

SunSentinel OPINION

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ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Newcomers, please help us keep Florida, Florida

This is a message for the estimated 800 net new people who are relocating to Florida every day.

Welcome to Florida. We're glad you're here, and we hope you'll help us keep Florida, Florida.

Florida is open for business, and business is better here. This state is like a magnet — for businesses, residents, students and visitors, and according to research by Florida Chamber Foundation Chief Economist Dr. Jerry Parrish, Florida is estimated to gain about 800 net new people per day on average.

While we welcome the \$1.19 million in income relocating to Florida every hour, we need to ensure we keep Florida, Florida. Constantly ranked one of the best states for business and education, Florida is committed to keeping regulatory red tape and local business taxes low so we can remain a prime location with a competitive, pro-business, pro-jobs climate. This, along with a strong economy and zero personal state income tax, makes Florida a better state to do business.

Elections matter and we hope you'll register to vote and help us keep electing people who want to keep Florida, Florida, and not let politicians who want Florida to be like New York, California, Illinois and New Jersey ever lead Florida's Legislature, 67 counties or our over 400 cities. Florida is a special place and we want to keep it that way.

Floridians are not the only ones who notice the superior quality of life here. Every day, we see new businesses choosing to relocate from high-cost, high-regulated states like New York, California, Illinois and New Jersey to our high-value location with a low-cost of living. Who can



By Mark Wilson

blame them? It's no wonder people are leaving New York. Florida has more people than New York but New York's state budget is more than double Florida's budget.

If Florida were a country, it would have the 17th largest economy in the world. Florida has a top five business tax climate, top five education system, offers a gateway to emerging markets in the Americas and for international trade, has a business-friendly government committed to fiscal stability and regulatory certainty, is a right-to-work state and offers an unmatched quality of life, making it the best place to live, work, learn, raise a family and retire.

Florida never really closed its doors. Under the leadership of Gov. DeSantis, Florida has reopened safe and smart, something some states still cannot figure out. Slowly, but surely, national media is acknowledging what I've been saying since last year — that Florida was, and is, a national and international model.

Florida's economy is moving in the right direction. As we work to become the 10th largest economy in the world by 2030, we welcome new residents and businesses that champion free enterprise, but the last thing we need is for those choosing to relocate to Florida to bring the politics of their state with them, impacting and changing the Florida they chose to move to in the first place. We welcome you to Florida and invite you to help us keep Florida, Florida.

Now that you're here, visit www.flchamber.com/openforbiz and help us share how special Florida is.

Mark Wilson is the president and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Chauvin trial is far from over — and far from won

The trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin moves like a freight train destined for a delivery of generational consequence. Each day brings additional evidence that the defendant violated department policies, training standards and elemental human decency by pressing his knee into George Floyd's neck for over nine minutes.



By Michael McAuliffe

Those nine minutes included an extended period during which Floyd wasn't moving or even breathing. Midway through the nine minutes, Chauvin appears in a video of the incident to lean into the victim with more weight, not less.

The current police chief, the training officer and the longest-serving lieutenant on the Minneapolis force all testified that the defendant's actions were unnecessary or wrong. That numerous police witnesses are government witnesses addressing the defendant's actions is not common in prosecutions of police officers. The norm is that civilian witnesses square off against police witnesses. In too many criminal cases involving officer defendants, police witnesses make no secret of their disdain for others judging their actions. Prosecutions of police officers often are two separate worlds with almost nothing overlapping in what is recounted or argued; such a gap does not exist so far in the Chauvin case.

Additionally, the jury is more diverse than many that sit in judgment of police officer defendants. The fourteen jurors (counting two white alternates) include three Black men, one Black woman and an additional two jurors self-described as multi-racial. The decisionmakers reflect the growing diversity of Minneapolis, and are arguably more diverse than Hennepin County, where the trial is taking place. Even given Minneapolis' strained race relations, the diverse make-up of the jury should offer extra credibility to its eventual decisions. Based on the evidence thus far and the jury making the decision, one might be tempted to conclude the result of the trial is inevitable — that we now can expect a guilty verdict of some crime. That view is understandable, but it is a mistake.

The traditional strategy in prosecuting an officer for official acts is that jurors have to be cornered into guilty votes by eliminating all other options. This rationale stems from the oft-repeated defense refrain that unless you were a cop, you don't know what happens on the street — the fear and the risks involved in being an officer. That assertion carries enough inherent force that a juror in any particular police case can doubt the readily apparent, even when presented with video evidence.

That's how the state jurors in the initial

Rodney King beating case failed to convict any of the police defendants. The acquittal of three officers and the mistrial of a fourth came despite video evidence of several defendants and other officers inflicting dozens of blows with batons as King was crawling or on the ground. It took a subsequent federal criminal civil rights trial to obtain convictions of some of the officers involved in the beating. And we shouldn't forget the riots and destruction that occurred between the state and federal trials. The fear exists that the same might happen again now.

We haven't heard the defense case yet in Minneapolis. Decorated current or former officers might yet testify that one can't make harsh judgments in the rarified air of a safe courtroom. Police chiefs seldom are in sync with the patrol officers on the street. That's why — according to countless officers — policies and procedures on the page don't translate easily into actions during confrontations. As such, defense attorneys in police cases argue that even if conduct is wrong or ineffective in hindsight, it isn't criminal. They have to convince only one juror to prevent a conviction.

Finally, a criminal trial is an artificial construct. It's not meant to reflect reality; a trial is a performative and largely scripted subset of facts and arguments about an event. The judge guides the process but doesn't take sides. The lawyers are advocates in an adversarial process, but they go home after the proceedings. A criminal trial is not well-suited to act as a referendum on larger issues such as race or to assign moral culpability based on non-legal standards of right and wrong.

So there is reason to be tentative in our collective expectation of a guilty verdict and to fear that a disappointing result will prompt a violent reaction on a national scale. Jurors swear an oath to not make any judgment until the end of the trial when they deliberate in secret. However, members of the public can and will draw conclusions from what they observe and hear of the televised trial proceedings. Let's hope in the end what the public sees is what the jurors believe.

Michael McAuliffe is a former federal prosecutor serving both as a civil rights prosecutor at the Department of Justice and as a supervisory assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Florida. McAuliffe also served as the elected state attorney for Palm Beach County and is currently an adjunct professor at William & Mary's Law School and a senior lecturing fellow at Duke School of Law.

CARTOON ROUNDUP



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Something's rotten in the city of Tamarac

Bravo, Sun Sentinel for exposing the waste of Tamarac's taxpayers money. ["Amid pandemic, city leaders set aside lots more money for travel. 'Where are we going?' mayor asks," April 1] Kudos to Mayor Gomez for recognizing the obvious waste of taxpayers money. The "gang of four" — city commissioners Villalobos, Bolton, Gelin and Placko — should be ashamed of their actions. They are like newborn puppies trying to get the most mother's milk as they can.

Indeed, the county inspector general should launch an immediate investigation into the flagrant misuse of taxpayers money. Many people in Tamarac are struggling to get by in this pandemic. That does not seem to have any meaning to the commissioners' arrogant disregard for the taxpayer.

Herb Epstein, Tamarac

Farewell, Alcee

My good friend of almost 60 years, the Honorable Alcee Hastings, was called to a higher place.

Our friendship goes back in the 1960s, when we were both tinkering with getting involved in "making things happen and changing the world." We were both in the Fort Lauderdale Jaycees, served on the Urban League board, and a few other community-based organizations.

He was articulate, opinionated, brilliant and stubborn as a mule. I was opinionated, fun loving and stubborn as a mule. We were basically on different sides of issues and enjoyed heated public debate. We

then went to dinner together and laughed, plotted and figured out how to bring our respective views together for the good of all.

Where is that today in our nation? Alcee, I will miss you my brother. You will be replaced in Congress. You will never be replaced here on earth or in my heart.

Randy Avon, Lighthouse Point

Impounding vehicles compounds the problem

Taking someone's vehicle because the driver is uninsured is shortsighted, mean-spirited and vindictive. ["Give us the keys. You're too uninsured to drive | Letters to the editor," April 3] The cause of non-payment is likely an inability to pay — perhaps having to chose between food on the table for children, or paying rent or filling a prescription. So the "solution" would not be taking away the means of getting to and from a job, or getting children to school or going to a medical treatment, it would not be causing more debt or increased fees and penalties. Easy to say take the car when the potential dire consequences are of no concern as those choices are not ones you face.

Possible solutions include extension plans, creating a fund to assist those without means, or some other mechanism that does not punish those who cannot afford car insurance, but instead works with them to get the needed insurance, or some type of "drive-time permit" while still covering accident costs. We can do better, and we should.

Siobhan McLaughlin, Hollywood

NOTICE TO READERS

South Florida Sun Sentinel journalists are working remotely during the pandemic. For the foreseeable future, please send your letters only by email to letters@sunsentinel.com. Letters should be no more than 150 words. They may be edited for length and clarity. They become property of the Sun Sentinel. We look forward to hearing from you.