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Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? Under

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.) One of the most important roles of community newspapers such as ours is to ensure local elected officials remain accountable and responsive to residents. That means, more often, questioning their actions, but just as importantly supporting them when we think they have done well.

This entry provides as mix of both, challenging decisions and actions on potential regulations, one city's leaders abdicating when the going got rough, and advocating for leadership when people attempted to hold them responsible for things over which they had no control.

In all cases, the provided pieces ramped up the community dialogue. Freeport's officials, specifically, responded to the opinion pieces by rethinking the positions they had taken and revisiting the issues. It's hard to argue that the newspaper isn't fulfilling its vital community role when it is achieving such results.

Small businesses, cities should accentuate the positives

A few weeks ago, we wrote of our support for a program Clute Police Chief Randy Bratton championed. The experienced lawman proposed a cadet sponsorship program that would hopefully allow Clute PD to compete for a limited pool of qualified applicants — officers who often end up at larger department with more robust bankrolls.

Bratton proposed allowing the department to pay a candidate's tuition to go to the Brazosport College Police Academy, plus an hourly wage. The move was approved and Clute PD has another recruiting tool at its disposal. The chief also started purchasing about \$1,000 in equipment for each new officer,

OURVIEWPOINT

Our Viewpoint reflects the majority opinion of The Facts editorial board, which includes Yvonne Mintz, Michael Morris, Derek Kuhn and Dale Dimitri.

including a handgun and all duty-belt equipment incoming hires previously had to purchase themselves.

Even with the sponsorship program, Clute and other departments still face the daunting task of keeping good employees from leaving for greener pastures.

Freeport Police Chief Dan Pennington, for example, recently accepted a civilian position with the San Antonio

Police Department. The resignation comes after he spent four years as Freeport's top cop. Pennington was well-regarded in the department and worked to improve public trust and customer service while lowering officer turnover and the crime rate. Freeport will miss Pennington's skill and experience, and his departure illustrates the issue isn't only for entry-level employees.

Small-town governments aren't the only entities hurting for bodies. Small businesses, particularly in small towns, contend with many of the same issues. The biggest hurdle always seems to be pay, but employers without a bottomless bank account can compensate good

employees in other ways.

One way is giving workers a reason to stay through professional development, including advance training opportunities and mentorship. Forbes recommends a coach-versus-managing approach. "Try to balance giving your team members the authority, the tools and the space they need to do their jobs — empowering them — and staying checked-in as they execute their responsibilities," Forbes suggests. "Be accessible for, and open to, problem solving — whether it's brainstorming next steps or fighting fires. And, be accessible personally — taking a genuine interest in employees as individuals, as people."

Other suggestions include

gaining insight into employees' aspirations.

Essentially, Forbes' suggestions could be condensed to know your employees and communicate with them and provide leadership.

Quality of life can be another factor used to retain employees.

While it isn't always possible to compete with larger businesses or cities, employers can build better work environments than larger competitors. And that's where small businesses and cities can compete. They can create an environment that makes people want to stay.

Today's editorial was written by Derek Kuhn, assistant managing editor of The Facts.

YOURVOICE

Letters from Facts' readers

Writer remembers World War II years

I read a recent letter that wondered how many juniors and seniors graduated high school in Germany during the war years. I'd guess not many. Now I'd like to turn that around and ask how many may have graduated in their country between '42 and '45. I'm talking percentage-wise.

In my small-town, southern high school, more than 40 students started high school in the fall of '41, and six boys/men graduated and 21 girls graduated. All the rest volunteered before their 18th birthday. Now if I'd had my way, it would have been five boys who graduated, but Dad said no. Dad was 64 when I graduated, and he needed another hand on the farm.

Sometimes during the war years, the War Department put out posters showing Hitler with his black boot resting on the globe, Tojo holding a sword that had blood dripping from it, and Il Duce strutting on stage like a banta rooster. It made you want to pick up a rifle and shoot those monsters.

Now, of course, you didn't think of a bullet that might have your name on it.

The reasons for volunteering were for many: patriotism, dropping out of school (farm boy didn't need a lot of book learning), adventure (see the world), money in your pocket (something more for me), and seeing what a Yankee looked like. I'd never seen or met one.

In closing, I don't think we've had a war with the total participation of the public like World War II, and it completed the unity of our U.S.A.

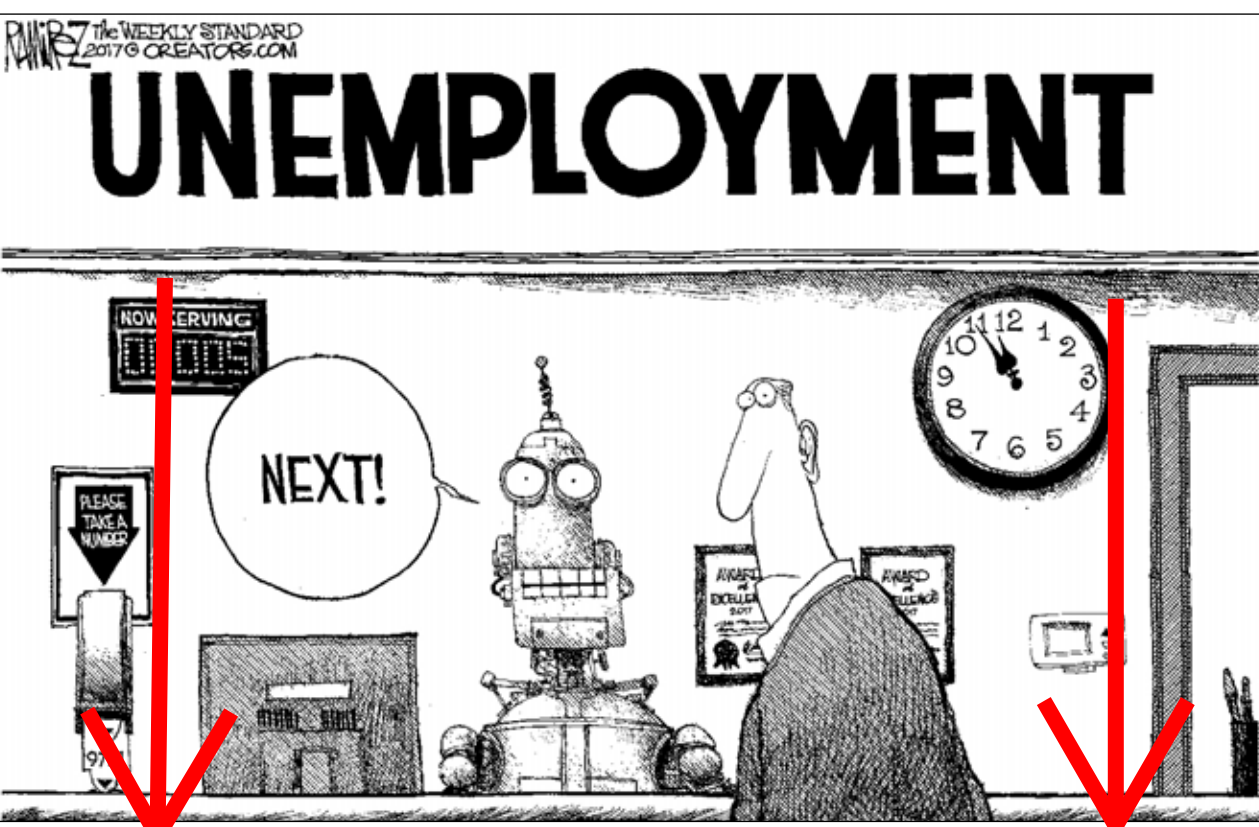
Sanford (Lou) Hunter, Angleton

Henry Marcus was hero in hijacking incident

Thanks for the retelling of the hijacked plane incident from 45 years ago.

But I was sorry to note the account omitted the name of a local hero, Henry Marcus, who was working at the airport, saw the pilot lying on the runway, and pulled him to safety.

Carol Evans, Tucson, Ariz.



Renters deserve equal protections

Before buying a house, the mortgage company mandates the prospective homeowner fork out a few hundred dollars or more to have someone go through the property to look for problems and potential problems.

In my case, the loan would not have been approved without a new roof. Some bad siding had to be replaced. A missing safety device on the water heater needed to be installed.

Most things my home inspector found were relatively minor, things a handyman could fix in pretty short order. The person selling the house happened to be a handyman, so getting the repairs done and loan pushed through didn't create much of a headache.

After the checklist had been checked off, the house still wasn't perfect, but it met expectations. I wouldn't have to worry about the roof collapsing or the wiring sparking a fire, which seemed like reasonable assurances.

Many renters, though, lack those same reasonable assurances because not all cities mandate an inspector make sure the home they will be moving into is free of dangers to property and lives.

The city of Freeport is considering whether it will pass an ordinance mandating rental properties undergo inspection before a new renter moves in. With an estimated 1,200 rental properties in the city, the initial task of ensuring they are up to a minimal standard won't be easy.

But it's something the city needs to do. Simply put, someone should



MICHAEL MORRIS
COMMENTARY

not be forced to live in substandard, potentially unsafe conditions because they lack the means to rent a nicer place or buy a home of their own.

Inevitably the concern will be on how much it will cost a landlord to pay to bring properties up to code. New water heaters and siding, house leveling and other projects do not come cheap. Equally inevitable is that the cost of those improvements will be tacked onto the monthly rent, in some cases raising the cost of living there beyond the means of the people the inspections are intended to protect.

Neither is an excuse for allowing people to live in deplorable conditions and allowing property owners to get away with it.

There are multiple rental homes within eyesight of my house, and many more within easy walking distance. Some receive sufficient upkeep, while others look like they would be reduced to a timber pile if someone leaned against them. Some of the homes that appear the worst from the outside are occupied by families with small children.

"We've got to put something in place to see that this stops," Mayor Troy Brimage said during City Council's discussion about the issue last month.

It's encouraging to see many city leaders recognizing the problem and intent on taking action. Building a community for families includes all of them, not just those who can afford quarter-million-dollar McMansions. That means protecting renters, too.

The initial proposal offered to council seems reasonable.

Code enforcement officers would inspect the interior and exterior of a rental structure each time a new tenant moves in, Interim Building Official Billywayne Shoemaker said. The international building codes adopted two years ago by City Council would serve as the guidelines for each inspection, he said.

The property owner would face a \$150 fee per unit for the first failed inspection, and \$25 per unit for each inspection after that, he said. If the unit passes inspection, the owner wouldn't be charged a dime for the permit.

Still, there are objections, one of which is that many of the properties would not meet the code. Arguing for dilapidated rental properties because they're dilapidated seems like backward logic.

Freeport has an inordinate number of rental homes. Just as it requires inspections and permits for people who purchase homes to ensure they are up to code, it should do the same for those who cannot afford to own a house or rent high-end properties.

Michael Morris is managing editor of The Facts. Contact him at 979-237-0144 or michael.morris@thefacts.com.

TODAY'S HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, July 19, the 200th day of 2017. There are 165 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history: On July 19, 1961, TWA became the first airline to begin showing in-flight movies on a regular basis as it presented "By Love Possessed" to first-class passengers on a flight from New York to Los Angeles.

On this date: In 1553, King Henry VIII's daughter Mary was proclaimed Queen of England after pretender Lady Jane Grey was deposed.

In 1848, a pioneering women's rights convention convened in Seneca Falls, New York.

In 1903, the first Tour de France was won by Maurice Garin.

In 1941, Britain launched its "V for Victory" campaign during World War II.

In 1944, the Democratic national convention convened in Chicago with the nomination of President Franklin D. Roosevelt considered a certainty.

In 1952, the Summer Olympics opened in Helsinki, Finland.

In 1967, the movie "Up the Down Staircase," a novel by Louis Kaufman starring Sandy Dennis, was an idealistic schoolteacher, opened in Los Angeles.

In 1979, the Nicaraguan capital of Managua fell to Sandinista guerrillas, two days after President Anastasio Somoza fled the country.

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ANOTHERVIEWPOINT This editorial is reprinted from the Monday edition of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Time to flush 'bathroom bill' or watch billions in state business go down drain

The "bathroom" bill is the legislation that won't die. But it should.

If passed, any of the various House and Senate versions would restrict the use of bathrooms by birth-certificate gender in certain buildings. And that could mean problems.

IBM has come out against it. So has the NFL. In multiple

cities, tourist bureaus, and business groups have made their opposition known.

So why are we still talking about it? Two words: Dan Patrick.

The lieutenant governor pushed it through the Senate, but House Speaker Joe Straus let it stall in the House.

Now, with Abbott's push, the

"bathroom" bill is back on the table. On Monday, many in the business community spoke on the steps of the Capitol to remind legislators why the bill is bad for Texas.

"(Regulating bathrooms) poses an enormous long-term economic risk for the state of Texas. It literally challenges the miracle of Texas," said Jeff

Moseley, Texas Association of Business president.

"A bathroom bill (like) this goes against long-standing Texan values, where independence and grit are the meaningful measures of any person," Phil Gilbert, IBM's Global Head of Design, said.

Opposition isn't just in Austin. The Fort Worth Chamber

of Commerce and the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau adamantly oppose the bill.

"Companies have cited our inclusive policies as one of the reasons they choose to invest in Fort Worth," said Matt Geske, the chamber's vice president.

Fort Worth and Arlington business leaders get it. Why can't our lawmakers?

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Extra pay raises to county employees broke protocol

County government leaders put a lot of time, money and effort in the recent past coming up with a formula for employee pay raises. It's a fairly complicated structure based on employees' experience, responsibilities and competitiveness with similarly sized counties.

With this in mind, we believe County Commissioner Stacy Adams made a solid point recently when he criticized extra pay raises that recently were doled out to just a handful of county employees outside of the agreed-upon process.

Here's a quick summary of what happened: Under the county's "step and grade system," every employee received a 1.77 percent cost-of-living adjustment and a 3 percent step increase after commissioners approved the 2017-18 budget, according

OURVIEWPOINT

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to County Human Resources Director Holly Fox.

But four positions are getting two additional step increases after special requests from department heads and elected officials were granted by the Commissioners Court. Those employees are the chief administrators for Precinct 2 Commissioner Ryan Cade and Precinct 4 Commissioner David Linder; the library system's assistant director of technical services; and the superintendent of the road and bridge department's central service center.

Whether they deserve the raises isn't really the point.

Breaking policy to reward a select few is a bad precedent for the county.

Adams cast the sole vote against the four increases last month, saying he supported the raises that all employees received but not those four granted outside of county policy.

"It was mainly two employees out of 1,400-plus. They were for court members and there was no basis for it," he said. "I believe court members should work within the same policy and guidelines as all the other department heads. There's a select few included in here that are getting far above what the other employees are, and it's disenfranchising 99 percent of the employees. I just can't go along with it."

Linder argued the extra step increases were necessary to bring the administrators' sala-

ries more in line with those in the same positions elsewhere. "It still doesn't get them close to what they would be making in other counties," Linder said. "Sometimes positions are not really where they should be and the policy doesn't allow for that, so you've got to go in and correct it."

We understand Linder's effort to shore up employee retention. He's right that it's disheartening to lose experienced and skilled staff lured away by fatter paychecks in greener pastures.

But those inequities should be addressed as part of the process county leaders have in place, instead of just handing out raises to a few people, creating the perception of special treatment.

The county periodically commissions a salary study to gather baseline data on which to base its salary structure. The

last time it did so, in 2014, it showed its pay scale shorted county employees and adjustments to remedy it were made.

The county plans another survey in the next two years to see how it stacks up again, ensuring a prescribed, fair measure is applied.

"Otherwise we need to follow a policy," Adams said. "That's one of the reasons we got rid of our compensation committee in 2014. We didn't need it, we just followed the policy."

Commissioners have put a formula in place to properly set salary levels for employees to remain competitive. They should maintain that structure or risk returning to the days when it was easy for employees to make charges that county leaders were playing favorites.

Today's editorial was written by Dale Dimitri, news editor for The Facts.

YOURVOICE

Letters from Facts' readers

Get rid of Prager, who lacks integrity

How can you, in good conscience, publish this biased far right-wing columnist? There are conservative journalists who publish that write with integrity and with verifiable facts.

Why can't you pay them to write? David Brooks, for example, is an excellent writer from the conservative genre.

Dennis Prager produced a list of so-called lies he thinks the left-wing citizens of this country teach. The list of "lies" he published in your newspaper have been proven by numerous statistical data, except for the last two in his list. The other "lies" on his list are factual, thus not lies.

Prager is not worth publishing, even if he costs you little.

Please drop him and find someone of integrity.

Thank you.

Donna Jablecki, Angleton

Taking a knee during anthem disrespectful

The USA is not a perfect society and never was or will be. Our history and future is a continual effort to resolve those imperfections.

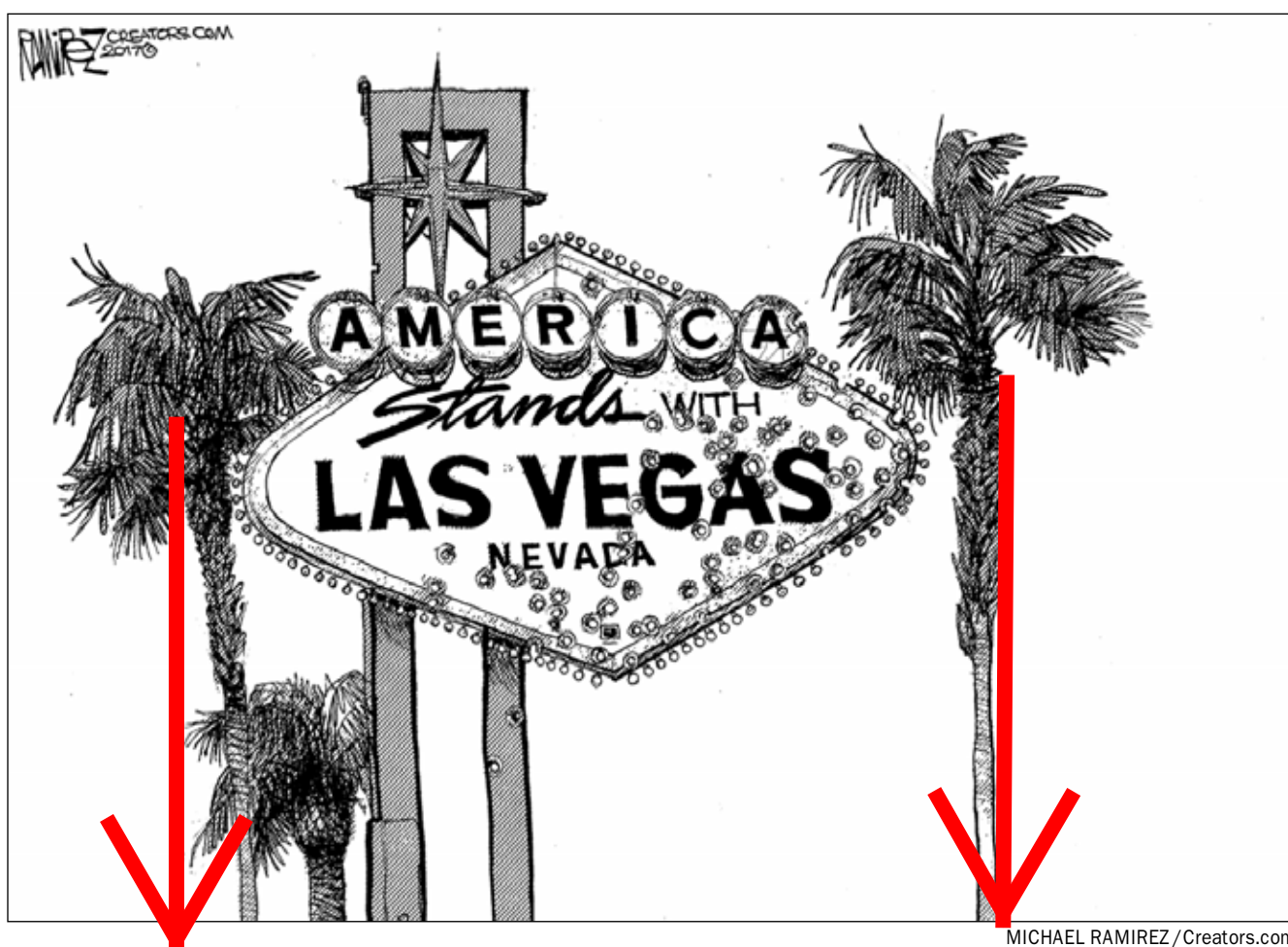
These efforts have cost many lives and much of our treasure. Consider the cost of all our wars, especially the Civil War where the country fought to stay united. In that war, thousands died of

When I hear the national anthem, I also consider all those many volunteers who respond to the many national disasters past, present and in the future, like Harvey and Irma.

There will be many more and the volunteers will respond. They are an honor to our nation.

Because of these historical efforts we have rights to protest, but the current trend of kneeling by celebrities is disrespectful to the USA and to all it stands for, and it is disrespectful to those who made great sacrifices for all our freedom, some giving their lives for our country.

Charles Bennett, West Columbia



MICHAEL RAMIREZ / Creators.com

Flood called historic for a reason



MICHAEL MORRIS
COMMENTARY

There's no telling exactly how high the San Bernard River rose near Sweeny during the flooding that followed Tropical Storm Harvey. Since it is a manual gauge and not an electronic one at that spot in the river, it requires someone to be able to see it to record the water's depth.

No one could get close enough to do that, and it likely would have been underwater if they could.

Ironically, at the time, some people in the city were criticizing officials who ordered them to evacuate and posting pictures showing dry streets. On the other hand, in the same city, people now are filing lawsuits because the flooding was the likes of which no one has ever seen, and they believe it can't be all because of Mother Nature.

Over in Richwood, people likewise are lining up lawyers like they're "The Bachelorette." One will be lucky enough to get the rose and sue everyone they can think of, though they haven't thought of which one yet — one of the prospects is "Conoco Phillips," which is 25 miles away.

People from both cities say their actions are because the flooding they experienced hasn't happened before, and



Facts file photo

Debris serves as an unofficial gauge of water level Sept. 2 at a bridge near the intersection of FM 522 and CR 842 in Wild Peach. In less than a day, the road went from bone dry to the water being as deep as the guardrail.

the actions of man are the reason why. Someone needs to be held responsible, preferably someone with deep pockets.

Except there is a reason they call the post-Harvey flooding historic, and that is because at no time in recorded history had as much rain fallen upstream in such a short amount of time — roughly 14 trillion gallons of water on Harris County is the estimate. All that water flowed down to Brazoria County when it drained, leading to a lag time of a couple days until we received our devastation.

Let's head back to the San Bernard briefly. Best estimates are the river topped 30 feet. At one point, it was estimated it would reach 37 feet. The previous record level, set in 1998, was 23 feet.

If a home near the San Bernard had never flooded before, it likely is because the river this time was at minimum 7 feet higher

than ever recorded. It also remained at that level for the better part of a week.

Similarly, over in Lake Jackson, water came pouring through neighborhoods in places that had stayed dry in the past because the floodwaters never needed to take those routes before — the volume of water being greater than anyone had seen in the past.

To most people, I'm not saying anything they don't already know, and I'm hardly qualified to litigate cases before they have a chance to get to court. I also don't want to come across as unsympathetic. People lost everything and whatever we can do to help them recover, I'm on board with.

But like a receding river, the empathy begins to ebb when lawyers get involved. Just because they're coming by boat doesn't make them any less an ambulance chaser looking to make a buck off people's

misfortune.

I don't fault the residents who are jumping on the legal riverboat, who have nothing to lose and everything to gain. It is the law firms taking the risk since they're paying for things up front in the expectation they'll get a giant slice of a settlement down the road.

It is their claims and finger-pointing that are disheartening and misguided.

Having seen the endless days city leaders, workers and volunteers put in trying to protect people's homes, they don't deserve to be tarnished by lawyers and others. To borrow the expression, when people were running from the floods, they were running toward them, some almost losing their lives in the process.

Those leaders, elected or hired, will take responsibility for the decisions they made as being in the best interest of the people they serve. They can't, and shouldn't, be held responsible for what Mother Nature wrought.

We are dealing with history both in terms of what happened and in how we choose to recover from it.

The people we're trying to blame for our losses are the ones whose wisdom and dollars we will need to prevent history from repeating itself.

Michael Morris is managing editor of The Facts. Contact him at 979-237-0144 or michael.morris@thefacts.com.

TODAY'S HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 4, the 277th day of 2017. There are 88 days left in the year.

Today's highlights in history: On Oct. 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite, into orbit. The family sitcom "Leave It to Beaver" premiered on CBS.

On this date:

In 1777, Gen. George Washington's troops launched an assault on the British at Germantown, Pennsylvania, resulting in heavy American casualties.

In 1822, the 19th president of the United States, Rutherford B. Hayes, was born in Delaware, Ohio.

In 1931, the comic strip "Dick Tracy," created by Chester Gould, made its debut.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini conferred at Brenner Pass in the Alps.

In 1959, the Soviet Union launched Luna 3, a space probe which transmitted images of the far side of the moon.

In 1960, an Eastern Air Lines Lockheed L-188A Electra crashed on take-off from Boston's Logan International Airport, killing all but 10 of the 72 people on board.

In 1970, rock singer Janis Joplin, 27, was found dead in her Hollywood hotel room.

In 1976, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz resigned in the wake of a controversy over an obscene joke he'd made that was derogatory to blacks.

In 1982, casino executive Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal survived the bombing of the Cadillac outside Las Vegas. The case was never solved.

In 1990, for the first time in six decades, German lawmakers met in the Reichstag for the first meeting of reunified Germany's parliament.

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Freeport house size mandate handcuffs developers

City leaders who favor mandating a minimum square footage for new homes built in Freeport have the right idea, as larger homes are necessary to attract families with children who can help the city grow. Where they err is in dictating to developers what they think is the best course.

The thinking is if the city sets a 1,000-square-foot minimum for new homes, a developer would be unable to come in and slap up a bunch of tiny shacks that might appeal to couples seeking a starter

OURVIEWPOINT

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home or contractors who don't need a lot of space. Several members of the audience during a recent council meeting where members discussed the proposal agreed with that approach.

"I don't think you're going to get any developer to come

in here and build 1,000 square-foot houses," said resident Ed Garcia, a member of Concerned Citizens of Freeport. "If you allow this and then you get all these contract companies to come in and build these very small houses, we're going to be left with empty 1,000 square-foot houses on these lots."

The flaw in that argument is if the mandate is larger — say, 1,500 or 2,000 square feet — the home will be just as empty when a contractor moves out of it or it's too much house for a young family to afford.

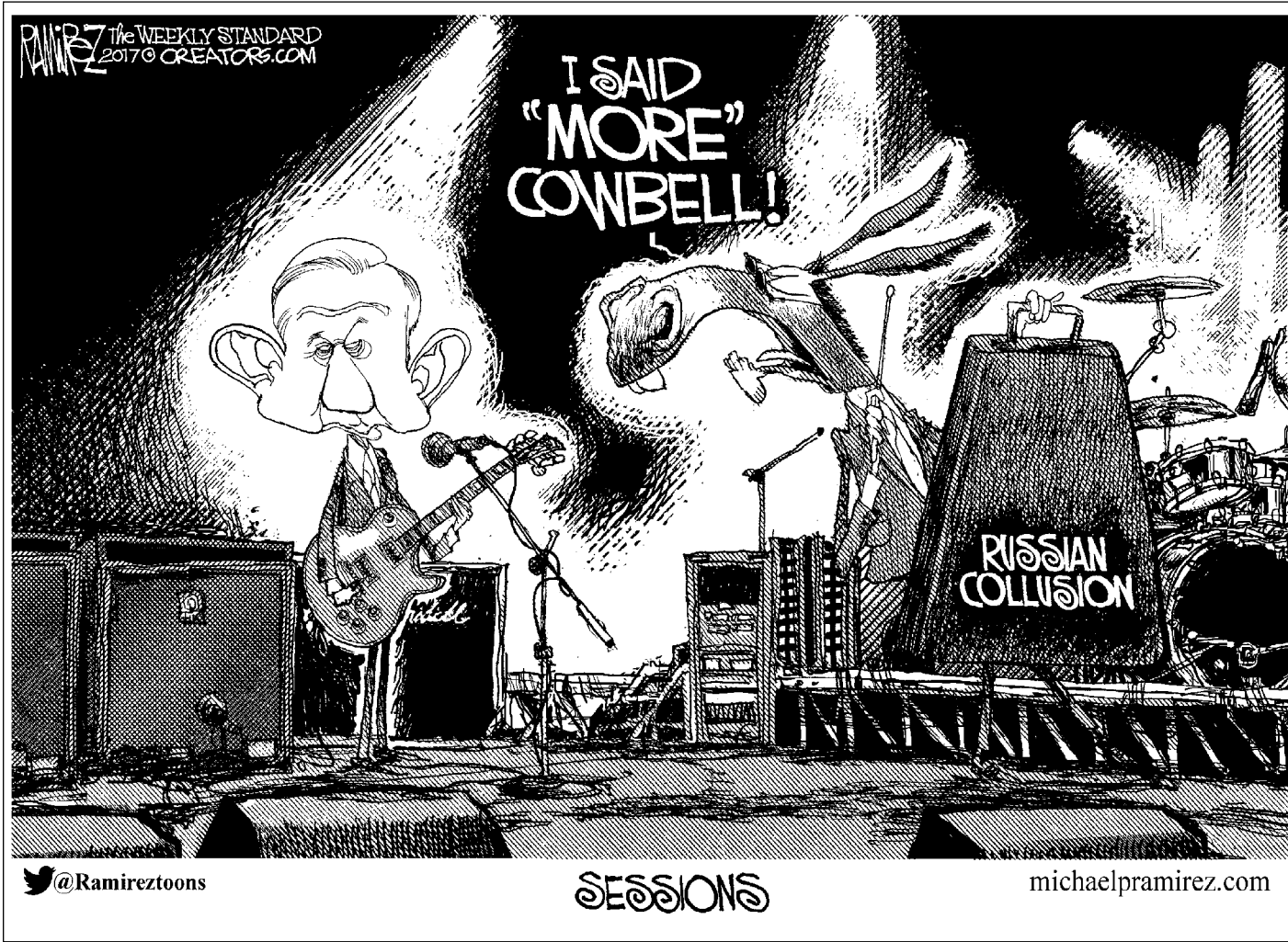
Consider the community members who were hit hard by the housing crisis less than a decade ago. Hundreds of beautiful McMansions were abandoned and unsellable because builders had overbuilt and families had overbought. Freeport is no better off in that position than it is with a bunch of "tiny houses."

Developers' job is to study a market and find what will sell. If they see potential profit in some 900-foot homes in vogue with millennials — and a size of home already common in Freeport — that is what they

will want to build. Handcuff them by mandating they build something bigger, and more than likely they will choose not to build at all.

Freeport's smartest move would be to create the best possible environment to attract developers who can provide much-needed new housing. City leaders should focus on how well those new homes are built instead of creating barriers to whether homes are built at all.

This editorial was written by Michael Morris, managing editor of The Facts.



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SESSIONS

michaelpramirez.com

MICHAEL RAMIREZ / Creators.com

ANOTHERVIEWPOINT

This editorial is reprinted from the Monday edition of the Dallas Morning News.

Supreme Court has a chance to restore democracy

We are pleased that the U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a partisan gerrymandering with the potential to reshape American politics.

Courts have rejected district election maps on grounds they were drawn outlandishly to disadvantage minority voters. However, the court has never turned down a map drawn to give an advantage to a political party. That's what makes this case so consequential. Political parties routinely draw maps that either concentrate or dilute the other party's voters to create safe districts for their own incumbents.

The case before the court is Gill v. Whitford, which grew out of election results in 2010 that gave Republicans control of Wisconsin's government. GOP lawmakers immediately drew a map for the state assembly that helped Republicans turn razor-close statewide vote totals into lopsided legislative majorities.

Since then, a three-judge federal district court panel ruled that Republicans overstepped, concluding that the map "was designed to make it more difficult for Democrats, compared to Republicans, to translate their votes into seats." The district court agreed with the challengers that the map was drawn for partisan reasons and resulted in "wasted votes."

After every U.S. census, district lines are redrawn to reflect changes in population. As districts gain or lose residents, new boundaries are supposed to make sure each district has about the same number of people, is compact, includes people with common interests and gives voters an equal say.

Partisan-inspired redistricting violates most of these standards. Boundaries are overtly manipulated to maximize the number of districts favorable to one party while spreading as many of the voters that might back the other party into remaining districts where votes have minimal impact.

The case before the Supreme Court has the potential for serious repercussions in Texas. We have long decried gerrymandering shenanigans here. Few state legislative and congressional races are considered competitive, which is why many incumbents run unopposed election after election and challengers face a steep climb. As a result, voters often don't have meaningful choices.

In addition, a trial is scheduled next month over accusations of racial gerrymandering in Texas House and congressional political maps. A federal court has already ruled that GOP lawmakers drew boundaries in 2011 to intentionally discriminate against minority voters.

We'd like to see Texas lawmakers establish an independent commission to reduce redistricting self-dealing on both racial and partisan grounds. They haven't.

Racial gerrymandering has long been seen as unconstitutional. We welcome the Supreme Court's scrutiny on political gerrymandering, too. No one should be happy with a process that effectively allows elected representatives to pick their constituents and to be less responsive to the concerns of political minorities in their districts.

Democracy fails when politicians rig the system before the first vote is cast. Democracy works when people have choices.

Lone Star land commissioner dry as dirt

At a campaign stop in New Hampshire during his ill-fated 2016 presidential campaign, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush delivered one of his signature lines to the audience. Those in the crowd sat silent until Jeb said sheepishly, "Please clap."

The sad moment pretty much summed up a sad effort to win the Republican nomination. Never a compelling speaker, the former governor had reached a new milestone in unenthusiasm.

Listening last week to Jeb Bush's offspring speak at the Brazosport Area Chamber of Commerce Membership Luncheon, Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush's impassiveness made dear old dad's delivery look like Stone Cold Steve Austin.

George P.'s local appearance had been on my calendar for a while, making sure the space remained clear so nothing interfered with my attendance. The chamber snaring such a high-ranking state official was a real coup, and with the number of local power brokers in the crowd, there was some



MICHAEL MORRIS
COMMENTARY

genuine excitement about his appearance.

That shouldn't be a surprise. With so many crucial projects in Brazosport connected to the work of the General Land Office, what the agency's leader had to say would be important.

Only it wasn't. The land commissioner, who announced Monday he would be seeking re-election to the office next year, provided an uninspired, cookie-cutter presentation to our group. Everything the former school teacher touched on that might matter to southern Brazoria County got passing mentions at best, delivered like he still was standing in front of a roomful of sixth-grade science students.

The Ike Dike, a massive project aimed at protecting the Texas Gulf Coast from another hurricane

catastrophe, earned a couple of sentences in the presentation. Proposed local RESTORE grant projects on the short list for funding include reopening the mouth of the San Bernard River, Village of Surfside Groin and Quintana Beach Public Fishing Pier project.

It would be a surprise if Bush knew that. If he did, he didn't mention them specifically.

He also brought up beach renourishment, touting the largest project ever undertaken in Texas that had just been completed in Galveston. Surfside Beach, which has one of the biggest erosion problems in the state, was noticeably absent.

Bush opened his speech with an interesting observation.

"I liken the General Land Office to perhaps the most important state agency that you probably don't know a thing about," he told the audience of mayors, commissioners, business leaders and other prominent officials at Dow Academic Center in Lake Jackson. "I think more Texans are recognizing what

we do."

After more than two years leading that agency, that statement very well could apply to the land office's leader. His knowledge of its functions and some of its projects seems to be a mile wide and a foot deep, which would explain why he did nothing more than wade into the major issues in Brazoria County in which the GLO will be expected to have a hand.

As the next generation of the Bush political dynasty that includes two presidents, George P. Bush will need to polish up his presentation if he intends to move any higher than land commissioner. He has the lineage and right political party affiliation in Texas to keep moving up, but he might want to hit the books before his reputation takes on the same label once applied to his uncle George W. Bush — all hat and no cattle.

Michael Morris is managing editor of The Facts. Contact him at 979-237-0144 or michael.morris@thefacts.com.

TODAY'S HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, June 21, the 172nd day of 2017. There are 193 days left in the year.

Today's highlights in history: On June 21, 1942, German forces led by Generaloberst (Colonel General) Erwin Rommel captured the Libyan city of Tobruk during World War II. Following his victory, Rommel was promoted by Adolf Hitler to the rank of Field Marshal; Tobruk was retaken by

the Allies in Nov. 1942. An Imperial Japanese submarine fired shells at Fort Stevens on the Oregon coast, causing little damage.

On this date: In 1377, King Edward III died after ruling England for 50 years; he was succeeded by his grandson, Richard II.

In 1788, the United States Constitution went into effect as New Hampshire became the

ninth state to ratify it. In 1834, Cyrus Hall McCormick received a patent for his reaping machine.

In 1932, heavyweight Max Schmeling lost a title fight rematch in New York by decision to Jack Sharkey, prompting Schmeling's manager, Joe Jacobs, to exclaim: "We was robbed!"

In 1954, the American Cancer Society presented a study to

the American Medical Association meeting in San Francisco which found that men who regularly smoked cigarettes died at a considerably higher rate than non-smokers.

In 1963, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini was chosen during a conclave of his fellow cardinals to succeed the late Pope John XXIII; the new pope took the name Paul VI.

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Brazoria confronts a failure of leadership

There are a few core principles of leadership that are required for someone to convert their vision into reality.

Leaders accept more blame than they deserve when something goes wrong, and accept too little credit when they succeed.

Leaders do not make accusations without evidence to back them up.

Most of all, however, leaders do not walk away when things get rough.

Brazoria, in less than a month, has seen two people step down from positions of leadership to which residents elected them because, quite frankly, they didn't have the stomach and thick skin necessary for the job. They might be good people who had good intentions, but they were not the leaders

OURVIEWPOINT

Our Viewpoint reflects the majority opinion of The Facts editorial board, which includes Yvonne Mintz, Michael Morris and Dale Dimitri.

the city needed to change how it operates.

Mayor BobbyJo Newell surrendered her position last week after 18 months — and surrender is the appropriate word — because she lacked the tools to garner enough backing from residents and others in the city to carry out what she promised to achieve. On her way out the door, she blamed backstabbing by council members, claimed wrongdoing by other city officials based on assumptions and not facts, and said the problems with the city government are the fault of residents who fail to get involved. That's not leadership. That's

finger-pointing.

Councilwoman Stephanie Cribbs, who lasted just a third of the time in her position as Newell, turned in her resignation Oct. 26. Likewise, she blamed cattiness by her council colleagues and made allegations of malfeasance. She also has repeatedly claimed to have taken legal steps against city leaders but has yet to produce any proof of wrongdoing or any action to bring it to light besides vague statements in her letter and on social media.

Cribbs, in fact, has said only that she has evidence of illegality and she went outside the county to have it investigated. Why she would go elsewhere is curious considering Brazoria County District Attorney Jeri Yenne has a strong record of taking public officials to task for skirting transparency laws. She also has prosecuted more than

one elected official accused of wrongdoing and is currently prosecuting a city secretary accused of stealing.

It also happens to be Yenne's job to investigate wrongdoing in local government and ask for outside help if she thinks there is a possible conflict.

As of late last week, Cribbs admits, she had not filed any claims of wrongdoing with our DA, and won't say what she has done. That's not leadership, either. That's juvenile.

We repeatedly have seen where elected officials in other cities have been subjected to ridicule, disrespect and outright vile behavior from the people they were elected to represent. We have seen their ideas rejected, their push for change laughed at and their calls for cooperation ignored.

This is the first time, however, we have seen two elected

officials quit before completing a single term in office because they didn't get their way and got their feelings hurt.

Brazoria has been governed by the same handful of people for a long time, and the motivation for Newell and Cribbs to upset the apple cart is laudable. They stepped forward while many others who called for change stayed on the sidelines — and, sadly, stayed quiet when critics slung arrows at two well-meaning people.

But facilitating change, especially among people who think things are just fine as they are, requires a level of leadership neither Newell or Cribbs managed to carry off. Good ideas and good intentions are not enough if people will not follow.

This editorial was written by Michael Morris, managing editor of The Facts.

YOURVOICE

Letters from Facts' readers

Trump tax cut plan will address double taxation

There has been much contention over President Donald Trump's proposed tax cuts, and much of the focus has been over the reduction of the corporate tax rate cut. Other than the obvious benefits of this reduction, a huge boost for the economy, less incentive for businesses to relocate to other countries, and the creation of many more jobs, there is another compelling reason to enact this tax cut. Double taxation.

The owners of a corporation are the shareholders who share in its profits. First, those profits are reduced considerably (35 percent) by the corporate tax, the highest of any developed nation. Then the shareholder's portion of the profits is again reduced by the individual's income tax rate. Classic double taxation.

Yet, there has been no mention of this insidious practice by either side of the debate, or am I, again, missing something?

Roy Mullins, Sweeny



MICHAEL RAMIREZ / Creators.com

Biggest threat to Republicans often Republicans

The Republican big tent shares a risk with big family reunions; everybody shows up, and the name is sometimes the only thing they have in common.

In the latest installment of the GOP's family feud, Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican whose own state representative is a Democrat, came out against a Republican Houston incumbent this week by backing the GOP challenger to state Rep. Sarah Davis in the lead-up to next year's March 6 primary.

This is a big deal. Texas governors generally don't endorse against incumbents, never mind endorsing against incumbents in their own party. Sure, this is politics and politics ain't beanbag and all that. But this puts a sort of official stamp on a split in the GOP that so many Republicans won't even acknowledge.

In a recent email to supporters, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz nodded to that, saying, "The media continues to pit Republicans against each other in squabble after squabble..." But here's Abbott putting a squabble on his list of things to do in the next four months. He's not done, either: Aides told The Texas Tribune's Patrick Svitek that he's likely to add more Republican incumbents to the list.

It might not work in mailers from Republican senators like Cruz, but Abbott's works — and those of the state's lieutenant governor — are pretty good evidence that some of the folks at the Texas GOP's family reunion



ROSS RAMSEY
COMMENTARY

would like to throw out some of their political kin.

Susanna Dokupil, an assistant solicitor general when Abbott was the state's attorney general, will have the governor's support — for what that's worth — against Davis in the Republican primaries. What that is worth depends on the governor himself. Two Republican incumbents — Doug Miller of New Braunfels and Wayne Smith of Bay City — lost their runoffs in 2016 in spite of Abbott's endorsements. His name alone was not enough to save them. But the governor, who has a huge campaign account and no formidable opposition in his own bid for re-election, could bring heavy artillery to back up his choices in legislative races.

There's a tie here to one of Abbott's perennial "emergency issues" for the Legislature: His call for ethics reform. He seems more interested in it for other officeholders than himself. The governor's office bristled — governors have minions to do that for them — earlier this year when the House overwhelmingly supported a bill that would have barred big donors to governors from gubernatorial appointments to state boards and commissions. Some lawmakers believe that's a little too

blatant a case of quid pro quo. For this governor and his predecessors, fancy seats for big givers is simply the way things are done.

Davis wasn't the author of that gem — state Rep. Lyle Larson was. He might be on Abbott's hit list before this is over. But Davis was part of the club, and one of the noisiest critics when Abbott didn't put ethics reform, an issue he declared an "emergency" earlier this year and two years ago in his first session as governor, on the list of 20 things he wanted done during the summer's special session.

If the governor is successful, Davis won't be one of the thorns in his paw for much longer. It would tell the surviving members of the Legislature that crossing the governor has real costs. It would tell members of the more conservative Senate that the governor is on their side of the bubbling Senate v. House turbulence that colored this year's legislative debates.

It also puts the governor's thumb into the race for speaker of the House. Joe Straus, the current speaker, is leaving. The people elected to the House in 2018 — a group that will include Davis or Dokupil or a Democrat who beats the Republican nominee — will select the next speaker. Abbott evidently wants more people in that chamber that vote like the state's conservative senators, and picking off the least-conservative members of the House is a way to move things in that

direction.

Abbott isn't the Texas GOP's only cannibal. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick's campaign consigliere, Allan Blakemore, has signed on to run a challenge to state Sen. Kel Seliger, an Amarillo Republican who doesn't always toe the movement conservative line favored by Patrick.

The two leaders are trying some political behavior modification on their own party. They can't kill many more Democrats, but the Republican-drawn House and Senate political maps have minimized the danger from the minority party. They're trying to straighten their own ranks, to remove obstacles within their own party that have successfully blocked or slowed their agendas.

And they're betting Republican primary voters are with them. Davis answered Abbott's endorsement of her challenger with a cautionary note, noting Hillary Clinton's 15-point advantage over Donald Trump in her district and pointing to that as evidence that a moderate Republican is what her voters want. Electing a more conservative Republican in the March primary, she said, risks a Democrat winning the seat in November.

They can't all be right.

Ross Ramsey is executive editor and co-founder of The Texas Tribune, a nonpartisan, nonprofit media organization that informs Texans about public policy, politics and government.

TODAY'S HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Sunday, Nov. 19, the 323rd day of 2017. There are 42 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history: On Nov. 19, 1997, Iowa seamstress Bobbi McCaughey gave birth to the world's first set of surviving septuplets, four boys and three girls.

On this date:
In 1794, the United States and Britain signed Jay's Treaty, which resolved some issues left over from the Revolutionary War.

In 1831, the 20th president of the United States, James Garfield, was born in Orange Township, Ohio.

In 1850, Alfred Tennyson was invested as Britain's poet laureate.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln dedicated a national cemetery at the site of the Civil War battlefield of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania.

In 1917, Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru and, like her father, a future prime minister of India, was born in Allahabad.

In 1924, movie producer Thomas H. Ince

died after celebrating his 42nd birthday aboard the yacht of newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst. The exact circumstances of Ince's death remain a mystery.

In 1942, during World War II, Russian forces launched their winter offensive against the Germans along the Don front.

In 1959, Ford Motor Co. announced it was halting production of the unpopular Edsel.

In 1969, Apollo 12 astronauts Charles Conrad and Alan Bean made the second manned landing on the moon.

In 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev met for the first time as they began their summit in Geneva.

In 2002, in a moment that drew criticism, singer Michael Jackson briefly held his youngest child, Prince Michael II, over a fourth-floor balcony rail at a Berlin hotel in front of dozens of fans waiting below.

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