contact Micki Hirsch at 352-624-9563.

Our Redeemer Lutheran

Join us for Casual with Christ every Saturday at 5 p.m., beginning March 9. This will be a casual service with modern music. Youth bible study follows.

Christ's Church of Marion County

Wednesday, Feb. 27: Bible Study, 7 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 28: Prayer and Praise Group, 9 a.m.

Saturday, March 2: Men's Prayer Group, 8 a.m.

Sunday, March 3: Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship Service, 10 a.m.

Monday, March 4: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 5: Women's Crafts and Fellowship, 9 a.m.

Wednesday, March 6: Bible Study, 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 7: Mt. Mission School Choir Concert, 6 pm.

Christ's Church of Marion County, 6768 S.W. 80th St. (off State Road 200), Ocala, 352-861-6182, http://www.ccomc.org.

Friendship Baptist

Sunday services at Friendship Baptist Church on March 3 begin with Sunday School at 9:30 a.m. Studying through the Book of Acts, the Adult classes are taught by Bill Walleit in the Auditorium and the Ladies Class, in the Fellowship Hall, taught by Linda Brown. At the 10:45 a.m. Morning Worship Service the FBC choir will be singing, "Hallelujah Praise the Lamb".

Through the month of March the Choir will be singing music preparing the heart for Resurrection Sunday. Pastor Randall Brown will be bringing the Bible Message from the Word of God to the hearts of the people.

The Sunday Evening

West Church of the Nazarene (5884 S.W. 60th Ave., Ocala on March 10 at 10:30 a.m.

In His Steps is an adaptation of Charles Sheldon's Classic novel, which has sold millions of copies and is ranked as one of the best-selling books of all time. It is the story of a group of Christians who revolutionize their community when they dedicate themselves to live by one simple code: "What would Jesus do?" All are invited to attend and be challenged by this unique story presentation.

Marion Chamber Music Society concert

Last year's Ocala Symphony Orchestra Concerto competition winner Julia Lee is the featured performer for the March 10 Marion Chamber Music Society concert.

Julia will be joined by her mother, concert pianist Hee Jung Kang, and her sister, Sophia Lee on flute. Julia was also the 12 and under winner of the 2012 Concerto Competition at Carnegie Hall. The MCMS concert is at 3 p.m. at Queen of Peace Church, 6455 S.W. State Road 200, Ocala.

For more information call 352-867-1340 or visit our web: www.marionchambermusic.com. The concert is free to the public.

Tuesday, March 12

Charity pro-am at Ocala Open

A charity pro-am event kicks off the Ocala Open on Tuesday, March 12, at Candler Hills Golf Club. Proceeds from the event benefit Hospice of Marion County and Interfaith Emergency Services.

Start the day with breakfast, then select a tee gift at the Nike tent. Participants will warm-up next to pros who will be vying for Ocala Open honors; play golf with a pro and get a few pointers on your own game. The day concludes with the Champion's Roundup Barbecue and Awards Luncheon.

For more information, call 352-861-9712.

Wednesday, March 13

Tom Shelton concert scheduled

Gospel Musician Thomas Shelton, member of "Who's Who in American Music," is internationally known and has appeared in the United States and 11 other countries.

He presents his vocal concert on Wednesday, March 13, 7 p.m. Admission is free; a love offering will be

taken.

Christ's Church of Marion County, 6768 S.W. 80th St. (off State Road 200), Ocala, 352-861-6182, www.ccomc.org/.

Friday, March 15

Vendors wanted for Spring Expo

Business owners are invited to set up booths at the Spring Expo sponsored by the West Marion Business Association on Friday, March 15.

The Spring Expo is from noon to 5 p.m. at the Circle Square Commons Cultural Center. Booths are available on a first come, first serve basis and cost from \$100 to \$175.

Electric is available. Reserve your booth space, or learn more, by visiting our website at westmba.com or contacting Erin Jones, eajones@brickcitytitle.net, 352-274-3511.

Saturday, March 16

O'Calá St. Patrick's Day event

The 11th annual O'Calá's St. Patrick's Day will take place on the downtown Square on Saturday, March 16, from 4 to 9 p.m.

Entertainment this year will include many great Irish dance groups and two great bands! An Triur will perform a very traditional Irish sound that will make you feel like you are feeling the breeze just atop the Emerald Isle.

The main performers for the evening, the band that will get your Irish blood flowing is Seven Nations!

There will be plenty of food to enjoy including corn beef sandwiches and corn beef and cabbage!

There will be arts and crafts vendors providing all kinds of unique items of your interest.

Fun games and activities for children and adults including the face painting, arts and crafts, dunk tank, jousting stands and Bounce House!

The dunk tank will be held as a charitable attraction, so make sure to make someone get soaked!

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