

# Carmage Walls Commentary Prize

#### 2019 Entry Form

Name of Author(s): Howard Goodman

Author's Title (editor, columnist, etc.): Editorial Writer

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What is the subject/title of the entry? Invading Sea Editorials

Date(s) of publication? Jan 13, March 20, May 4, May 11, July 1, August 19

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

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

These opinion pieces, by Howard Goodman, were written for a major project undertaken by the editorial boards of The Palm Beach Post, Miami Herald, and South Florida Sun-Sentinel. The three rival newspapers decided that the growing reality of sea-level rise was so important to the three-county South Florida area -- and so little talked about -- that we needed to find a strategy that would bring as much attention to the issues as possible. Thus we collaborated, and enlisted WLRN Public Radio, to make as great a noise as we could.

These five editorials and one column were published in all three newspapers. The aim was to show the inadequacies of our region's 70-year-old flood-control system; the potential for spiking insurance rates that may make many coastal properties unaffordable, without reforms; the importance of Florida's response to the national politics of climate change -- and more.

Our editorial campaign has played a significant role in hurtling sea-level rise and climate-change issues into Florida's public consciousness. When we started, there was a code of silence in state government on these issues. But last year, for the first time, every statewide Democratic candidate placed climate change high on his or her campaign agenda. The new

governor, Ron DeSantis, appointed a science officer and established an Office of Resilience. We feel strongly that without our sustained campaign, the silence on sea-level rise would be continuing, and our communities would be losing time to prepare for a certain, existential threat.

One sign of the success of the project, called The Invading Sea, is that other newspapers, including The Tampa Bay Times, want to join the collaboration in 2019 and to commission news stories, analyses, and investigations as well as editorials. In other words, our editorial campaign has changed not only public discussion about Florida's readiness (or unreadiness) for rising waters but is raising the story's profile in the state's major newsrooms.

 $\frac{https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20180504/editorial-aging-flood-control-systems-cant-protect-south-florida}{}$ 

https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20180511/editorial-missing-threat-on-govs-hurricane-conference-agenda

 $\underline{https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20180701/editorial-region-must-prepare-now-for-higher-flood-insurance-rates}$ 

 $\underline{https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20180819/goodman-commentary-as-florida-goes-on-climate-change-so-goes-nation}$ 

 $\frac{https://www.palmbeachpost.com/opinion/20190113/editorial--encouraging-moves-from-gov-desantis-on-clean-water-everglades-and-sea-level-rise}{}$ 

 $\underline{https://www.palmbeachpost.com/opinion/20190320/editorial-vote-in-florida-senate-kindles-hope-for-state-leadership-on-sea-level-rise}$ 

PDFS will also be included in submitted email as attachments.

# **OPINION**

# The Palm Beach Post

**Timothy D. Burke**.....Publisher **Rick Christie**......Editor of the Editorial Page

**THE PALM BEACH POST EDITORIAL BOARD'S MISSION:** The news you need, the analysis you appreciate, the viewpoints you

news you need, the analysis you appreciate, the viewpoints you value.

# THE INVADING SEA CAN SOUTH FLORIDA BE SAVED?

**OUR VIEW: CLIMATE CHANGE** 

# Follow through on bold moves on sea-level rise

fter eight years of Gov. Rick Scott degrading science and dismissing climate change, Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Thursday he will appoint a chief science officer to deal with "current and emerging environmental concerns most pressing to Floridians."

This welcome turnaround came just two days after DeSantis' swearing-in, in an executive order that also calls for a record \$2.5 billion in Everglades restoration, creates a task force on blue-green toxic algae and instructs the South Florida Water Management District to immediately start the next phase of the reservoir project south of Lake Okeechobee.

In addition to the chief science officer's remit to "coordinate and prioritize scientific data, research, monitoring and analysis" on Florida's environment, the order also creates an Office of Environmental Accountability and Transparency "charged with corralling scientific research and data "to ensure that all agency actions are aligned with key environmental priorities."

This is whole new tone for a governor's office that told Floridians, basically, that we couldn't afford to both create jobs and protect the environment. Scott, for example, cut millions of dollars from water management district budgets, which meant shedding scientists, engineers and other experts.

We hope that Thursday's executive order is a step toward reversing that trend — and more.

Indeed, the order also created something else that Thursday's news release does not mention. Far down the list of Executive Order 19-12 — in the 26th of 27 paragraphs — the governor directs the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to:

"Create the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection to help prepare Florida's coastal communities and habitats for impacts from sea-level rise by providing funding, technical assistance and coordination among state, regional and local entities."

That's right. "Climate change," that taboo phrase in the Scott administration, gets its own office in the DeSantis administration.

Make no mistake: this could be a huge advance for the state of Florida as the existential threat of sea-level rise becomes more and more apparent, no matter your views on the underlying cause. Our collaborative editorial-page project, The Invading Sea, has been arguing for months for action at the state level to bolster localities that are organizing to make their regions prepared and resilient for the higher waters.

DeSantis did not talk about sea-level rise on the campaign trail, unlike his Democratic opponent Andrew Gillum. And when asked about climate change, he questioned whether it's man-made, adding that, in any case, it's a problem beyond the capacity of state government to tackle.

But the former congressman from northeast Florida has surely noticed the more serious flooding that's been occurring in Jacksonville, just as we in South Florida now see floods even on sunny days during king tides.

By appointing a science officer and setting up an office to ensure that all agencies are on the same page on environmental matters, DeSantis has now set the expectation that he will heed what science has to say – and not parrot the dodge used by Scott and other climate deniers, "Don't ask me, I'm not a scientist."

What scientists are predicting is that the sea will rise 2 feet, and maybe more, in the next 40 years. At 3 feet, barrier islands and low-lying communities will be largely uninhabitable. DeSantis is 40, the youngest Florida governor in a century. We are talking about enormous change — traumatic change — occurring within his lifetime, and certainly in the lifetime of his two young children.

DeSantis spoke at his inaugural in the heroic wartime cadence of Winston Churchill as he pledged to protect the environment ("We will fight toxic blue-green algae, we will fight discharges from Lake Okeechobee, we will fight red tide, we will fight for our fishermen, we will fight for our beaches..."). After years of an administration embracing climate deniers, our state desperately needs that same courage when it comes to preparing for the inevitability of rising seas and the threat it poses.

As DeSantis said in his speech, "Our economic potential will be jeopardized if we do not solve the problems afflicting our environment and water resources." Very true. But you can't ask for more jeopardy than our low-lying peninsula going underwater.

Because, contrary to what DeSantis said on the campaign trail, state government can do quite a bit to diminish climate change and a looming future of ever-more intense hurricanes, flooding and coastal erosion.

In just his first few days, DeSantis looks to be off to a bold, strong start on the environment. But on the topic of sea-level rise, the proof will be in the follow-through.

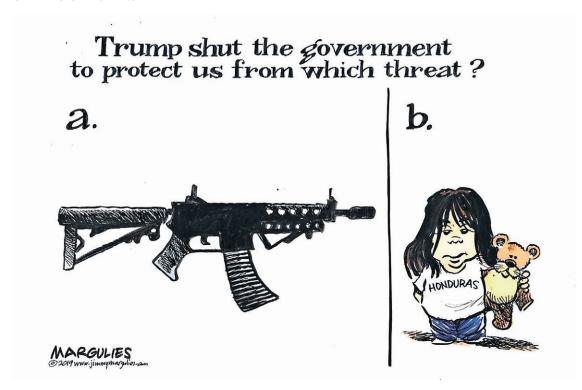
### JOIN THE DEBATE

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Highway, West Palm Beach, FL 33405 **Fax:** 561-820-4728

#### **CARTOON VIEW**



#### **YOUR VIEWS**

# Frankel should focus on home; let president handle border

I noted that U.S. Rep. Lois Frankel, D-West Palm Beach, paid a visit to the U.S. southern border, after which she returned to cavil the president for his insistence on a wall to secure that border from intrusion by illegal immigrants.

I don't know what Frankel hoped to accomplish by her presence other than picture opportunities for dazzling her constituents. But I suggest that she would have been better advised to focus her attention in her own backyard to ensure the moral and political legitimacy of future elections in Broward and Palm Beach counties in view of the conduct of the supervisors of elections in those counties.

David G. Kamm, Palm Beach

## Mexican government, not U.S., should be closed

It strikes me as being ironic that President Donald Trump is engaged in a Mexican stand-off over the southern border wall. Since Mexico won't pay for the wall, shouldn't their government be the one that's closed?

William Damato, Boynton Beach

#### Politicians, learn difference between loyalty, patriotism

Loyalty is defined as being true and faithful to a person, government or country. Patriotism is defined as loyalty to one's country. We now need another definition to characterize a politician.

Can a politician be both loyal and patriotic? I say, yes. Our politicians should be able to function with loyalty and with patriotism. But in truth, this is not the reality. We are presently living in a country where loyalty and patriotism are conflicting concepts. Does political loyalty to a party take precedence over patriotism to a country? I say, no. Is party more important than country? I say, no.

Blind obedience to a president is similar to looking at a piece of art wearing blinders. Politicians, open your eyes, develop a spine, and see the divisiveness created by your conflict with loyalty and patriotism.

Barry Pearlstein, Palm Beach Gardens

# Don't forget FDR effort to pack U.S. Supreme Court

Too bad Frank Askin's Point of View op-ed, "Supreme Court power grab," (Thursday) left out the most current effort in history to pack the U.S. Supreme Court by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. But then again, he was a Democrat and why disclose that?

Too bad it is such a challenge to some today to fully disclose pertinent facts whether in news reports or even "op-ed" articles.

Ken Berkowitz, Boynton Beach Editor's note: In the online version, Askin's op-ed did indeed refer to Roosevelt's efforts to pack the high court in 1937 over his proposed New Deal legislation. It was trimmed from the print version for space.

# Trump's latest achievement not lost on all supporters

I've heard a lot of people suggest that President Trump is ignorant, amoral, lies a lot and likes to take credit for other people's achievements while taking none of the blame for his own disastrous mistakes. But I absolutely disagree. After all, because of Trump it is now 2019, the highest number year ever. A much higher number than President Obama's.

Thanks, President Trump, from all your not-at-all gullible supporters — bigly.

Matthew Paul, Delray Beach

### ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

### Steyer's impeachment ads are a waste of money

he more the merrier in the presidential race should be the general rule for a party not in power and eager to reclaim the White House after multiple years in the wilderness. However, I draw the line at self-absorbed billionaires with no governing experience who throw their money around on vanity projects.

I'm not talking about President Donald Trump, for now, but progressive moneyman Tom Steyer.

The New York Times reports: "Tom Steyer, the California billionaire who has crusaded for President Trump's impeachment, said on Wednesday that he would not join the pack of Democrats running for president in 2020." Instead, he will continue running those impeachment ads. "Underwritten by Mr. Steyer's personal wealth," the Times report continued, "the impeachment campaign has bombarded television and computer screens around the country with ads demanding Mr. Trump's ouster, and staged pro-impeachment events around the country." He's spent tens of millions of dollars already and plans to spend \$40 million more.

I don't share Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren's aversion to self-funded candidates. A candidate such as former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg would add a lot to the 2020 race, has well-thought out positions on important issues and would be qualified to serve as president.

However, I certainly do object to unqualified dilettantes taking up space and political oxygen. (In fact, put me down as against any presidential candidate who has zero military or civilian service.) Steyer's decision not to run therefore is good for the country and the Democratic Party. It is also far from certain that he would have won many votes.

"Steyer made his vast fortune as the founder of a hedge fund, and his portfolio of investments included considerable stakes in fossil fuel companies," The New York Times' report noted. "As a wealthy white man, he could have been an awkward cultural match for a party increasingly defined by demands for racial and gender equality, and economic populism."

However, it is ridiculous, deplorable even, for him to spend tens of millions of dollars on an utterly useless campaign to impeach Trump, regardless of whether you favor impeachment. Trump either will or won't be impeached after the report from special counsel Robert Mueller is completed;

lawmakers and the public won't be influenced by Steyer's annoying, ubiquitous ads — featuring himself! — but by what's in the report, Trump's political standing and the reaction of voters.

Steyer's financial wastefulness is his own concern, I guess, but the moral vacuity of spending money on such an ostentatious activity is matched only by Arab sheikhs eating gold. (Really, that's a thing now.)

Even if you wanted to spend your money on politics, why not do something halfway productive? Register new voters, promote civics education, run a campaign to end gerrymandering or finance media literacy. The possibilities are endless. (It should be noted that Steyer did spend on activities such as voter turnout, but he chooses to blow tens of millions more on his vanity project.)

Oh, and I have one question for the environmentalist mogul: Why did he add to his carbon footprint by flying to Iowa to announce he wasn't running for president?

Jennifer Rubin, Washington

Editor's note: Rubin is an opinion columnist and blogger for The Washington Post.

# OPINION

# The Palm Beach Post

Rick Christie.....Editor of the Editorial Page

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**OUR VIEW: SEA-LEVEL RISE** 

# A hopeful vote in state Senate

very journey of a thousand miles, the adage goes, begins with a single step. Last week, a state Senate committee took a small step toward protecting our region against the devastation that can be foreseen as the sea keeps rising.

Voting 5-0, Republicans and Democrats on the **Environment and Natural Resources Committee** together passed Senate Bill 78, which would require that state-funded infrastructure projects near the coast be preceded by sea-level impact studies.

Coming the same week that thousands of young people across the state, nation and globe skipped school to demand action to combat the projected changes in climate that threaten their generation's future, the unanimous vote by the panel in Tallahassee was a breakthrough.

After years of turning a blind eye to the growing prospect of devastating losses, the Legislature is beginning to concede to reality: Sea-level rise is happening; it will worsen; and Florida must adjust.

SB 78 addresses one obvious adjustment: From now on, whenever we construct public buildings, roads or bridges, we should be factoring in the structures' ability to withstand the heavier flooding that we know to expect. Doing this will help keep repair, replacement and insurance costs to a minimum. And by setting statewide standards for making structures resilient, we'll give the insurance industry and Wall Street more confidence that coastal buildings are worth investing in more than 20 or 30 years.

The bill is sponsored by state Sen. José Javier Rodríguez, a Democrat from a king tide-prone section of Miami, who thinks this issue is so urgent that every day during session he wears black rain boots with white letters reading: #ActOnClimate.

Rodriguez said he is gaining support from reluctant Republican lawmakers by emphasizing climate change as an economic issue. Before last week's vote, builders, architects and local governments joined environmental groups in praising the measure.

In an interview, Rodriguez said the debate on climate change has significantly shifted among his Senate colleagues. They're no longer arguing about the science. "We're now talking about how much of a priority are we going to make it," he said.

My message is, we are in urgent times - and that, when you plan, you save money in the long term and the short term," he added.

This is change for the better – the sort of change The Post Editorial Board has been advocating in our collaborative series "The Invading Sea," in conjunction with the Miami Herald, South Florida Sun Sentinel and WLRN.

Rodriguez has high hopes that the bill will do well in the Senate. But even if it hits rougher waters in the more conservative House of Representatives, this movement is an important sign that state government is rousing itself from its years of denial on climate issues under the Rick Scott administration.

Gov. Ron DeSantis, who calls himself an environmentalist in the Theodore Roosevelt mold, has named a Department of Environmental Protection secretary, Noah Valenstein, who is respected by environmental groups. Without fanfare, he formed an Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection within the DEP to "help prepare Florida's coastal communities and habitats for impacts from sea-level rise." And he created the DEP position of chief science officer to prioritize "scientific data, research, monitoring and analysis needs to ensure alignment with current and emerging environmental concerns most pressing to Floridians.'

But next should come proper funding in the state budget.

Local governments have needed this kind of support. The four counties from Jupiter to Key West have been doing trailblazing work for 10 years on resiliency issues as the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.

And just last month, 10 south-county communities and the county government – under the name Palm Beach County Coastal Resilience Partnership - began meeting to craft a cohesive strategy for climate-change adaptation.

They were no doubt sobered - if not staggered – by the news from Delray Beach, which learned from a consultant that alleviating present and future flooding in some 14 neighborhoods will require raising roads and seawalls and improving pipes to the tune of \$378 million.

Such enormous projects can't be shouldered by the towns alone. "We can't keep leaving this to localities, with no leadership from the state," Rodriguez said. "That's not what we ought to be doing."

### **JOIN THE DEBATE**

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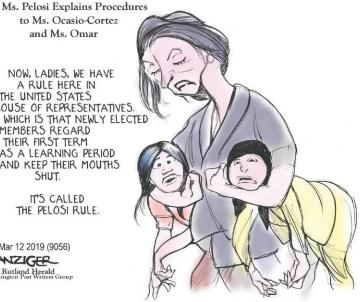
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#### **CARTOON VIEW**

to Ms. Ocasio-Cortez and Ms. Omar NOW, LADIES, WE HAVE A RULE HERE IN THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.
WHICH IS THAT NEWLY ELECTED
MEMBERS REGARD THEIR FIRST TERM AS A LEARNING PERIOD AND KEEP THEIR MOUTHS IT'S CALLED THE PELOSI RULE.

Mar 12 2019 (9056) DANZIGER



#### **YOUR VIEWS**

#### Special '911' could help curb police shootings

I am very glad that the Jones family feels that they received justice for the death of Corey Jones. I believe the only reason former Officer Nouman Raja was found guilty was because of the motor club phone record. It is good that more and more officers are having to wear cameras while performing their job, but we still have minorities being killed on a weekly basis by officers who are not wearing or not turning on the cameras when they are supposed to.

An organization such as the NAACP could very inexpensively create a phone line like 911 that anyone could dial on their phone and then place the phone inconspicuously, and it would record the interaction. If the person so chose, they could inform the officer that they are both being recorded.

I would think that the police should appreciate that. It could also protect them. **Kenneth Duvall, Greenacres** 

#### Media blame Trump for every injustice

Reading David Crary's account of the university bribery scandal compelled me to write. Pointing the finger at President Donald Trump as the responsible party in these crimes is the crime ("Admissions scandal unfolds amid cynicism about moral values," Friday).

Despicable reporting-Hollywood elites and greedy universities are the story here.

If and when a liberal is elected president again, I will be looking for similar accusations toward them at every news event. Please refrain from making Trump the scapegoat for every injustice in our land. Look to yourselves, media, as the trench to "public cynicism." Anne Kinley,

**Palm Beach Gardens** 

#### **Trump bears responsibility** for white nationalist threat

When asked if he saw white nationalism as an increasing threat throughout the world, President Donald Trump responded: "I don't really. I think it's a small group of people that have very, very serious problems, I guess."

Let's look back at the Trump campaign where his hateful rhetoric inspired increased recordings of hate crimes against nonwhites, non-Christians and the LGBTQ community:

His proposed "Muslim registry" in the U.S. His Muslim ban. The "very fine people" at Charlottesville who shouted anti-Semitic slurs and inspired one person to drive a car into opposing peaceful

demonstrators, killing one. His false claim that George Soros was funding the "caravans" coming to our southern border, which motivated one of Trump's supporters to mail a pipe bomb to George Soros and other Democratic "enemies" of Trump, including the family of a former president. The Trump supporter who struck out and murdered Jewish people at prayer in a synagogue. And now, this monstrous murder of people at prayer in a mosque.

Trump and his administration must bear responsibility for consistently, by words and actions, encouraging these overt demonstrations of bigotry, racism and callous murder.

Mary Ann D'Angio, **Boynton Beach** 

#### It's opinion columnists' job to, well, give their opinion

A recent letter-writer chastises Leonard Pitts for calling out Fox News as partisan ("Pitts column

'biased at best," March 13). Let us please take a moment to remind Republicans of the distinction between news articles and stories - and opinion writers. Pitts writes opinion columns. CNN and The Palm Beach Post report news. Surely this distinction can't be that murky. **Jesse Walters, Jupiter** 

### FROM THE EDITOR OF THE EDITORIAL PAGE

# Gillum has plan for 2020, but not presidential bid



**Rick Christie** 

ndrew Gillum should be tired of this by now. Tired of answering "the question": Will he, or won't he run for president in 2020?

"No, I am not running for president in 2020," Gillum answered Monday, chuckling at the question from the Post Editorial Board. It's maybe only the hundredth time he's been asked this year.

But who can blame us? After all, the first black candidate to win a major party nomination for Florida governor came within roughly 32,000 votes 0.4 percent – of becoming the first black governor of the biggest swing state in the country. That tends to put you on a whole lot of people's radar.

And with everyone and their sister seemingly announcing a 2020 run for the Oval Office, the charismatic former Tallahassee mayor seems as good (or better) a bet as many already in the field.

Who cares if he's been publicly denying a run since at least January? Just last Friday, he was on HBO's Real Time

with Bill Maher, again brushing off the host's suggestion that Gillum just announce on the show that he's running.

However, I agree with Gillum's decision not to run. Though this newspaper's Editorial Board – and just about every other Florida newspaper - endorsed him in the general election, he barely squeaked by Democratic primary opponent Gwen Graham, arguably because he didn't draw the well-funded negative ire of other primary opponents as she did. Also, he was spared a difficult and costly runoff race against Graham by Florida election law.

(Gillum also remains entangled in a state ethics commission investigation.)

All that said, he won and went on to mount a surprisingly strong general election campaign that had many believing he would win it all as Election Day approached.

But he didn't. And now he's displaying the realism, steeped in just the right amount of optimism that won over so many voters in the first place.

As for the other two Young Turks of the reinvigorated National Democratic Party bench: former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke, who lost a surprisingly close Senate contest to the unlikable Ted Cruz, is off and running for president. Stacey

Abrams, former minority leader of the Georgia House of Representatives, meanwhile, has yet to announce her intentions as of today. Abrams lost a controversial race to Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp by a slim 1.5 percentage points.

But here's the difference: Of the three, Florida was winnable. And Gillum knows it. You can tell that it still eats at him from the way his voice tightens with purpose when he talks about the 2018 Florida gubernatorial vote - and vote count.

Undoubtedly, that's why he's moving on with a "major announcement" later today at Florida Memorial University in Miami Gardens about an initiative he believes will "flip Florida blue" and deliver the presidency into the hands of the Democrats in 2020.

Here's a hint: It's an embargoed secret that's really not so secret when it comes to winning elections. But as Gillum says, it's a strategy that the state's Democrats have pretty much abandoned for the past three election cycles, and cut their voter registration advantage from 660,000 to about 250,000.

ing wound will surely keep him busy through 2020. Oh, but what about 2022?

Well, closing that gap-

RChristie@pbpost.com Twitter: @rchristiepbp

### **OPINION: THE DEBATE STARTS HERE**

**OUR VIEWS** SEA LEVEL RISE

# Aging flood-control systems can't protect S. Florida

The way most Floridians will first feel the effects of sea-level rise probably won't be from some catastrophic wave crashing over a sea wall. More likely, it will be flooding, the water covering your shoes, your street, your doorstep.

Flooding is already heavier in South Florida. And it will get heavier still as the sea continues its inexorable rise – gaining at least 2 feet by 2060 and rising faster after that, according to scientists' mid-range projections.

Our main protection is a flood-control system built 50 to 70 years ago, long before climate change was even imagined. It's clear that this aging system will need serious, and expensive, upgrades.

Congress has yet to provide the money for a much-needed study of how to do that. It's galling that lawmakers gave the Northeast \$20 million for a flood-control system after just one storm, Superstorm Sandy. Yet for all the hurricanes and tropical storms we've endured, Congress has yet to fund a flood-control study for our region that it authorized in 2016.

Florida, of course, has a long familiarity with the engineering of water. An epic system of drainage canals dried out the Everglades sufficiently for South Florida to grow to be a major population center. A system of wells and underground water storage allows 6 million peo-



#### **COMING TUESDAY**

What needs to be done so that the National Flood Insurance Program can protect its policyholders without running up huge debt.

ple to slake their thirst. When the ocean's vol-

when the octains wo's
ume expands, as it's
bound to do – the seas
having absorbed 80 percent of the heat from
global warming, and with
Antarctica and Greenland
melting – the water won't
just lap over Florida's sea
walls. Salt water will push
its way up, under our feet,
through the peninsula's
foundation of porous limestone. The seawater will
threaten underground
drinking water.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) supervises some 2,000 miles of canals – major channels carrying water from Lake Okeechobee to the ocean. It maintains gates near the coast to keep the canal water level higher than the sea level to allow water to flow out from the cities to the ocean when it floods, and to keep salt water from reaching inland.

The system won't perform as designed when seas get higher and managers are forced to close the gates more often.



South Florida Water Management District supervises some 2,000 miles of canals, but the system won't perform as designed when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system won't perform as designed when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system won't perform as designed when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system when seas get higher. HOWARD GOODMAN/THE PALM BEACH POST and the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system was also seen to be a significant form of the system was a significant form of the system of the system was a significant form of the system of the system was a significant form of the system of the system was a significant form of the system of th

If the canals can't flow outward, where's the floodwater supposed to go? This is already happening in Miami-Dade County, where the canal levels and tide fluctuations are "already very close," according to a 2015 report from the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.

It's obvious that the gates and other structures are going to need to be enlarged or otherwise redesigned. But by how much and at what cost?

When the SFWMD studied the problem in 2009, 20 flood-control structures were deemed vulnerable if the sea level rises just half a foot – which is now expected in less than 15 years. A recent Florida Atlantic University study concluded that a half-foot rise would cripple about

half of South Florida's flood-control capacity.

We need a deeper, more current study. And Congress has authorized one. The 2016 Water Resources Development Act orders the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study 10,000 miles of coastline along the south Atlantic and Gulf Coast "to identify the risks and vulnerabilities of those areas to increased hurricane and storm damage as a result of sea-level rise."

Encouraging words. But the Corps is still waiting for the money to get started. Eric Bush, the Corps' South Atlantic Division planning chief, says the delay was expected; it's just how Congress works.

Still, it's vexing. This study will be vital for understanding where flood risk is most severe. It will help the state and localities, as well as the Corps, plot strategies for making our region more resilient. This could mean fortifying sea walls, raising streets, adding pumps, upgrading sewage systems, renourishing beaches and creating mangroves, marsh and seagrass habitats.

The SFWMD, to its credit, is making regular checks of its flood-control system and runs frequent scenarios to figure out how soon it will have to do more construction or make adaptations such as rerouting water.

But it's not just the SFWMD and Corps that must act. Our region has thousands of miles of secondary canals, managed by local drainage districts – and even smaller canals under such entities as homeowner associations. Unless improvements are made in these, your street will flood no matter how well governments improve the major canals.

The time to be thinking about this is now. As the National Research Council has said, "every dollar spent before an event saves \$4 to \$5 in reconstruction costs after."

Fortunately, local officials do have their eyes open. The four-county Climate Change Compact is doing an exemplary job of beginning the long, difficult, expensive task of adapting to a future of frequent flooding.

What we can't afford is a governor who denies climate change and a federal government that won't prioritize the public investments that must be made if low-lying coastal regions like ours are to survive the brunt of rising seas.

We challenge every statewide and national leader, those now serving and those seeking office, to act. A good place to start would be to shake loose the money tree, and secure for the Army Corps of Engineers the funds to assess the coastal storm and flood risks we know await us.

"The Invading Sea" is a collaboration of the editorial boards of the South Florida Sun Sentinel, Miami Herald and Palm Beach Post, with reporting and community engagement assistance from WLRN Public Media. For more information, go to www. Thelnvading Sea.com.

#### The Palm Beach Post

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# **BALANCED VIEWS**

FROM THE LEFT

# Trump tax cut looking like much-hyped cuts of past



short-run bump in the economy. But if you want to boost overall spend-

sharply higher than they would have been absent the legislation, and investFROM THE RIGHT

# Vulgarity goes mainstream in comic's filthy dinner rant



Kellyanne Conway, obliterating any remaining standard of conduct and I am no fan of the Clintons, I thought the routine was in poor taste.

# The Palm Beach Post

Opinion

# Editorial: The missing threat on the gov's hurricane conference agenda

By The Palm Beach Post Editorial Board

Posted May 11, 2018 at 12:01 AM Updated May 11, 2018 at 7:16 PM

Here's one sure bet about the hundreds gathering for the annual Governor's Hurricane Conference, which runs this week in West Palm Beach: They'll all want to hear forecasters' predictions on how active the 2018 hurricane season is going to be.

And whenever a tropical storm forms in the Atlantic Ocean, they'll keep a nervous eye on the computers' predicted hurricane paths. They'll become fluent on wind speeds and shear, drops in barometric pressure, cones of uncertainty.

They'll be talking, in other words, about science.

And they'll be heeding scientists. When the experts say a hurricane is about to make landfall, the governor and other leaders will urge Floridians to take appropriate action: stay put or evacuate, open shelters, stock up on bottled water, kennel the pets.

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But if science is to be trusted when it comes to hurricanes, why is it so hard for state officials in Florida and federal officials in the Trump administration to respect science when it comes to climate change and sea-level rise?

How is it that everyone will accept science whenever it shows that Florida is in danger of getting slammed by a storm, but that many stubbornly refuse to believe in science when it shows that the southern end of the peninsula is on a decades-long course to sink under water?

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This is not just a theoretical question. This is no parlor game. The scientists who have measured the global temperatures, the melting of the world's great ice sheets and the rising of the oceans are no less worthy of our trust than are the weather experts who will alert us to the next tropical storm.

They're in the exact same business: reading the data and warning us of imminent danger. The only difference is that the creeping rise of the sea level is far less visible than the ominous spiral of a hurricane.

In fact, the warnings are interrelated. One of the greatest dangers of global warming and rising seas to us will be the increasing intensity of hurricanes as they feed on warmer ocean water. As the sea level gets higher, storm surges will be stronger, more destructive and deadlier.

Climate expert Harold Wanless, chairman of the University of Miami Department of Geological Sciences, says that if Hurricane Irma had remained a Category 5 and hit the east coast of Florida — instead of veering west — our region would have suffered a devastating, transforming blow from a 20-foot surge that would have pounded us for hours.

The destruction would have been "much worse" than Katrina's hit on New Orleans. South Beach's world-famous row of Art Deco hotels, to take one example, would be gone.

As Wanless explains, half the heat generated by greenhouse gases since 1997 has been stored in the ocean. This means that even if we could halt CO2 pollution immediately, the climate would keep heating up for a long time. Since 1995, the sea level has risen 3 inches in Key West. By 2060, it's predicted to rise another 2 feet — and to shoot even higher, more quickly, after that.

As the <u>Union of Concerned Scientists</u> said last year: "In the future, there may not necessarily be more hurricanes, but there will likely be more intense hurricanes that carry higher wind speeds and more precipitation as a result of global warming. The impacts of this trend are likely to be exacerbated by sea level rise and a growing population along coastlines."

An overwhelming 97 percent of climate scientists agree that humans are the primary cause of climate change. But conservative interests have done such a

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good job of creating a false narrative about divisions in the scientific community that only 42 percent of Republicans "say most scientists believe global warming is occurring," according to a recent <u>Gallup poll</u>. In contrast, 65 percent of Independents and 86 percent of Democrats understand that the scientific consensus is definitive.

And here we have this conference, 1,600 people gathering for a week of speeches, workshops, and conversations on almost every conceivable aspect of hurricane preparation and response — everything but the one factor that threatens the region's ongoing viability more than any other. There's not one word in the program about climate change or sea-level rise.

Not one word about how to mitigate the destructiveness of future hurricanes, while we may still have time. Or actions like building up shoreline with dunes or mangroves to soften the impact of storm surges. Or constructing more resilient buildings to cope with huge waves of water. Or updating and improving the region's aging flood-control system.

This is all too predictable when the governor who is the host of this 32nd Aannual Governor's Hurricane Conference is Rick Scott, famous for allegedly banning the words "global warming" and "climate change" from all state correspondence.

But this head-in-the-sand attitude must end. If this annual get-together on preparations for hurricane season shows anything, it is that state, federal, county and municipal officials can work together to address a common threat.

We need the same attitude, all oars rowing in the same direction, to cope with the certain threat of sea-level rise. The sea isn't going to wait for us to get our act together. It's time to start now.

"The Invading Sea" is a collaboration of the editorial boards of the Palm Beach Post, South Florida Sun Sentinel and Miami Herald, with reporting and community engagement assistance from WLRN Public Media. For more information, go to TheInvadingSea.com.

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## **OPINION: THE DEBATE STARTS HERE**

**OUR VIEWS** 

SEA LEVEL RISE

# **Prepare now** for increased insurance rates for floods



Long before the invading sea reaches our homes, it could upend



our region's economy. And soon. In just two or three years, Congress may change the way it sets

rates in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to reflect more realistic assessments of risk, including the expected impacts of sea-level rise. According to the chairman of Miami's Sea Level Rise Committee,

FEMA officials believe the largest provider of flood insurance in the United States will be aligning the cost of premiums much closer to the heightened risks of flooding. And that the changes will come sooner than

"This is a big game-changer," Wayne Pathman says. "South Florida is ground zero, in many studies, for the economic impact of sea-level rise. So I've said many times that the tip of the spear of this economic issue is

Rather than focusing on how high the sea level will be in 2060 or 2100, more concern should be on the economics, Pathman told The Post Editorial Board. "Because those things are already changing."

The move to so-called "risk-based assessments" will likely jack up the cost of flood insurance to as much as wind-storm insurance "or more" in the next five to 10 years, said Pathman, a Miami attorney who is also chairman of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce. He sees rates rising 25 percent to 60 percent in the near term, and more after that.

In high-risk areas – and much of Florida is a high-risk area - real estate will get more expensive. The higher costs will ripple through banking, bonding and taxation. It might not be long, Pathman warns, before "30year mortgages will be a thing of the past."

Put it together, and investors could start bailing on South Florida long before the waters arrive. "Once riskbased assessment takes hold, it sends a message to the world that this place is too risky," Pathman said at a community meeting reported by WLRN.

As harsh as the consequences will be for our region, there are sound reasons to reform the federal program, which was created 50 years ago to help people affordably repair their homes after flooding. It is now \$24 billion in debt and its authorization to issue new policies is set to end on July 31.

The program's finances have been battered as floods have become frequent, damage more extensive, and about 20 percent of the 5 million policyholders pay artificially low premiums that don't reflect the true likelihood of flood damage. Against all common sense, those unrealistic rates encourage development in flood-prone zones. More than 30,000 properties have flooded an average of five times each and been rebuilt each time through the NFIP. Some of these properties have been flooded more than 30 times.

At present, the NFIP ties its rate-setting to floodplain maps drawn up by FEMA. But the maps aren't all that precise. And because the maps are based on historical data, they don't take into account the heavier storms we've been seeing in recent years, let alone predicted increases in the sea level.

The most logical reforms would match premiums more realistically to each property's flood risk. This would require better maps and more precise assessments. Any reform must also include financial help to ease the sticker shock for lower-income homeowners.

No place will be more susceptible to higher flood-insurance rates than Florida. As the Union of Concerned Scientists recently reported, 64,000 homes statewide will be vulnerable to chronic flooding by 2045 ("chronic" defined as 26 flood events per year). That's not even 30 years away. These are risk factors that insurers and global investors are already discussing.

It sounds grim. But there are things we can do to minimize the economic threat.

Pathman urges us to think back to 1992's Hurricane Andrew. That disaster could have been catastrophic for insurance rates. But it wasn't. Why? Because Florida passed the nation's most stringent building codes. Today's buildings have a greatly reduced risk of falling apart in a hurricane. The insurance industry has taken note. Premiums haven't soared.

By the same token, if we can demonstrate that we are reducing the risk of property loss from increased flooding, insurers will restrain insurance rates and investors will keep believing in South Florida. In other words, we apply the lessons learned from Andrew to sea-level rise.

To do that, Pathman is advocating that Miami create a 40-year action plan, as soon as possible, to show the investment and insurance worlds that the city is doing all it can to tamp down the risks of future damage.

But Miami can't act alone. Its government must join with other local governments, because rising water doesn't respect municipal or county boundaries. The business community must be invited in, as well.

This sounds like a smart policy for all South Florida. If we don't want insurance rates to dictate our economic future, we must show the markets we intend to adapt our environment to the more watery world that's

We've done it with hurricanes. We can do it with rising water.



A bench off Lake Trail in Palm Beach is surrounded by water from the Intracoastal. LANNIS WATERS / THE

### **YOUR VIEWS**

**LETTERS** @PBPOST.COM

#### Harbourside is being wronged

I think the ongoing dispute between the Harbourside development and the town of Jupiter is disgusting. From what I've read in the past, the owner of Harbourside has done everything possible to appease the nearby homeowners by lowering the music decibel. Harbourside is a lovely waterfront complex with restaurants, shops and an amphitheater where families and visitors can be entertained. It's a shame that Jupiter doesn't take that into consideration. The past fines should be voided and the lawsuit thrown out of court. I am not a friend or relative of anybody connected with Harbourside; I just like going there.

ILEAN GUTHARTZ, WEST PALM BEACH

#### Scott ads attacking Nelson are not right

I am in total agreement with the letter, "False political advertising should be called out," (June 23). The Rick Scott-affiliated New Republican Super PAC 's political advertising is focused solely upon why Scott's anticipated gen**CARTOON VIEW SIGNE WILKINSON** 



eral election opponent, incumbent U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, should be denied reelection based upon excessive years of service" rather than what he (Scott) brings to the table as a candidate for this office. Further, the ads are designed to mislead the public into believing that Nelson has made the "excessive amount" of over \$4 million over 45 years of service. That amounts to less than \$89,000 per year. A nice salary to many Florida residents but hardly the windfall that is being conveyed in these ads.

Kudos to Nelson for running ads that stress his accomplishments rather than focusing upon his probable opponent's rather questionable history as a businessman. TIM VAIL,

WEST PALM BEACH

#### New tariffs will be counterproductive

Tariffs are taxes collected by the government, increasing the cost of an imported item, which increases the price of finished goods consumers buy. This kills competition, driving a monopolistic strategy of increasing price (to grow profits), lowering quality by reducing costs (to grow profits), and slowing innovation. Who spends capital improving what's not necessary?

Are companies funding campaigns to gain tariffs and subsidies? Are links between politicians and companies more important than links between

politicians and the voters? This is the swamp. A cozy association of slimy creatures seeing the people as prey, taxing and spending us to death. MARK MOLLOY, **BOCA RATON** 

#### Work together on immigration

It seems every time I read and/or hear liberal opinions with respect to our ongoing challenges with illegal immigration they can't seem to address it as such. Liberals continue to demonize the conservative agenda to protect our nation's borders by claiming these folks breaching our borders are simply poor folks trying to get ahead. Some even go as far as to compare these people with our ancestors that came to this country and realized their "American Dream." The liberal mindset is based solely in politics with blatant disregard for the fact these folks are entering the country illegally vs. those that follow the law and comply with our long-standing legal entry procedures.

Notwithstanding opportunities squandered by previous administrations to



After days of waiting, a Honduran youth seeking asylum prepares to enter the U.S. across from Brownsville, Texas. CALLAGHAN O'HARE / THE NEW YORK TIMES

address our immigration problems and their failed promises to do so, we should be working collaboratively to get it right.

SCOTT BLASIE, LAKE WORTH

#### Treat new refugees as we did Cubans

In 1980, about 10,000 Cubans emigrated from Mariel harbor in Cuba to Florid,a which led to

more than 125,000 refugees seeking political asylum in the United States that year. Under the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, the U.S. assumed that Cuban refugees were political rather than economic refugees. Consequently, those Cuban refugees gained lawful entry into the U.S. and have assimilated into our social structure. In the past 38 years, many

of those refugees raised families, enlisted in our Armed Forces, went to college, started businesses and became productive members of our American society. They achieved the American Dream and have contributed to building a better America.

The refugees from Central America on our southern border should be given the same opportunity for legal entry and eventual citizenship that was offered to the Cuban refugees in 1980. The Central American refugees could also eventually become constructive members of our society if given the same opportunity. We, as Americans, are abandoning our own moral and social values if we cannot extend the American Dream to this new wave of political refugees. Our better angels must overcome those who would have us hate again. ARTHUR GARCIA, WELLINGTON

**POINT OF VIEW SCHOOL SAFETY** 

# PBSO is unfit to patrol our schools

If there was any doubt that the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office should not be in charge of patrolling our schools,



Pasch

the Legal Aid Society and Human Rights Defense Center's lawsuit regarding

the inhumane treatment of children in the Palm Beach County Jail should put an end that discussion. Under the leadership of Sheriff Ric Bradshaw, children are allegedly held in solitary confinement for months, denied access to education and mental health services and subjected to physical and mental abuse by deputies charged with their care.

Lest you think that the topics are unrelated, consider Bradshaw's own words when he described to the Post how PBSO would patrol a school,

"His focus has got to be on perimeter security. He can't be the guidance counselor with a gun.' This condescending view on the role of school police ignores the reality of the daily work of officers who must interact with children.

Children are different than adults, and should be treated as such – a fact that every parent knows and courts have repeat-

edly affirmed. For those who argue that PBSO's tough approach and additional resources will make our schools and children safer, I ask, "Which children?" Not the children currently in PBSO's custody who are denied their basic rights and due process. Also not children of color or with disabilities, whose rate of arrests in Palm Beach County remain disproportionately higher than their rate of population.

As a parent of two children in the county's pub-

lic schools, I am deeply concerned about school safety. As an attorney who works with families of children who are routinely arrested, Baker Acted, and excluded from these schools, I see the unfortunate results when there is a lack of training and resources for school police, administrators and teachers.

The school district says it has cooperative agreements with 33 agencies that offer mental health counseling to students. In my experience, these interagency agreements allow agencies access to schools to provide services, but many schools do not have staff who know how to proactively connect students to these services given the various eligibility requirements. The district's unfortunate answer to therapeutic services was to contract with MSUSA, whose business model disincentives the provision of services to children without insur-

ance, i.e. those who have the most difficulty accessing mental health care.

Our county needs leadership and coordination across systems of care to make our schools safe. Our fragmented mental and behavioral health services systems need a streamlined point of entry for all families. Our schools need staff who know how to help students access these ser-

School police, administrators and teachers require training, adequate resources and sufficient staffing to address the needs of all students, especially those with developmental disabilities, emotional or behavioral challenges. All of our children should be able to access education and mental health services and be treated with dignity and respect, including those in the custody of PBSO.

SHAHAR PASCH, WEST PALM BEACH

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TIMOTHY D. BURKE, Publisher

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# **BALANCED VIEWS**

# 39 years later, Klan's faces red under that white hood



**Leonard Pitts Jr.** He writes for the Miami Herald.

In 2006, Leonard Pitts wrote this column based on an interview with Ron Stallworth, who, 12 years later, is the subject of Spike Lee's latest film, "BlacKkKlansman." In 1979, Stallworth was an intelligence officer with the Colorado Springs police department. He infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan, a hate group, and even developed a relationship with leader David Duke.

And now here's this week's episode of Great Moments in Black History.

The year is 1979. Jimmy Carter is in office, disco is on the radio and Ron Stallworth has just joined the Ku Klux Klan.

We are indebted to the Deseret Morning News, of Salt Lake City, for revealing this in an article earlier this month commemorating Stallworth's retirement from the Utah Department of Public Safety. Since then, the story has made MSNBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Co. and blogs from here to eternity.

And if you're wondering why the fuss, well ... it's not every day that a black man becomes a Klansman.

The story goes as follows: In 1979, Stallworth was an intelligence officer with the Colorado Springs police, tasked with gathering information on subversive groups. One day he sees a classified ad: The KKK is forming a chapter and looking for members. So he calls.

"This guy answered the phone," he told me in a telephone interview. "I told him I saw the ad and was interested. He asked me why. I told him I was a pure-blooded Aryan white man. I told him I was a victim of the Zionist Occupied Government because of ZOG's preference for mud people, meaning blacks or anybody that's not considered pure blood."

Stallworth's deft use of the buzzwords of hate excited the Klan man, who was, in his day job, a soldier at nearby Fort Carson. The two made plans to meet. Stallworth gave a physical description of himself, accurate except for the minor matter of melanin. After he got off the phone, he recruited a colleague who matched his description - except for the minor matter of melanin – and sent him in.

It worked. Stallworth filled out his application, paid his dues, became a Klansman. Some snafu delayed his membership card, though, so Stallworth went to the top to get it straightened out. "I called David Duke," he said.

Within a few days, Stall-worth had his membership card, which he still carries. He says he handled Klan business by phone, sending in the white cop when face-to-face meetings were required. For a year, he said, he and Duke spoke once or twice a week.

Once Stallworth asked Duke if he wasn't afraid of being infiltrated by undercover cops, or maybe some smart-aleck black man posing as white.

"He said, 'No, I'm not concerned about that because I can always tell when I'm talking to a n—r.' I said, 'How?' He said, 'The way they pronounce certain words or letters. N—-s tend to say the word 'are,' they say 'are-uh.' That's a dead give-

After a year, Stallworth's Klan contact called with the news that he was being reassigned. He asked Stallworth to lead the chapter "because I had been a loyal and dedicated member."

Stallworth promised to

get back to him. His bosses

promptly shut off the phone, closed the investigation. His career in the Klan was over. This Great Moment in Black History has been

sponsored by the same

Monday

**Tuesday** 

**Thursday** 

Saturday

Sunday

**Friday** 

Wednesday

old ignoramuses who still

think melanin is destiny.
Which only goes to show
you what atavistic imbeciles they – ahem – are-uh.

# Markets know better than bureaucrats what's needed



George F. Will
He writes for
the Washington Post.

Governments, seemingly eager to supply their critics with ammunition, constantly validate historian Robert Conquest: The behavior of any bureaucratic organization can best be understood by assuming that it is controlled by a secret cabal of its enemies. Consider North Carolina's intervention in the medical-devices market.

Born in India, Dr. Gajendra Singh is an American citizen and a surgeon in Winston-Salem who wants to supply something useful for which there is a strong demand. North Carolina's government is, however, an almost insuperable impediment.

Singh runs a medical diagnostic imaging cen-

FROM

**THE RIGHT** 

Mona Charen

Ross Douthat

Michael Gerson

Kathleen Parker

Marc A. Thiessen

**David Brooks** 

George Will

ter where patients can get X-rays, echo-cardiograms, ultrasounds and CT (computed tomography) scans. It cannot, however, be a full-service center without an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) machine, and local hospitals offering MRIs are averse to competition.

Americans with high-deductible insurance plans, which are increasingly prevalent, especially need low-cost diagnostic services. The median Winston-Salem household income is about \$40,000. The average MRI scan at a North Carolina hospital costs \$2,000. Singh charges \$500-\$700 for the MRIs he does using rental machines that the state's harassing law requires to be moved once a week. Singh wants to buy an MRI machine. North Carolina, however, has a "certificate of need" (CON) law, requiring Singh to prove to the Soviet-style central planners in the state government that Singh's area needs another machine.

Such state and local CON laws proliferated in the 1970s as the federal government began pouring money into health care and government-funded hospitals tried to protect their revenue streams. Just for the privilege of submitting an application to buy an MRI Singh would have to pay a nonrefundable \$5,000 fee and be prepared to spend \$400,000 to surmount the opposition of competitors. The only two providers of fixed (not mobile rental) MRIs in Singh's county are

at two multibillion-dollar hospitals.

Fortunately, Singh has the support of the Institute for Justice's litigators who are wielding on his behalf four provisions of North Carolina's constitution: First, "Perpetuities and monopolies are contrary to the genius of a free state and shall not be allowed." Second, "No person ... is entitled to exclusive or separate emoluments or privileges." Third, "No person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws." Fourth, Singh has a due-process right to participate in the health care market.

There are three important lessons from North Carolina's CON mischief. First, domestic protectionism that burdens consumers for the benefit of entrenched economic interests (e.g., occupational licensing that restricts entry to professions for no reason related to public health and safety) is even more prevalent and costly than are tariffs and import quotas that interfere with international trade. Second, the intrusive, interventionist, administrative state – aka modern government - that recognizes no limits to its competence or jurisdiction is inevitably a defender of the entrenched and hence a mechanism for transferring wealth upward. Third, only courts can arrest the marauding of the political class when it pretends to know more than markets.

CLIMATE CHANGE

# Florida can drive U.S. views on climate change

FROM

**THE LEFT** 

Paul Krugman

Mary Sanchez

Maureen Dowd

Thomas

Friedman

E.J. Dionne Jr.

Leonard Pitts

**Gail Collins** 



Howard Goodman

For climate change, Florida is the ballgame.

So says Rafe Pomerance, a man who has worked longer to stave off the threat of global warming than just about anybody.

If the national politics on climate change is ever to shift from denial to action – in time to stop the disgorging of carbon dioxide beyond the point of no return – Florida, he says, is the key.

Why? Because no other state is under greater immediate threat from the warming planet and rise in sea levels. And no other swing state has so many electoral votes.

As Pomerance puts it: "The impacts are extreme and the politics are critical."

"This is the largest purple state in the country," says Pomerance, currently a consultant for the nonprofit Rethink Energy Florida. If the state takes a new attitude on climate change, the "national impact can be very powerful."

This assessment comes from the original climate-change warrior. Almost nobody had heard of global warming when Pomerance first stumbled upon the concept in 1979.

upon the concept in 1979.

Then a lobbyist for
Friends of the Earth, he
was plowing through a
technical government
report on coal when he
was stopped cold by a
seemingly out-of-nowhere
remark that the continued
use of fossil fuels might,
within a few decades,
"bring about significant
and damaging" changes to
the global atmosphere.

THE INVADING SEA CAN SOUTH FLORIDA BE SAVED?

We need to slash carbon emissions drastically as soon as possible. We need state leaders with the courage to push for it.

Stunned, he started asking around: who knew about this threat? A geophysicist named Gordon MacDonald did, one of the few. Quickly, Pomerance set up meetings for MacDonald with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Security Council, New York Times, all the way up to the Carter White House.

Soon, "global warming," the "greenhouse effect" and "climate change" were common parlance. Within a decade, the world's nations came within a few signatures of a treaty that just might have saved the planet – but didn't.

planet – but didn't.

The story is told in a remarkable article that takes up the whole issue of the Aug. 5 New York Times Magazine, "Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change," by Nathaniel Rich.

Pomerance is a major figure in the 30,000-word retrospective, which ends its tale in 1989. But Pomerance didn't quit then. He has continued to be a tireless activist on global warming, including a stint in the State Department as the Kyoto Protocol was being negotiated.

The United States withdrew from that agreement to cut carbon emissions, the George W. Bush administration complain-



Traffic on South Olive near Hibiscus slows to a crawl as vehicles cope with flooded roads from a recent afternoon storm. BRUCE R. BENNETT / THE PALM BEACH POST

ing that developing countries including China, were excluded. Just as, last year, the Trump administration pulled out of the Paris Climate Accords.

The consequences of these failures are sobering, if not flat-out frightening.

As Rich writes: "The Paris climate agree*ment – the nonbinding,* unenforceable and already unheeded treaty signed on Earth Day in 2016 – hoped to restrict warming to two degrees. The odds of succeeding, according to a recent study based on current emissions trends, are one in 20. If by some miracle we are able to limit warming to two degrees, we will only have to negotiate the extinction of the world's tropical reefs, sea-level rise of several meters and the abandonment of the Persian Gulf.

"The climate scientist James Hansen has called two-degree warming 'a prescription for long-term disaster.' Long-term disaster is now the best-case scenario."

Sea-level rise of several meters. That's a projection for catastrophe in Florida. Our vulnerability is nothing less than an existential threat. Yet, the state's leadership couldn't be more ostrich-like.

That's why Pomerance, still going strong at age 72, is now focused on Florida.

Pomerance can imagine many things that a climate-conscious governor (as opposed to the climate-denying governor we've had for eight years) might do to ignite action, causing ripples that carry way beyond state lines.

Convening the governors of other southern coastal states, like Louisiana, Texas, Georgia and the Carolinas, for a vigorous fight for self-preservation. Or being an outspoken proponent of a carbon tax to discourage emissions – a move that would have to be bipartisan to get traction.

Bipartisan? Don't scoff. Although the Republican Party teems with climate-denial, that's not always the case at the local level, especially when the localities are already feeling the effects.

Just last month, U.S. Rep. Carlos Curbelo, a Republican representing Florida's southern tip – make that Florida's extremely vulnerable southern tip – broke with his party's orthodoxy to propose a carbon tax. He introduced a bill that went nowhere but showed that even the most rigid ideology is susceptible to an unyielding reality.

In the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact, the joint effort by Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties to get proactive on sea level rise, some local Republican office holders and business people are deeply involved.

The trouble lies at the state and federal levels, where Republicans shut their eyes, plug their ears and yell, "Hoax!"

and yell, "Hoax!"
Once upon a time, we had two major parties that evinced concern for the environment, but the dominant strain of Republican dogma today holds with the fossil fuel industry's invented "controversy" over a supposed split among scientists on whether climate change is

man-made.
In fact, at least 97 percent of climate scientists agree that the extraordinary warming trends over the past century are "extremely likely due to human activities," according to NASA. The essential facts about greenhouse gases have been known since the 1970s. What holds back action in this country isn't doubt about the science. It's politics.

Republicans routinely contend that environmental-friendly policies kill the economy. Tell that to California, with those tough auto-emissions standards and a 2006 state law, signed by Republican Gov. Arnold Schwartzenegger, requiring emissions from all sources to be cut back to

1990 levels by 2020. That poor, hurting state is now the world's fifth largest economy.

Still, we hear inanities like this from Republican governor hopeful Ron DeSantis, asked on Wednesday if he thinks climate change is a factor in the red tide that's killing marine life and tourism on Florida's west coast. It "may be a factor," but climate change isn't really a problem for state government, DeSantis said. And while he believes the state ought to protect against sea-level rise, he seemed to question whether human activity has anything to do with it.

"If you have water rising in, like Miami, we've got to do resiliency for that," said DeSantis, according to the Sarasota Herald-Tribune. "I don't know if it's because of my activity, your activity, but if it's there it's there and we've got to deal with it"

We've heard pussyfooting like this from Florida politicians before. And we should be sick of it.

If you worry that your house might burn down, you don't slap up fire-retardant all over the place – while leaving a bunch of candles burning. You do something about the cause.

We know that greenhouse gases are warming the atmosphere. The added heat is melting the arctic and antarctic ice caps. The melting ice sheets are raising sea levels. Here and around the world.

It's urgent that we slash carbon emissions. We need state leaders with the courage to push for it as soon as possible.

With sunny-day flooding now a Florida reality, with king tides now a part of our vocabulary, time is not on our side. Remember that in the voting booth this year.

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