

**Posted Dec 27, 2016**

## **Revisit Safe Harbor plan**

Homelessness is not just being on the street without a roof. It is a very serious social issue that requires medical, mental health, drug abuse, job training/placement and individual case management to help the homeless get back into society. Homelessness is a Volusia County-wide issue, and should be treated as such with a Volusia County homelessness program that offers all of the services required to help the homeless get back into society. There is a plan - Volusia Safe Harbor - that addresses the homeless issues and, at least at one point, had Volusia County Council support to provide land and to build a shelter, providing that municipalities funded the operating expenses of the shelter. Some cities stepped up adding funds to their budget; others denied they had a homeless problem and some said, "not in my backyard."

Catholic Charities has developed a business plan and has volunteered to manage the shelter with assistance of other local charitable/volunteer organizations. Let's move forward with the Volusia Safe Harbor concept, a centralized, come-as-you-are, 24/7 Volusia County homeless caring center.

Recent proposals for a tent city, use of refurbished deserted rundown buildings, and individual shelters run by municipalities are not the answer to the homeless problem. A centralized full-service facility that will address all of the issues of the homeless is the answer.

Harry R. White  
Ormond Beach

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20161210/letters-curbing-dangerous-dogs>

**December 10, 2016**

## **FRIGHTENING FUTURE**

The writer of "Media complicit" (Dec. 6) deplores Hillary Clinton's so-called "corruption" and claims she is "tired of media bias," yet she presents no evidence of Clinton's corruption other than "WikiLeaks and undercover videos" - never saying what that specific "corruption" entails. Apparently, the fact that no major U.S. newspaper endorsed Trump, and that major news sources printed fact-based articles exposing Trump's mendacity, mean that the media are biased.

(READ: [Dec. 6 letters](#))

During the campaign, Trump never let the truth stand in the way of his claims. He said that Hillary Clinton wanted "open borders" that might allow "600 million people to pour into our country" - without a shred of evidence. Trump beat the dead horse of the private email "scandal" despite extensive investigations, including 15 hours of Clinton's Senate testimony.

More worrisome for Floridians, however, is Trump's apparent unconcern about global warming. Although he denied it (lied again) in the first presidential debate, in 2012, Trump claimed that "the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive." Trump later insisted that he never made that statement. However, at a December 2015 rally in South Carolina, Trump said, "Obama's talking about global warming and . . . It's a hoax. I mean, it's a money-making industry, OK?" This despite the consensus of thousands of climate research scientists that global warming is real and that humans are responsible for much of it. In Florida, it will drastically affect our oceans, our forests, our food production, perhaps even our very lives.

Trump has also announced that he will dismantle the recent Paris agreement on climate change. He has named climate change-denier Myron Ebell to lead the Environmental Protection Agency transition team.

I tremble for our country's future in the hands of such a man.

**Carolyn West**

Ormond Beach

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20161204/letters--amusements-create-old-timey-family-friendly-flavor>

### **The amusements create an old-timey, family-friendly flavor."**

The Boardwalk's arcades and amusements were big draws during Bike Week 2016.  
News-Journal

**Sunday** Dec 4, 2016

### **SAVE THE AMUSEMENTS**

Regarding the land battle between arcade/amusement owner Dino Paspalakis and the developer who wants to build a condo/hotel on that site: The Boardwalk would be very much diminished without the arcade and rides, which add life and character. The amusements create an old-timey, family-friendly flavor, along with Pizza King, Zeno's Candy, and the other classically "beachy" businesses there. Do we really need yet another hotel/condo? Don't we rather need to support the hotels and condos that are already there, which have plenty of vacancies much of the year?

(READ: [Daytona Boardwalk property fight continues](#))

If the developer really is dead-set on building yet another hotel or condo, I have an idea. Mr. Paspalakis has said he would want to build a restaurant and a two-story arcade on that land. (Wonderful addition, I say!) What if he and the would-be hotel/condo developer, who have been battling it out in a lawsuit all these years, were to instead team up and build all of it together? Hotel, restaurant AND arcade/amusements — now that would be a win-win.

**Jenny Nazak**

Daytona Beach

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December 3, 2016

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20161203/letters-there-are-literally-hundreds-of-rudy-type-stories>

## **KEEP DOORS OPEN**

I have friends who escaped Cuba for the United States under Fidel Castro's rule, and I can appreciate their reasons for not wanting our president to normalize relations with Cuba. Still, I am glad President Obama has worked to normalize relations with that country. My teenage grandson attended Fudan University in Shanghai and traveled to Vietnam, both countries under Communist rule that sell us their goods. So why not Cuba?

In July, my teenage granddaughter, representing the United States, traveled to Cuba to compete in USA Beach Volleyball against such countries as Mexico and Canada. If we in the United States want to have the best leaders, we need to expose our children to such educational opportunities that cannot be found in front of a computer or in a classroom. I hope that Donald Trump doesn't close Cuba to us. It would not be beneficial to the Cuban people nor to us.

**Barbara Sandberg**

Ormond Beach

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**Friday** Dec 2, 2016

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20161202/letters-we-must-be-careful-not-to-diminish-our-public-schools>

## **PICK SCORNS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

President Trump recently chose Betsy DeVos to lead the U.S. Department of Education. DeVos chairs the American Federation for Children, an advocacy group that has aggressively pushed to provide public money for charter and private schools in Michigan, and in other states. This advocacy has led to a reduction in oversight of these schools, a decrease in Michigan reading scores, and a rating of Detroit's charter school system as the biggest school reform disaster in the country.

(READ: [School choice fans have ally in DeVos](#))

Most charter and private schools are selective: using entrance exams, and refusing admission of students with special needs or with disciplinary problems. Public schools are left with less money, and a higher percentage of students needing additional resources. Diane Ravitch, a Bush administration assistant secretary of education and a former supporter of charter schools, is now a consistent critic of charter schools and believes that, for the most part, they fail when compared to public schools.

Since its inception, public education has been a hallmark of our country. In 1779, Thomas Jefferson proposed a tax-funded system of public education for all male and female children. Public education has educated our presidents, engineers and astronauts who

developed our space program, our teachers, doctors and nurses who provide our health care, and skilled workers who build, repair, and manufacture what society needs.

Volusia County has an excellent public education system. There are some problems, especially for students lacking a stable or a financially secure environment. But we have outstanding teachers, effective administrators, and committed School Board members who help develop an informed citizenry. Although there are good charter and private schools, we must be careful not to diminish our public schools or threaten their existence.

**Thomas Hilburn**  
Ormond Beach

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## **NO COLA PLOT**

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20161028/letters-you-see-nothing-has-been-picked-up>

Posted Oct 28, 2016

An Oct. 24 letter to The News-Journal questioned the small size of the recent COLA (cost of living adjustment) raises (zero in 2016, 0.3 percent in 2017), with the question “You think they are cooking the books?” Such disparagement is part of the rampant charges of “rigging,” and the long-running criticism of problems with “big government.” Although we can be sympathetic to those who are wholly dependent on their monthly Social Security payments, we should not discard the law, the facts and reason in trying to understand how COLA is determined.

(READ: [Oct. 24 letters](#))

The way the annual adjustment is computed is specified in the Social Security Act of 1935 (and its subsequent amendments). The act specifies a formula for determining COLA, which is based on increases in the Consumer Price Index. CPI is calculated monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In September the bureau reported that increases in the shelter and gasoline indexes were the main causes of the 0.3 percent rise in CPI. The gasoline index rose 5.8 percent in September and accounted for more than half of the “all items” increase. The shelter index increased 0.4 percent, its largest increase since May. The index for food, in contrast, was unchanged for the third consecutive month, as the food at home index continued to decline.

It is extremely questionable that the books are cooked — it would require a massive government conspiracy, involving thousands of employees of the bureau, from the labor secretary down to low-level administrators, data collectors and statisticians. Of course, those addicted to internet conspiracy schemes and a nationwide rigging plot will not be convinced by these words.

**Thomas Hilburn**  
Ormond Beach

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## **"Thomas shows a lack of both knowledge and empathy."**

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20161004/letters-thomas-shows-lack-of-both-knowledge-and-empathy>

**October 4, 2016**

In an Aug. 30 column, "Abolishing 'man' at Princeton," Cal Thomas is upset by recent Princeton University "Guidelines for Using Gender Inclusive Language," which he sees as an example of political correctness. As a retiree from a university career, I also have some concerns about current university political correctness. For example, many professors are being pressured by students and administrators to not offend or hurt the feelings of students by challenging their beliefs or values. A worthwhile university education should include intellectual challenge of social, economic, political and religious philosophical positions by examining a variety of viewpoints. However, Thomas is clearly presenting a personal bias in his chastising of Princeton.

(READ: [Abolishing 'man' at Princeton](#))

Thomas refers to Princeton as a "once great school" and relates this to its early connection with the Christian religion, which was characteristic of early American universities. He quotes the Bible in regard to God creating "male and female" and naming them "mankind." He then attacks the transgender experience with, "It's what's in your head, not your genitalia, that defines you and me," a statement clearly presented derogatorily. He is partially correct in that both physical characteristics and brain function are importantly involved in this type of self-identification.

The term "sex" biologically emphasizes the differential physical characteristics of males and females. The term "gender" emphasizes the psychological feeling of self-identification relative to concepts of male and female. The vast majority of people are born with a compatibility between sex and gender. Neuroscience research indicates that a few people are born with an incompatibility between sex (e.g. genitalia) and gender (e.g. male or female brain type) resulting from a hormonal brain anomaly in utero. This biological mismatch between brain type and physical characteristics certainly appears to account for the transgender experience. Concerning this matter, Thomas shows a lack of both knowledge and empathy.

Thomas laments that the U.S. has "moved from a notion that we are created by God" to "a secular progressive worldview." One might hope that his ideas would be open to challenge in our institutions of higher learning.

**Dan Kennedy**

Ormond Beach

— Kennedy retired from a career that combined education and psychology, mainly in university settings in Oregon, Hawaii and Florida.

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**"Myths and misunderstanding have played a significant role in the difficulty that so many individuals face."**

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20160821/letters-myths-and-misunderstanding-have-played-significant-role-in-difficulty-that-so-many-individuals-face>

**Sunday Aug 21, 2016**

## **MENTAL HEALTH IS A SHARED GOAL**

As an individual who worked as a mental health public policy advocate for most of my 40-year professional career, I heartily commend The News-Journal for publishing the excellent article, "Mental illnesses are real, manageable, medical conditions," in its Aug. 15 edition. These myths, and many more, have historically cast a negative light on these disorders and on the millions of people worldwide who experience them. Since the Middle Ages, myths and misunderstanding have played a significant role in the difficulty that so many individuals face when seeking timely and effect treatment for a mental health problem or illness, or to get elected officials to recognize the need to provide adequate funding for mental health services.

(READ: [Mental illnesses are real, manageable, medical conditions](#))

Even today, in Florida, the failure of state government to treat these illnesses and the people who live with them with respect is apparent, as Florida ranks near the bottom among the 50 states in per capita funding for mental health services. Hopefully, your publication of this article will bring serious attention and new hope for greater public understanding of, and support for, an improved future for all of those who live with serious medical conditions such as bipolar disorder, depression, and schizophrenia.

Thank you so much for your efforts to educate the public about these real, serious, yet manageable conditions if adequate and appropriate treatment and public understanding is available.

**Preston Garrison**

Astor

— *During his career, Garrison served as executive director for the Mental Health Association of Florida, CEO of the National Mental Health Association (now Mental Health America), and secretary general/CEO of the World Federation for Mental Health.*

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20160720/letters--is-it-any-wonder-that-we-do-not-have-greater-percentage-of-registered-voters>

**July 20, 2016**

## **WORDS TO UNITE**

In David Harsanyi's July 16 column, "How Obama divides America," he cherry-picks the president's speech at the Dallas memorial service to assert that the president delivered a "needlessly politicized" lecture. So, let me do some cherry-picking of my own. In his speech, the president, in many places, attempted to not only mourn the dead but offer encouragement for us to come together to make a better society. He closed with these words: "Today our focus is on the victims and their families. They are heartbroken. The entire city of Dallas is grieving. Police across America, which is a tight-knit family, feels this loss to their core. And we're grieving with them. I'd ask all Americans to say a prayer

for these officers and their families. Keep them in your thoughts. And as a nation, let's remember to express our profound gratitude to our men and women in blue — not just today, but every day." Not exactly a divisive political statement.

[\(READ: Harsanyi's July 16 column\)](#)

I do not agree with President Obama on a number of issues, but I am dismayed by those who continually question his citizenship, his religion, his family values and his love for this country.

**Thomas Hilburn**

Ormond Beach

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160619/OPINION/160619515/101031?p=1&tc=pg>

*Published: Sunday, June 19, 2016*

### **Freedom and safety**

The mass shooting in Orlando is tragic for the families and friends of the victims, for the lives that will not be lived, and for all of America. Although such terrorism is hard to understand (in this case, some complex combination of mental instability, religious zealotry, and senseless hate), we should try to find ways to stop it. However, we should be sensible in our efforts to solve the problem; we should not let fear of losing more American lives cause us to adopt strategies that will cause more loss of life or the surrendering of any of our constitutional rights.

We have been down this road before: We lost 2,996 on 9/11 and since then, over 4,600 in the Afghan and Iraqi wars. Some say all would have worked out well if we just had not pulled out of Iraq in 2011. The experts for such a claim speak with the same surety as those who claimed in 2003 that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

I do, however, believe there is something we can do to save thousands of American lives. No need for troops on the ground, sacrificing our freedoms, or inordinate expenditures. In 2015, 38,000 Americans died in traffic deaths.

I think substantial police presence on our roads would cut the causes of accidents: speeding, following too closely, dangerous lane changes, driver use of cellphones, and other types of erratic driving. Such actions would not only save lives, but would likely provide a net financial gain.

**Thomas Hilburn**

Ormond Beach

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160608/OPINION/160609618/101031/OPINION02?p=2&tc=pg>

Published June 8, 2016

## **No More Email**

Three political cartoons on in four days (May 31, June 1 and June 3) focusing on the trumped-up “scandal” relating to Secretary Hillary Clinton’s emails is more than enough. This “scandal” is nothing more than another smoke screen by GOP congressmen to divert attention from their abject failure to address the real issues faced by the nation — such as the impact that climate change is having on weather across the U.S. (witness the torrential rains and flooding in the Southwest), the inability of airline travelers to get through airport security checkpoints in less than an hour and the need to reduce the rapidly growing gun violence in communities across the nation.

For The News-Journal to waste valuable editorial space to highlight a politically motivated attack that is not grounded in fact is unfortunate, and signals an increased level of political bias by the editors. Where was the outcry and investigation when both of George W. Bush’s secretaries of state admittedly used their personal email accounts when they were in office?

It’s time to get real. Factual, serious, issues need to be given preference over politically-motivated, made-up “scandals.” So, enough about the emails! Focus on the real issues that impact the daily lives of the nation’s people.

**Preston J. Garrison**

**Astor**

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160604/OPINION/160609810/101031/OPINION02?Title=Letters-Racquet-club-worries-the-real-tragedy-remember-childrenLetters>

### **Racquet club worries, the real tragedy, remember children**

***Published: Saturday, June 4, 2016 at 5:30 a.m.***

#### **PRESERVE SHORES TENNIS**

Twenty-five years ago I was part of the cast in a production of the play “Our Town,” by Thornton Wilder. Now I am a resident of our town, Daytona Beach Shores. My wife, Janet, and I feel like we are living in paradise as we look at the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Halifax River on the west. It is truly awesome.

However, even in paradise, we must sometimes deal with issues. A large number of residents play tennis at the city-owned Oceans Racquet & Recreation Club. After more than 40 years, we are concerned about the courts’ future. Mayor Harry Jennings, a wonderful and charming man whom all of us call “Harry,” is in a difficult position. He wants to make us, the tennis players, happy, but he also wants to save the city money. Public Safety Director Stephan Dembinsky, whom we all know as Stephan, is like a friend to us all rather than a officer of the law, and contributes to our sense of community. On a regular basis, there are social gatherings at the city pavilion to bring us all together and mingle with our neighbors.

The Oceans Racquet Club is not just a club for recreation, but a facility that provides training. It is home to two young tennis stars, Kristina and Lindsey Zieglar. They started their tennis career there 10 years ago. Kristina was the 2015 and 2016 News-Journal Girls Athlete of the Year.

The club is an attraction for people from other parts of the United States as well as Canada and Europe. For all of us who play the game of tennis, it is a very important part of our life, and the club is like our second home. We worry that if the tennis courts are closed even temporarily, they will be gone forever — or that the number of courts will be reduced. The motto of Daytona Beach Shores is “Life is better here.” For those of us who play tennis, that motto would no longer apply.

The city makes investments to improve the lifestyle of its citizens. Tennis is not an exception; it is a healthy lifestyle to all who participate and enjoy the game.

**Panos Stroumpis**  
**Daytona Beach Shores**

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160528/OPINION/160529544/101031?Title=Letters-Volusia-s-homeless-embracing-Trump-Clinton-s-guilt-bathroom-terms>

*Published: Saturday, May 28, 2016*

## **HOMELESSNESS IS COUNTYWIDE**

In response to the May 24 article, “DeLand unveils homeless project”: To some, this may seem like progress on the homeless issue. It isn’t.

The homeless issue is a countywide problem. Volusia County officials recognized it as a county problem when they offered \$4 million and land to build a shelter with the requirement that the operating expenses had to be borne by the cities.

The Volusia County Council exists to address countywide problems. The County Council is failing to live up to its countywide responsibilities by requesting the cities to fund shelter operating expenses. Cities are now trying to solve the homeless issue by building their own homeless shelters. This is admirable, but divides the solution of the homeless issue. These city shelters will cost much more and will not solve the homeless issue. No city on its own can provide the services 24/7, no questions asked — with the mental health, dental and medical care, drug addiction counseling, case management, food and shelter that the well-researched Volusia Safe Harbor proposal would provide.

The County Council recognized homelessness as a countywide problem, so council members should live up to that obligation and pay the operating expenses of Volusia Safe Harbor. That is the only way to solve the Volusia County homeless issue.

**Harry R. White**  
**Ormond Beach**

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## **SENSE ON GUNS**

Published May 4, 2016

What people want responsible gun regulations. The vast majority of Americans do not want to “outlaw all guns” and “take them away from law-abiding citizens,” as reported by a recent Pew Research nationwide survey.

What we want is to prevent events — such as the story that was included in the same April 28 issue of The News-Journal as a letter blaming our culture for gun violence, where a Milwaukee 2-year-old fatally shot his mother through the backseat while she was driving. He found the gun after it rolled out from under the driver’s seat.

We need laws banning the sale of assault-type weapons, of sales to felons and those with severe mental health issues. Regulations are needed to include the legal requirement that gun owners take a course in responsible use, storage and care of firearms. I received a certification at the end of just such a course, issued by the National Rifle Association. Likewise, my driver’s license required a course of study.

We have a better chance of coming together on the “gun debate” if we stop misrepresenting what the concerned parties believe. Gun sales are boosted while we argue, and people continue to die needlessly.

**Leigh Montgomery**

Ormond Beach

## **COMMUNITY VOICES**

### **How Public Schools Boost Democracy**

**Dan Kennedy**

*Published: Wednesday, April 20, 2016*

Clearly, K-12 education is one of the most important of all human endeavors. This has certainly been true — from what must have been the relatively informal methods of instructing the young in survival skills during prehistoric times, to the organization and sophistication seen in schools today. But we should examine the use of school vouchers and charter schools relative to the educational goal of maintaining a democracy.

American education has included several major goals. We strive to pass on the general national culture from generation to generation. For all students, we want to foster the optimal development of their potentials in the cognitive, affective and physical areas of life. This goal includes acquiring basic skills for learning, knowledge acquisition, positive social-emotional development, and healthy lifestyle habits. We also seek to maintain a well-educated citizenry, which is necessary for maintaining a democratic form of

government and for maintaining a position of strength and respect in a world of nations. Finally, we want to prepare students for gainful employment and for higher education.

So where do vouchers and charter schools fit in?

Public schools are especially important institutions from a standpoint of governance. History has shown that a well-educated citizenry is necessary for the maintenance of a democracy. An especially important feature of education for democracy is the development of critical thinking skills. In Florida, and elsewhere, there has been a movement for several years to provide the option of vouchers for private schools; taxpayer money for students to enroll in private schools. This is not only questionable from a standpoint of church-state separation (by some measures, about 85 percent of private schools have religious affiliations) but private schools are more likely to have social, economic, political or religious philosophical agendas, which is a condition antithetical to developing critical thinking.

Research concerning vouchers has not generally supported the efficacy of private schools in regard to academic achievement as compared with public schools (see the 2012 study by the Center for Educational Policy). Overall, the same has been true for charter schools (as documented in the National Assessment for Educational Progress of 2006 and Stanford University studies, 2009-13).

Recent articles in The News-Journal have discussed the huge amount of taxpayer money that has been, I believe, wasted on charter schools.

[\(READ: Tighten financial scrutiny of charters\)](#)

Supporters of charter schools argue that their relative freedom from public school policies and regulations enables greater development of innovation. But American education has seen numerous important innovations within the framework of regular public school education.

Is it possible that some aspects of the K-12 accountability movement (including excessive testing, vouchers, charter schools) is part of an agenda for greater privatization of American education? As reported by Michael Massing in the New York Review of Books Dec. 17, 2015, we've seen evidence concerning the role of hedge fund managers and wealthy philanthropists influencing the accountability movement.

I believe it is certainly important that we have School Board members and government leaders who are strong advocates of public school education.

— Kennedy, of Ormond Beach, is retired from a career that combined education and psychology, mainly in university settings in Oregon, Hawaii and Florida. He was also a licensed psychologist in Florida and Hawaii, and served as adjunct faculty at the University of Central Florida and Nova Southeastern University.

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**March 5, 2016**

## Safe space

It would be an easy step from finding yourself homeless to giving up on yourself and losing respect for who you are.

Whenever you lose what you think of as your place in this world, you begin to rethink everything. Have you ever lost a job? Lost your home because you were unable to pay the rent or the mortgage, or have been abandoned by a spouse?

People in this situation live in fear all the time. Maybe they have no family or friends, or maybe they are too proud to ask for help and expose the failure they feel they have become. Maybe they sought nothing more than forgetfulness they could get in a bottle or a needle.

Eventually, they found themselves living on the streets. They struggle for a while to keep hope alive but then give up on themselves — even tell themselves they're losers. They begin to listen to others living on the street.

Finally, they pick up the armor and shield of the downtrodden. The mantra becomes, "Who wants a job?" Panhandling becomes a job; all they need is one meal a day, an unlocked public bathroom, a bed somewhere on a cold night — and the conviction that "I don't want to live by their rules anyway."

That armor keeps them from seeing the warm glow of lights inside other people's homes or longing for the respect they once had. It keeps them from seeing pity in the eyes of those passing or from seeing the disgust in the eyes of others.

In some eyes, they can see hope that has been kept alive. Yes, they can live a better life, regain respect and take off the armor which shields them from accepting life on the streets.

Join hands, and let's build Volusia Safe Harbor.

**Leigh Montgomery**

**Ormond Beach**

**February 24 2016**

Although Justice Antonin Scalia was widely considered an individual of great intellect, character and charm, his originalist approach was a point of contention. The concept of originalism is an approach to interpreting the U.S. Constitution based on the perceived original intent of its framers.

But English words and terms are often open to various interpretations — including constitutional terms like "general welfare," "natural born citizen," "take care" and "cruel and unusual punishments." Even the framers had their differences about the meaning of certain terms.

The "equal protection" clause of the 14th Amendment, in the beginning, was not interpreted as providing equal rights to all citizens: Blacks could not vote until the 15th Amendment; women could not vote until the 19th Amendment;

segregation was legal until the Brown vs. the Board and Education decision, and the 1964 Civil Rights law; and same-sex marriage was not legal in all states until 2015. Strangely, Scalia has stated that he would have sided with the majority in the Brown decision, and that it was consistent with a historical reinterpretation of the equal protection clause — not exactly an originalist view. Also, in a 2000 decision (FDA vs. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp), Justice Scalia seemed to again betray his originalism with the statement, “the words of a statute must be read in their context and with a view to their place in the overall statutory scheme.”

If strict originalism is not possible or appropriate, what is the proper philosophy for interpreting the Constitution? Most justices seem to use an evolutionary approach, using the Constitution and past decisions as a guide, with context provided by a peripheral view of our changing society.

I certainly hope the president and the Senate can agree on a justice who will preserve and support the best in our law, and assure justice and fairness for all.

**Tom Hilburn**  
**Ormond Beach**

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160113/OPINION/160119847/101031/OPINION02?p=3&tc=pq> published Jan 13, 2016

## **Area priorities**

Reading Sunday’s News Journal, I find that \$400 million has been spent on a sporting facility, and that the city or county cannot afford a facility for homeless people in Daytona Beach.

Further, that the sporting facility will use large amounts of gasoline for racing cars, which will increase the rate of climate change.

What are we thinking?

**Patricia Tugas**  
**Ormond Beach**

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160112/OPINION/160119924/101031?Title=Letters-Famous-for-a-reason-theater-etiquette-food-and-shelter-political-priorities>

***Published: Tuesday, January 12, 2016 at 5:30 a.m.***

## **KEEP BEACH WORLD-FAMOUS**

The Atlantic Coast of the U.S. is 28,673 miles long; most could be called beach. Florida's piece is 3,331 miles, and the part considered the “World's Most Famous Beach” is 23 miles long. What made Daytona Beach and nearby beaches into the World's Most Famous Beach? Hard-packed sand that can be driven on, and in the past raced on, by cars and motorcycles. Daytona Beach's growth, tourism and economic engine is the World's Most Famous Beach.

High-end hotels wanting to build beachfront have all 28,673 miles of beachfront to build on. They want to build here on the the World's Most Famous Beach because of its fame

— but they want to take away what has made Daytona Beach famous. I believe they will build without the city and county caving in to their requests for driving restrictions because the World's Most Famous Beach attracts tourists. Tourists spend money, and they want a piece of the action.

Let's keep our beach famous with unrestricted, safely controlled driving.

**Harry R. White**

**Ormond Beach**

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160106/OPINION/160109790/101029/OPINION01?Title=The-sense-and-nonsense-of-educational-testing>

## **COMMUNITY VOICES**

### **THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF EDUCATIONAL TESTING**

**Dan Kennedy**

***Published: Wednesday, January 6, 2016***

There have recently been several News-Journal articles discussing educational issues. The issues have been varied, but I'd like to focus on testing and student learning abilities. During my university career that combined education and psychology, assessment and measurement was a major area of interest.

Objective, quantitative assessment of student academic progress is certainly necessary and desirable. But what we have been seeing locally, statewide, and nationally has been an unreasonable degree of overkill. Many educators and others are strongly and justifiably protesting this.

A major flaw in the current testing craze is that it almost ignores student individual differences. With the exceptions of some special-needs students and non-English speakers, students are considered equal in learning ability, and capable of reaching established achievement levels (e.g. test cut-off scores). But students are individuals and have important differences. They differ in degrees of home encouragement and support for learning. They differ in interests, attitudes, values, and personality. They differ greatly in degrees and categories of curiosity. Genetic influences on cognitive development range on a continuum from low to high, with the large majority being within a medium range. One major purpose of education is to help each student reach her or his maximum potential level of academic achievement. When that is accomplished, test scores will range from low to high.

An important factor to consider is motivation for learning. Teachers know that emphasizing individual student progress is a potent motivator. Giving a school a D or F grade is not. The Volusia school district reports that 61 percent of all students are in the economically disadvantaged category (i.e. combining low income and poverty levels) with several schools showing over 90 percent of students in that category. Decades of research shows

socio-economic level to be one of the best predictors of academic achievement. Is it realistic to expect almost all students to reach an “academic bar” set at an exceptionally high level by test cut-off scores?

Another questionable use of testing relates to grade-level promotions. The idea is to detain students at their current grade level who do not reach certain test score cut-offs. A large body of research evidence over several decades has strongly demonstrated that this practice is very unlikely to improve academic achievement — and quite likely to predict increased school drop-outs and social or emotional problems.

There are certainly good reasons to be concerned about current educational philosophy and practice. The accountability movement has created a near-panic state, which has led to the setting of irrational and unrealistic educational goals. Current school culture sometimes seems to be one of frantic test preparation. There is a need to calm down, slow down, and carefully examine goal-setting for our children and youth.

— *Kennedy, of Ormond Beach, is retired from a career that combined education and psychology, mainly in university settings in Oregon, Hawaii and Florida. He was also a licensed psychologist in Florida and Hawaii, and served as adjunct faculty at the University of Central Florida and Nova Southeastern University.*

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20160103/OPINION/160109964/101031/OPINION02?p=2&tc=pq>

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### **Costello's approach**

Thanks to Rep. Fred Costello, Florida families have a chance to lower their electric bills. Although we live in the Sunshine State, Florida's utility companies have tried to block commercial and individual homeowners with rooftop solar from selling their excess energy to neighboring homes and apartment buildings.

Rep. Costello's bill would allow private investment to open the solar market, create competition and lower energy costs. Even more important, widespread use of solar power would help to capture our state's most abundant energy resource while at the same time lower our dependence on the fossil fuels that contribute to global warming.

In addition, widespread use of solar power will help to reduce our dependence on imported oil, whether pumped and shipped from fracking sites in Canada, or from unstable countries in the Middle East. Let's encourage our state legislators to support HB 687, Rep. Costello's very important bill.

### **Carolyn West**

Ormond Beach